Mr 11-12: Varied
THE Divine Original, AND Incomparable Excellency OF THE Christian Religion,
As founded on the Holy SCRIPTURES, Asserted and Vindicated:
IN VIII SERMONS, Preach'd at the LECTURE
Founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle Esq;
In the Year of our Lord, 1709

By Josiah Woodward, D.D.

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The Divine Original
and
Incomparable Example
of the
Christian Religion
An Exposition of Holy Scripture
Abridged and Improved
in \textit{viii Sermons}

Exposing the
Lectures

Preached by the Honorable
Robert Boyle, Esq.

In the Year of Our Lord MDCCLXX

TO THE
Most Reverend Father in GOD,

THOMAS
Lord ARCH-BISHOP of
CANTERBURY,
And PRIMATE of all
England, &c.

Trustee of the pious CHARITY
of the late Honourable
ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;
For founding a Yearly LECTURE,
in Opposition to Atheism, Deism, &c.
The following
SERMONS
Are humbly Dedicated.
THE CONTENTS.

THE Incomparable Excellency of the Christian Religion, founded on Divine Revelation, asserted and vindicated: In Eight Sermons; shewing,

Sermon I. The Certainty of GOD's Being, and of his Universal Government.

Sermon II. The Divine Light, Succour, and Comfort of the Christian Religion.

Sermon III. The Divine Original of the Holy Scriptures.

Sermon IV. The Divinity of our LORD Jesus Christ.

Sermon V. Further Proofs of it.

Sermon VI. Causes of Modern Infidelity.

Sermon VII. The Reasonableness of the Christian Hope.

Sermon VIII. The due Practice of our Holy Religion, a good Refutation of Infidels and Scoffers.
SERMON I.

The Certainty of GOD's Being, and of his universal Government.

1 Corinthians I. 21.

For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.

THE Design of these Lectures being to manifest the incomparable Excellency of the Christian Religion, as founded on divine Revelation, in Opposition to the Insults of Notorious Infidels; the Text before us affords a solid Ground for this Undertaking, in a Way too, as remote as any I could think of, from what has been already insisted on in this Place. For here St. Paul's Argument from the Com-
The Certainty of the Serm. I.

passion of the infinitely good GOD to the Ignorance of Men, in revealing to them, by his Incarnate SON and Inspired Servants, many Truths of the greatest Importance, which they could never have found out by their natural Light; gives us a good Evidence of the Truth and Excellency of the Gospel-Revelation, and consequently of the Christian Religion that is built upon it.

For we may hence argue with good Reason, that the Christian Religion cannot but be true, because it is built on the Word of GOD; that the Word of GOD cannot fail us, because it is his very Nature to be infinitely Perfect, and therefore infallibly true; that the Scriptures, which Christians call the Word of GOD, appear to be so, because they reveal such excellent Doctrine as is far above the Sphere of the Wisdom of the World, or meer humane Wisdom. For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.

That is, when GOD in his Wisdom saw, that the Light of Nature in Men was not sufficient to guide them
Serm. I. Being of GOD.

them to their true Happiness, and to instate them in it; and that their best natural Notions and moral Rules, could not advance them to such a Knowledge of their Maker, as would reduce them to his Likeness and Favour, it pleased GOD to send his SON in the Flesh, and to inspire his Prophets and Apostles with his Spirit, to lead and support Men in the Ways of eternal Happiness; and tho' this was not done in the Flourishes of humane Eloquence, and was therefore cenfured, by Men conceited of their own Learning, as foolish and inaccurate, yet thus it pleased GOD to save them that believe; that is, them that received these holy Truths with resigned Minds and Hearts.

It will be to our Purpose to remark, that whereas the Learning of Greece was in great Reputation in the World, when this great Apostle of the Gentiles wrote this first Letter of his to the Grecian Converts: It was expedient that he should shew them, how far the divine Philosophy of the Christian Religion excell'd those crude and unsuitable Notions of Things, which their wisest Men had attained by their imperfect natural Light;
minding them, that since they were instructed in the divine Doctrine of the Gospel, they were advanced in useful Knowledge and solid Learning, far above any Thing they could ever have attained by the Instructions of their best Philosophers.

For, of all Knowledge, that is certainly the highest and best, which brings Men to the truest Sentiments of GOD and themselves; and by correcting their Errors, and purging away their Corruptions, brings them first to the Likeness, and then to the Favour of GOD.

Now, had there been any Power or Sufficiency in Nature to have wrought this great Change and Cure on the Souls of Men; the infinitely wise GOD would never have been at the inestimable Expence (if I may so express it) of the Sacrifice of his dear SON, which was the Price of our Redemption; nor of the marvellous Effusion of his Holy Spirit, for the Sanctification of Men and for the inditing of the holy Scriptures, which are called His Oracles. For these were the Effects of GOD's infinite Mercy and Compassion, says the Text,
Serm. I.  Being of GOD.

Text, after that he saw, that the whole Sum of humane Wisdom, gathered up out of all the pretended Stores of it among the Jewish Rabbies, and the Gentile Philosophers, could not amount to such a Pitch of true Wisdom, as to make Men wise to Salvation, as every true Christian is taught of GOD to be.

Yea, what is still worse, when GOD in his Wisdom saw, that the Rabbinical Notions of the Jews, and the natural Theology of the Gentiles, were not only empty and insufficient Instructions, which could never make Men wise and good; but, on the contrary, that they were for the most part pernicious Fables and Delusions, which were to be renounced and cashier'd; as we read, 1 Cor. I. 18. I will destroy the Wisdom of the wise, (the then famous Sages (Σοφοί) that were the Masters of Wisdom among the Heathens,) and will bring to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent. Intimating, that the glorious Light of Revelation would bring Men to contempt the then magnified Sentences of their Philosophers, and their imperfect Doctrines of humane Prudence.

B 3  This
The Certainty of the Serm. I.

This is likewise applicable to the Folly of the prophane Wits of Greece, such as their Lucian, Celsus, and other Scoffers; who would indulge their prophane Jefts upon Religion, (as some others have since) tho' to the Hazard or Ruine of their Souls, and therefore droll'd on the Sermons of the Apostles, as unpolite and inaccurate Discourses, tho' their Preaching was indeed the Wisdom of GOD for the Salvation of Men. Thus professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools.

But the Rebuke chiefly points at the Institutions of their most celebrated Philosophers, which the Text calls the Wisdom of the World, or meer humane Wisdom; of which it may be truly affirmed, that it never gave Men a perfect Scheme of moral Doctrines and Rules of Life, from right Principles and for just Ends; and that it never could excite in Men a sufficient Power to conform to them, in their inward Dispositions and outward Deportment.

So that we find them exploded in the Verse before the Text.
Serm. I. Being of GOD.

Wife? (the Σοφή) probably the Moralist, such as the Seven Wise Men of Greece, as Dr. Hammond understands it: Where is the Scribe? (Τέκμωτας) probably the learned Philologer, as Tertullian renders it: Where is the Disputer of this World? (Σνζηνης) the Searcher and Inquirer into the Nature of Things, which the Hebrews call the natural Philosopher or Magician. Hath not God made foolish (says our Apostle) the Wisdom of this World? Hath he not, by the Light of revealed Truth, demonstrated the Imperfection and Ignorance of those who were greatly esteemed in the World for their Learning and Knowledge? And justly turned the Reproach of Folly, on such as term'd the preaching of the Gospel Folly, on such as term'd the preaching of the Gospel Foolishness?

It is far from my Intention, (and we are sure, it was far from the Design of the Noble and Learned Founder of these Lectures,) to cast any injurious Reflexion on humane Reason, truly so call'd; or upon the due Improvement of natural Light by humane Learning. The intellectual Capacity of Man, is the Glory of his Nature; and the Improvement of it by Study
The Certainty of the Serm. I.

Study and Reasoning, is one of our best and brightest Embellishments. But I am to shew, as my Text does, the Imperfection of both these, yea, the Darkness and Insufficiency of the best humane Knowledge, unassisted by Divine Light and Succour, to make Men truly wise and good, and to render them duly happy and at Rest, in the present Satisfaction of a well-grounded Peace with GOD, and in the blessed Hope of his eternal Kingdom.

This is the Scope of the Apostle's Argument throughout a great Part of this Chapter: And this is very seasonable Doctrine for these Times, wherein Deism (that is indeed Heathenism) is so much pleaded for, and gloried in, and the Writings of Heathens more perused, (I wish I could not say, esteem'd) by some Persons, than the Sacred Books of GOD.

Have we not seen humane Learning exalted in Opposition to the Principles of the Christian Faith? And the Oracles (alas!) of humane Reason set up in Defiance of the Oracles of GOD? Truly these Persons are in a ready Way to erect Altars to
Serm. I.  Being of G O D.

to their own Understanding; yea, some have already sacrificed their Faith and Hope thereon. But this their senseless Idol is dash'd in pieces by that one Sentence of divine Wisdom, *He that thinketh he knoweth any Thing, as yet knoweth nothing as he ought.* For it is a manifest Defect in Sense, not to be conscious of our own Ignorance.

I do readily grant, that the Memory of some excellent Heathens, will ever deserve Honour and Esteem in the Christian World; and that some of their Writings will be of perpetual Use in their Place: But when Men professedly revolt from the Guidance of GOD's Holy Spirit, and fancy their own Wit and Ability to be a more sufficient Director and Assistant in the Ways of Truth and Piety: When they affirm, that the Candles of Mens natural Reason give a better Light than the Noon-Day Beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and extol the Instruc-

*Cor. VIII. 2.*
The Certainty of the

Serm. I.

the Author and Finisher of their Faith, to contend earnestly for the Principles of their divine Religion, and for the Christian Prerogatives built thereon; and to declare their Preference of one Epistle of the Holy Apostles before the whole World of uninspired Treatises. And this, for the Reason alleged in the Text; namely, because one Book of the New Testament may lead us, by the Grace of GOD which accompanies it, to the saving Knowledge of GOD in his SON Jesus Christ, which all the Volumes of the Heathens can never do. For, when in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD; it pleased GOD by the Foolsishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.

In treating of these Words, I shall desire you to remark,

I. That whereas our Apostle affirms, that the Gentile World by their Wisdom (or Philosophy) knew not GOD; he does not mean, that the Light of Nature is not able to discover the Being and prime Attributes of GOD, for he elsewhere affirms that
Serm. I. Being of GOD.

that it is, in Opposition to the Atheist.

II. That the Words of the Text do imply, yea, they do expressly declare, that many Truths of great Importance to the present Peace and everlasting Happiness of Men, are clearly revealed in the holy Gospel, which could not be duly known by the Light of Nature; in Opposition to the Deist and other Infidels. For, when in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD, by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.

Let us in the first Place observe, that whereas the Apostle affirms in the Text, that the Heathen World, by their Wisdom (or Philosophy) knew not GOD; he does not mean, that the Light of Nature in Men, is not sufficient to discern the Being and prime Attributes of GOD; for he elsewhere affirms that it is, in Opposition to the Atheist.

This same Apostle is very positive in this Point, in his Epistle to the Romans, (Chap. I. Ver. 20.) where he de-
The Certainty of the Serm. I.

declares, That the invisible Things of GOD, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; so that they, the Heathens, if they are ignorant of this Truth, are without Excuse; for that it is scarce imaginable, that a Man, in the right Use of his Senses, can be a steady and a persevering Atheist; for there are Five Demonstrations of a Deity continually before his Eyes.

I. The admirable Frame of the visible Universe.
II. The manifest Footsteps of an over-ruling Providence.
III. The reasonable Sentiments of all wise and sober Persons in all Ages and Countries, concerning these Things.
IV. The wonderful Frame and Contexture of our own Bodies.
V. The divine Faculties and Operations of our Souls.

These are such Evidences of the Being and Government of GOD, as nothing but such a Degeneracy in Man
Men as is perfectly brutal, can wholly overlook.

I begin with the first Indication of a Deity, in the admirable Frame of the visible Universe, which must refute Atheism, wherever there is reasonable Thought.

Can a Man retain this senseless Thought when he looks up to Heaven, and sees those innumerable Globes of beauteous Light, which fill the dazling Hemisphere? Many of them vastly bigger than the whole Mass of this terraqueous Globe on which we live, yet observing the most exact Order and Discipline, like an Army under the strictest Command.

The fixed Stars of the first Magnitude, which to the common View appear but as the Sparks of Diamonds in a Crociat, are most certainly of a very vast Bigness. The most accurate Judges of the Matter assure us, that many of them are above a Hundred Times bigger than the whole Earth; and some learned Astronomers astonish us with very reasonable Conjectures, of their being so many Suns to other Globes, which may
may perhaps be as likely to be inhabited as this under our Feet.

That glorious Creature the SUN, is so admirable for its Beauty and Usefulness, that it has been adored by almost all the Heathen World in all Ages; insomuch that infinite Wisdom saw Reason to foreclose that beaten Path to Idolatry, by a special Law given to his peculiar People, (Deut. IV. 19.) For indeed this principal Luminary of Heaven, is wonderful beyond Expression, too splendid to be steadily beheld, too transcendent to be fully known. The Frame, Glory, Position, Motion, and Uses of this admirable Globe of Light appear clearly to be the Effects of infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, to all but resolute and abandoned Infidels. And how senseless and besotted are they, who cannot conceive that a common Lamp or Candle could be made and lighted up by Chance, and yet affirm it of this most glorious Planet, which is the Ornament of the Heavens, and the Life, under G O D, of this lower World? How comes it so minutely just in its Distributions betwixt Light
Light and Darkness, that it has not rob'd the Night of one Moment due unto it by the Laws of their Constitution, for above Five Thousand Years past, except where the special Command of the Creator interposed, as in the Days of Josua? (Jof. X. 12.) Should the Sun remove to a greater Distance from the Earth, we should perish with Cold; should it come nearer, we should be burnt up:

Whence then comes this nice and exact Order in Things without Sense? And how come they to serve so wonderfully to such good and merciful Ends? And to continue so to do, without Interruption or Decay? Truly, these and a Thousand other Queries of the like Nature, cannot be accounted for to a wise Man, by the random Fancies of blind Chance or meer Nature; but the only reasonable Account of all is, that these are the glorious Works of the Omnipotent GOD, (the παντεσυνεξεργαστε τω) who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working, (Isa. XXVIII. 29.) Were there no other Proof of a Deity but this, a discerning Man could never be an Atheist, were he never so willing to be
be One for some carnal Respects; for even a Man of common Sense would choose rather to be deprived of his Reason, by a natural Idiotism or Phrensy, than to be bubbled out of it by such palpable Delusions.

It is truly said, The Heavens declare the Glory of GOD, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work, (Psal. XIX. 1.) These are natural Sermons on the Subject of the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of their Maker; and they speak in the true universal Language, known of all: Nor can the Scoffers call this the Foolishness of Preaching, because the wisest Men of all Ages have been instructed by them.

If we hence descend to consider the admirable Nature and Uses of the Air, with all the various Kinds of Birds that inhabit it, from the little Hum-bird in America, not much bigger than a Fly, and that weighs but a few Grains, to the Ostrich of Eight Foot, and the Ruck in Madagascar, of many Hundred Weight.

If we consider in the next Place, the Element of Water, with the invaluable Uses and medicinal Tinctures thereof; together with the un-
unspeakable Variety of Fishes, which increase in Sholes, and grow up in different Sizes and Shapes, from the little Minny to the mountainous Whale.

And if at Length we come down to the Earth, and consider it as the common Promptuary of all Things living; with the many Beasts of Burden and Food, of Diversion and of Prey, that live upon it, from the little Mite which is hardly visible, to the vast Elephant, whose Bulk is terrible. If we consider withal the wisely proportionable Capacities of these Animals; for if the Horse had less Sense, he would not be fit to be our Servant; and had he more, he would be our Master. If the wild Beasts and Birds for Food had less Sagacity, they could not preserve their own Lives, so as to continue the Species; and if they were more subtile, we should never be able to catch them for our Use.

If we consider also the Vegetables of the Earth, we find that they abound in Virtue and Variety to such Degrees, that the ingenious Author of Micrography proves, by mathematical Proportion,
that one Kind of them exceeds some other Kinds in Size above Two Millions of Millions. The wife King of Israel, who wrote of them all, from the Hyssop on the Wall to the Cedar in Lebanon, performed a Work of unspeakable Use to Mankind, for one Leaf of which, a learned Physician of ours (Sir Thomas Brown) professed himself ready to part with his whole Library, which was very valuable. But after all, Solomon's Subject excell'd its Author, in the very Thing too, wherein he out-did other Princes, namely, in Splendour and fine Array; for a greater than Solomon hath affirmed, That that magnificent Prince, in all his Glory, was not array'd like the Lilly in the Field; or, as some explain it, the Tulip in the Garden. If we consider also those innumerable Creatures, with which almost every Leaf is plentifully stock'd, tho' they are not visible to us without the Assistance of proper Glasses: Every One of which very probably contributes its Mite toward the Accommodation of Man.
Serm. I. Being of GOD.

And if after all, we consider the numerous Kinds of Minerals and Fossils which abound in the Bowels of the Earth, with their various Uses and Virtues for the Benefit of humane Life; together with those Interpositions of marine Shells which are found among them all, which are so many Demonstrations of the Deluge, and consequently of the Being and Government of GOD: I say, whoever considers these Things with the proper Judgment of a Rational Being, cannot but cry out, in the highest Veneration of the Maker of all Things, as a wise Prince once did; O LORD! How wonderful are thy Works? In Wisdom hast thou made them all.

Let us now leave the Survey of the glorious Fabrick of the World, and come to the wise Government of it, which will afford us a Second Proof of the Being of a Deity.

II. The manifest Footsteps of an overruling Providence, by which all Things in the Heavens and in the Earth, are preserv'd and dispos'd for infinitely wise and good Ends, are another
The Certainty of GOD's Serm. I.

Demonstration of the Being and Perfections of a Supreme Director and Governor.

Can any One, that has the Use of Reason, conceive that the Sun and Moon, and the innumerable Hosts of Heaven, can be so exactly marshalled and marched, without the Command and Orders of some Great General? Can those Millions of living Creatures which abound in the Air, Earth, and Water, be so constantly subsisted and provided for, without the Care and Contrivance of some common Proveditor? Would not so large a Family as that of the whole World, very often want many Necessaries, did not their Heavenly Father provide for all the Members of it, filling all the Earth with his Plenteousness?

Who can consider the political Adjustment of Power and Interest in the various Nations, States, and Governments of the World, by which the greater Potentates are obliged in Interest to preserve the less, and by which the whole Administration of Worldly Government is admirably adjusted, except where the Sins of Men, by their Disorder, cause their own
own Punishment, which is still a further Evidence of a divine Providence. I say, who can consider this, without a forcible Inducement to admire and adore the infinitely wise and good Disposer of all Things, whose Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, and whose Kingdom ruleth over all? There is also a special Providence attending good Men, as legible to all the World in the admirable Administrations of divine Providence, as to Christians in the Holy Bible. The Accomplishment of Joseph's Prophetick Dreams by a long Train of dark Providences; the Deliverance of David when surrounded by his mortal Enemy, by the Invasion of the Land by the Philistines at that very Moment; and the righteous and reasonable Promotion of Mordecai the Jew, with the surprizing Disgrace and Execution of Haman his avowed Enemy, are Demonstrations of a watchful and tender Providence above, and serve as Clews to trace the wise and wonderful Footsteps of the Government of the World, thro' all its mysterious Windings and Turnings.
Of this the most prudent and virtuous Men of all Ages have been fully persuaded; which leads to the Third Proof of a Deity.

III. If we consult the Sentiments of the wisest and best Men of all Ages, in all Parts of the World, we shall find in them an unanimous Acknowledgment and Fear of a Supreme Being, who made them, and will call them to Account. We find many Philosophers, Statesmen, and Men of the best Parts and Learning, influenced by these Sentiments, and we find the same Impressions on Emperors, Princes, and great Generals: The former were too wise to be imposed upon, and the latter too great to be over-aw'd by vain Imaginations. Yea, we have seen and heard of many Persons of all Ranks, whose Sins have been so turned into Punishments by the Horrour of their Minds, that we cannot but look upon them, not only as Prefages, but as Introductions of a Judgment to come.

On the other Side, the same Power of Conscience comforts and cheers up the innocent Person, tho' under Injuries
juries and Aspersions, that he feels a Satisfaction which he cannot express, and would not part with for the whole World.

These present Evidences of a divine Superintendency are so general and so observable, that I cannot but be persuaded, that if any Person whatsoever did but take a true and full Account of the Good and Bad Purposes and Endeavours of his past Life, with the Favours and Rebukes of divine Providence that have attended them, he would often find himself stop'd and turn'd back from ill Purposes by an invisible Opposi-

tion, (in his first Applications to ill Courses) like Balaam in his Pursuit of the Wages of Unrighteousness; and as often animated and encouraged in the Ways of Virtue and Piety, more especially in his Sufferings for it, as St. Paul in his Shipwrack, by the comforting Voice of GOD, saying, Fear not Paul, for I am with thee.

I am afraid of being prolix on so growing a Subject, and will therefore only produce the Testimonies of those Two Domestick Witnesses of a Deity, which every Man carries about with him.
him wherever he goes, that is, his Body and his Soul. Behold not they live but know the 

IV. The Body of Man is such an admirable Piece of Mechanism, that the Lectures of Galen upon it, raised him up: we see, to a higher Pitch of Devotion, than we perceive in any of his other Discourses: And the ingenious Scharvon, descants on the Frame of a Man's Hand, fitted for so many various and excellent Uses, as a Miraculous in Nature. What shall we then say of the Eye, and all the curious Organs of our other Senses? What of the noble Palace of Thought in the Brain; and of the Laboratory of Life in the Heart? What of the regular Circulation of that noble Fluid, the Blood? returning back in just Seasons to the Fountain, to receive new Spirit and Life, by a new Reflection? To this, Solomon is thought to allude, when he describes the Approach of Death, as breaking the Wheel at the Cistern, (Eccles. XII. 6.) confounding, say, they, the Circulation of the Blood, and running the very Cistern, the Heart, that supplied it.
What can we in Reason conceive of the capillary Vessels in our Bodies, not so big as a Hair of our Head, and of other superfine Pieces of Workmanship appearing therein, by the Use of Microscopes, but as of the wonderful Works of GOD? So that every sensible Person will find himself constrained to cry out on this Occasion, with the Psalmist, (Psa. CXXXIX. 14.) I will praise Thee, O LORD, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Great and marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well. This properly introduces the other Witness of a Deity, which was the last to be considered.

V. The other Witness is a very noble One, our SOUL; of whose Original and Capacity no reasonable Account can be given, without the Supposition of a Deity. We find nothing in this visible World that has such noble Faculties and Operations, as the Soul of Man; that can reason and reflect, fore-see and recollect, meditate and abstract, as we ourselves can: Nor is it conceivable, that meer Matter can be wrought up to this
this Pitch of Rationality, because there is no Degree of it in Things meekly material. Man is surely something higher and better than a refined Stone, or a superior Mushroom. Besides, we find something of Religion connatural to Man; for though the learned Mr. Locke does not allow of innate Ideas of God in the Reasonable Soul, yet he affirms, that the Sentiments of a Deity are so agreeable to Reason, and so deducible from all Things that a Man beholds, that his Reason is prone to receive the Notion of a God, and to fall in with it upon the first Hint or Inquiry. This serves our Purpose as much as the Supposition of innate Ideas; for, if the Constitution of Man be so framed, that he can no sooner open the Eyes of his Mind, and think like a Man, but he discerns the Glory of his Omnipotent Maker, his Reason must as naturally conclude, that the highest Veneration ought to be given to infinite Majesty, the highest Affection to infinite Goodness, the greatest Fear to infinite Power, and the firmest Obedience to infinite Authority; and that it must be the best Improvement of
of humane Nature to resemble the Truth, Justice, and Beneficence of G O D, which is the Sum of natural Religion.

So that Religion is as true as our Faculties. If there be such a Thing as Reason, there is a G O D of infinite Perfection; for this is the Lesson that true Reason reads in every Page of the Book of Nature: And if there be an All-perfect Being who made us, we ought in Duty, in Interest, and in Honour, to love, reverence and serve this glorious Being, all the Days of our Life.

This proves the Atheist to be the most unreasonable Person in the World, like an Ape or a Baboon, which have only such a Likeness of Man as disgraces the Species: And therefore the best Philosophers of old allowed no better Title to the Followers of Epicurus, than the Swine of Epicurus's Herd.

The Principles of Atheism are also the most mischievous of any to humane Society; They loosen the Bonds of civil Government, and destroy the Foundations of humane Commerce and social Confidence.
The Certainty of GOD's Serm. I.

For, if a Man stands in no Fear of future Punishment, he may hope to escape the present by Privacy, or Power, or Flight; and so be prompted to do any Ill that serves his Lust or Passion.

The Atheist has also a very dark and desolate Sort of Life; for, being cut off from the common Succour of Man from GOD, his Fountain-Good, he stands alone in all the Shocks of this uncertain Life; and so, in any great Affliction, is crush'd by the Weight of it, and flees to those dismal Refuges, the Pistol, the Knife, or the Halter.

These were the Ends of those prime Patrons of Irreligion, Epicurus and Lucretius, as it is affirmed by Two ancient Historians: And the Two Modern Admirers of Lucretius, one of which translated his Book into English Prose, and the other into Verse, followed their Author in his sad Exit, the one by a Pistol, and the other by a Halter. And what must be the Portion of these Men in the other World, if, instead of Lucretius's Poetick Fancy of the Soul's vanishing into soft Air, they find St. Paul's Words
Serm. I. *Universal Government.*

Words true, We must all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, to receive according as we have done in the Body, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil? Here they'll find themselves at once deceived and undone for ever.

Let us therefore now make a few prudent and serious Reflexions on the important Matter before us: Since Atheism then appears to our Reason to be a most absurd Imagination in the Theory, let us ever abhor it as the most detestable Villany in Practice. If it be a Folly to think there is no GOD; it can be no less than a Phrensy to acknowledge a GOD infinitely righteous and holy, and yet insult his Laws and contemn his Threatnings; as a profess'dd Atheist once replied to a Person of corrupt Morals that exclaim'd against the Absurdity of his Principles.

Atheism is indeed most vile and execrable, both in the Speculation and the Practice: And on both these Accounts, we are in extreme Danger at this Day; to wit, by Reason of that speculative Infidelity which is abetted by Persons of no mean Rank and Parts, and by the practical Infidelity of
The Certainty of GOD's Serm. I.

of those who own better Principles.
All this too, under the brightest
Beams of divine Light.

May the infinite Mercy of GOD prevent the pernicious Consequences of these portentous Evils, by our speedy and general Amendment. And to this End,

May the Holy Scriptures regain their just Authority over the Minds and Manners of Men; and may every Thing that relates to the Great and Holy GOD, be treated with a distinguishing Reverence and Regard.

May the Glorious and Awful Name of Almighty GOD never be prophaned any more among Us. And may the intolerable Imprecation of Damnation, which is an implicit Atheism, never again be uttered in our Language.

May every One that is call'd a Christian, walk in the Fear of GOD all the Day long; demonstrating that there is such a Place and State as Heaven, by their apparent Conversation therein.

May
Serm. I. Universal Government.

May such Silence and Seriousness fill our Churches and Cathedrals, as may affect the Atheist himself, and constrain him to confess, that GOD is among us of a Truth.

May all prophane Plays and Pamphlets be banish'd from Us, with all trifling and jesting about Religious Matters: And may such an awful Veneration appear in mentioning the tremendous Name of GOD, as was observable in the Honourable Founder of these Lectures; whom I never observed to mention that Great and Holy Name, even in common Discourse, but with a most awful and observable Reverence.

In a Word, as the whole Earth is a visible Scene of the Goodness of GOD, may it ever be an universal Temple of his Praise.

I shall only add, that such as will not allow themselves Time to consider these great Things now, will have abundant Leisure, as well as Cause, to revolve them in their Minds with infinite Anguish and Regret, in the eternal World. May it please GOD, infinite in Mercy, to prevent this
The Certainty of GOD's, &c. Serm. I.

this irreparable Ruine of Men, by their timely Repentance, for the sake of Jesus Christ our only Saviour; to whom, with the Father and the Eternal Spirit, be all Praise and Glory ascribed evermore. Amen.

The Word to the wise is ready to be found, and to the simple a stumbling block.

SERMON

I shall only speak after this, as will last, though temporary. Time to call these things great persons, will have patience. Thou shalt, as to the name of the house, in which to publish, and to put the, in their order.

Go, therefore, to pray for me, that in the same things which I am about, I may not be given up to the reproach of them that reproach me.
Serm. II.

SERMON II.

The divine Light, Succour, and Comfort of the Christian Religion.

1 Corinthians I. 21.

For after that, in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.

HAVING remark'd, in a former Discourse on these Words, that whereas the Apostle of the Gentiles affirms here, that the Gentile World, by their best Wisdom, (or Philosophy) knew not GOD; he does not
not mean, that the Light of Nature is not able to discover the Being and prime Attributes of GOD; for he elsewhere affirms that it is, in Opposition to the Atheist. The invisible Things of GOD (faith he, Rom. I. 20.) from the Creation; (or ever since Men were created upon Earth) are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and God-head, so that they (the Heathens) are without Excuse:

We now come to consider what the Apostle doth particularly intend, and expressly declare in these Words; which is,

II. That many Truths, of great Importance to our present Peace and everlasting Happiness, are revealed in the Holy Scriptures, which could not be duly known by the Light of Nature; in Opposition to the Deist, and other Unbelievers. For, when in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom knew not GOD; it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.

We readily grant, that the Law of Nature is the Law of GOD. He who gave Man a rational Mind to
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

to know and consider the Infinite Perfections of his Maker, did by the natural Result of the same Reason teach and oblige him to esteem, reverence and regard that infinitely perfect Being in a supreme Manner. This is Natural Religion, namely, a comparing of the Nature of God and the Nature of Man together, by the best Light that human Reason gives, and a drawing of proper Conclusions from these Premisses. So that Natural Religion is as sure as our Faculty of Reasoning; and the natural Conscience of the Heathens did accordingly smite or cheer them, by very sensible Reflections, as they observed or disobey'd those Rules and Laws of their Minds.

But now, it must also be granted, that whatever was truly apprehended of God by Natural Light, is more clearly and fully known by the superinduced Light of Revelation. Yea farther, it cannot be denied, that many other Truths are revealed of God by way of Mercy and Succour to sinful Men, relating to their Pardon and Peace, Sanctification and Salvation, which could not
not be discovered by the Light of Nature in its highest Improvement. Yea, what is greater yet, there is a Divine Warmth as well as Light imparted to Men by the rising of the SUN of Righteousness: The Gospel is attended with a Power from on High, (Acts I. 8.) which influences the Practice of the Doctrines it reveals; being the Power, as well as the Wisdom of GOD unto Salvation: For thus it pleases GOD to save them that believe; that is, them that so firmly believe the Gospel to be the Will of GOD, as to make it the Rule of their Faith and Practice.

Hence it is, that those wise and learned Men of Old, who having thoroughly considered the Writings of the Heathen Moralists, were afterwards enlightened by the Christian Revelation, were filled with Admiration at the surpassing Excellency of this Divine Dispensation of the Gospel; crying out, with that Primitive Martyr S. Justin, This is the only true and safe Philosophy I ever found.

The Wisdom of this World, mentioned in the Text, is a False Wisdom,
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

or rather Wisdom fallly so called; as Laërtius proves at large, with a Force of Argument equal to the Sweetness of his Eloquence, in his Third Book of False Wisdom, Chapter the Fifteenth. *Nulla itaque Ratio, &c.* "There is no Reason (says he) "or Science or Law of good Life, "unless it be built on the only "true and heavenly Wisdom, (the "holy Gospel,) which hath been un- "known to the Philosophers. For "their terrane Knowledge being "false, may be various, multiform, "and contrary to itself: But as "there is one Maker and Gover- "nour of this World, GOD; so "there can be but one Source "of uncorrupt Truth; because "whatsoever is true and perfect, "must of necessity be uniform and "unmix'd. And in the Sequel of his admirable Discourse, he makes it clear and undeniable to the last Degree of moral certainty, that the Heathens could not by their utmost Study attain the true way of wor- shiping GOD, or reforming themselves in the inward Man.
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

The inspired Wise Man tells us, That the Spirit of Man is the Candle of the Lord, Pro. XX. 27. but it is no less than Madness to affirm, that these little Candles of humane Reason, tho' never so well snuffed by humane Prudence, and fed by humane Learning, can equal the Light of the glorious Sun of Righteousness.

This is demonstrated by the Apostle, 1 Cor. II. 14. The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discern'd. A Man in his natural Capacity cannot act above the Sphere of Humanity; and consequently cannot suitably know the sublimer Nature of Angels, much less of the Infinite GOD; any farther than he finds some Analogy to their Nature in his own, which can afford but a very maimed Conception of them at the best.

The Beasts, we see, have some degree of Reason, but yet they cannot have any just Idea of the Nature of Man, for want of a humane Spirit;
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

Spirit: Even so Man cannot truly know Divine Things, without the Inspiration of a Divine Spirit. And thus the Apostle argues, Ver. 11. For what Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man that is in him? Even so the Things of GOD knoweth no Man, (in his mere humane Capacity) but the Spirit of GOD.

So that all Men that are truly Godly, are inlighten'd and taught of GOD, Jo. 6: 45. They are supernaturally instructed; for GOD hath revealed his Will to them, by his holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 11: 10. We find a pious Prince praying earnestly for this, (Psal. CXIX. 18, 33.) Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold the wondrous Things of thy Law. Teach me, O Lord, the Way of thy Statutes. Give me Understanding, and I shall keep thy Law; with many like Expressions: By which we are taught, that some Degree of the Assistance of the same Spirit, which was extraordinarily dispensed for the inditing of the Holy Scriptures, are necessary to the true and saving Knowledge of them in every real Christian.

Hence
Hence it is, that we find the Spirit of Wisdom, of Light and Revelation, mentioned in the holy Gospel, as the Author of that Light and Knowledge by which Christians are distinguished from all others; and as the peculiar Gift of GOD in Jesus Christ, 1 Eph. I. 17, 18. That the GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him. The Eyes of your Understanding being inlightened, that ye may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints: And what is the exceeding greatness of his Power to us-ward who believe. Such Expressions as these are Paradoxes and Mysteries to the Adepts of the Wisdom of this World, and to every One that has not received Light from Him who is the Wisdom of GOD, in whom are hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, that is, JESUS CHRIST, the Light of the World, and Saviour of Men; Act. V. 31.
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

It is for this Reason, that the Wisdom of God frequently pours Contempt upon humane Understanding in its degenerate Estate, and upon humane Learning unassisted by Divine Light; affirming, that the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God, 1 Cor. III. 19. And that, not many Wise Men according to the Flesh, not many Rich, not many Mighty, are chosen, 1 Cor. I. 26. God was pleased to impower a few unlearned Fisher-Men, and Men of little Esteeem in the World, to instruct the most accomplish'd in Human Learning; and to shew all Men their chief Good, and the true way to it. This was a Matter of infinite Importance to Men, because the whole Tribe of Philosophers had wrangled in endless Disputes and Amulements about it, and were not able to come to an Agreement in these two Points, which are the first Lessons of true Wisdom; namely, what is the chief Good of Man? And what is the direct Way to attain it? For in Truth, their most improved Notions never came up to the just Knowledge of God or Them-
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

Themselves, nor to those admirable and sure Methods for the Peace of their Minds, and the Happiness of their Souls, which the glorious Gospel doth most fully and clearly reveal.

I shall therefore make it the Business of my present Discourse, to manifest the Excellency of the Christian Religion, as founded on the Will of GOD revealed by his SON JESUS CHRIST; above that which is called Natural Religion, as founded on the Light of Nature. In order to which, I propose to manifest the Truth of these Three Assertions.

I. That the Christian Religion discovers many Truths, necessary to our Pardon and Peace, and to our Purification and Hope, which could not be found out by the Light of Nature, tho' they are of infinite Importance to us.

II. That the Christian Religion communicates supernatural Aids and Succours in order to the Reformation of Mens Hearts and Lives: by which such Improvements
III. That the Christian Religion lays such a solid Foundation of Comfort in all Conditions, and in the Approaches of Death, and thereby leads Men to such a State of Serenity and Peace in Life and Death, as no other Rules or Prescriptions can bring us to.

By the First of these Advantages Man is made more Wise, by the Second more Excellent, and by the Third more Happy, than he can possibly be, by any Improvements of Natural Light, or Humane Learning; which undeniably proves the Excellency of the Christian Religion above all other.

I begin with the first Prerogative of it; which is, That it discovers many Truths necessary to the Pardon and Peace, and to the Purification and Hope of Men, which could not be found out by the Light of Nature, or humane Learning. To prove this, I shall instance in several Things wherein it is verified.

I. The
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

I. The Nature and Attributes of GOD cannot be known by the Light of Nature, so far as is necessary to the present Peace and future Happiness of Men. The World by its Wisdom knew not God.

For here we should know, not only that there is but One GOD, but also in what Way he may be worshiped acceptably; and how he may be served according to his good Pleasure. We should also know, how he may be reconciled and render'd Propitious, when we have offended his Infinite Majesty, and provoked his consuming Wrath.

But instead of proper Instruction in these great Points, what abominable Notions and Rites do we find in the Doctrine and Worship of the best of the Heathens!

The Romans, about the Time of our Blessed Saviour's coming into the World, enjoyed some of the most learned and eminent Philosophers that the Heathen World has produced. Their famous Cicero, who seemed to excel others in good Morals as much as in good Language, flourished a little before the Birth of our Blessed LORD; and
and their renowned Seneca, a little after his Death: Yet what a monstrous and absurd Miscellany was the Roman Theology at that time! They embraced all the Gods of the Countries they conquered: They worshiped above Three Hundred Jupiter's; and of inferior Deities, they had a whole Turba Deorum & Deorum; as I may so term it, a perfect Mob of Gods and Goddesses. And all these were worshiped by senseless Idols, which debased the Venerable Notion of the invisible God; and in filthy Rites, which overwork'd the Foundations of Virtue. For, as the Apostle reproaches them, they changed the Glory of the Uncorruptible God into an Image like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and Four-footed Beasts, and creeping Things, Rom. I. 23. So that here, their Philosophers, who were accounted Wise Men, betrayed their shameful Folly: as the Apostle goes on; professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools; and that in Things of the most momentous Consequence.

Again, what a Reproach was it to learned Athens, the other famous Seat
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

Seat of Humane Learning in those Days, that they should erect such a glaring Monument of their Folly, as that of an Altar in the open Streets dedicated to the Unknown GOD! On which Account St. Paul demonstrates the gross Ignorance of their chief Philosophers to their very Beards at Areopagus; telling them, that they felt after the Almighty GOD, like People groping in the Dark, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, tho' he be not far from any of us; Acts. XVII. 27.

What a base Subject was Hesiod's Theogonia, which gave an Account of the Genealogy of their Gods; wherein he shews where some of their Gods were born, where others died, and where some others did many foolish and unseemly Things!

These gross and impious Absurdities in the Heathen Divinity brought the learned Justin, afterwards Surnam'd the Martyr, into great perplexity (as he afterwards confessed) about this Fundamental of all Religion, the Knowledge of GOD. And whilst he was walking alone full of Thought and Concern about this
this grand Point, it pleased the Divine Providence to introduce a plain old Man into his Company, who in a private Conference convinced him of the Excellency of the Christian Religion, in which he was afterwards so stedfast, that he suffer'd Martyrdom for it. We find this Account of his Conversion related by himself in his Dialogue with Tryphon a Jew, about the 140th Year after Christ.

Tatian, who also lived about that Time, having been educated in humane Learning in the Schools of Athens, and afterwards instructed by Justin Martyr in the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, was so incensed against the Pagan Idolatry, that he derided the Deities of the Grecians in pungent Sarcasms; and fully expost their mistaken notions of Virtue. As to their Theology, he upbraids them with their Accounts of the Fights and Amours of their Gods, and other foolish Figments of their inverted Brain. And as to their Morality, he calls them \( \text{Αρριπτοποίοι} \) Men that did abominable Things, not fit to be mentioned,
mentioned, who, under a Pretence of Philosophizing, licensed many Vices under the Stamp of Virtue, and turn'd their Temples into Brothels. After which, he insults them with great Wit and Eloquence; and challenges them to shew any one eminent Advantage procured to Mankind by all their magnified Philosophers; or to produce one of them that seem'd to excel the rest, that did not abound in Pride and Arrogancy. He lays open the Secret Faults of Plato, Arristippus, Aristotle, and many other celebrated Philosophers; and declares, that Diogenes, notwithstanding his high Pretences to an abstemious Life, died of a Surfeit. Tert. in p. 7, 8.

To this Tertullian adds, that this same retired Philosopher lived unchastely with one Phrene, who often resorted to him: That Spencippus of Plato's School was Slain as Zimri, in the Act of Adultery: That Pythagoras did many tyrannical Things at Thurium, and Zeno at Priene. That Lycurgus made away with Himself, as not able to bear the Alteration of his Laws by the Lacedemonians: And
And to come to Socrates himself, to whose Character one is rather inclined to add, than detract, because he stood up bravely in Opposition to the Notion of many Gods; yet (says our Christian Apologist) he ordered his Friends to sacrifice a Cock to Esculapius for him a little before his Death; and all the World must grant, that he made a very mean and shifting Answer to his Judges, when they ask'd him concerning his Sentiments of their Deities: The Things above us, replied he, are Nothing to us: And it cannot be dissembled (says the learned Father before-named) that one Article charged upon him was the unnatural Sin of Sodom.

After all this, our zealous Apologist concludes thus: Where then is the Comparison betwixt a Philosopher and a Christian; when the One is a Trader in Fame, the other a Saviour of Souls; Between a Man of Words, and a Man of Deeds; Between a Destroyer of Virtue, and a Builder of it; Between a Dresler-up of Lies, and a Restorer of Truth; Between a Thief, and a Guardian of this sacred
The Di5ine Light, &c. Serm. II.


Chap. 47.

Lactantius, in his Second Book against Paganism, exposes the Heathen Idols, and the base Representations of their Deities: and proves that the Gods they adored were most of them Mortal Men, and many of them very wicked and profligate Wretches; instancing in Ganymedes and Antinuous, and reproaching the obscene Rites of their Worship.

But the Zeal, and Reasoning of St. Paul against the Heathen Idolatry is superior to all other: for he plainly demonstrated to the most learned of them the Monstrousness of their Theology, and the Madness of their Idolatry. And here, methinks, we may observe in St. Paul, a wonder not inferior to those special Miracles which GOD did by his Hands. For we behold this One Apostle, (tho' he himself owns that he had no good bodily Presence, nor a very graceful way of speaking) confronting and confounding both the Roman and the Grecian Philosophy, which was the Top of humane Learning then in the World; baffling all
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

all the Sects of their Philosophers and wisest Men; teaching them, as he would so many Children, the first Principles of Learning and true Knowledge.

Thus it pleased GOD to choose the foolish Things of the World, to confound the Wise; and the Weak Things of the World, to confound the Mighty, 1 Cor. I. 27. Yea, the base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath GOD chosen; yea, and Things that are not, to bring to nought Things that are: That no Flesh should glory in his Presence. For of Him are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us Wisdom, &c. Ver. 28, 29.

In a Word, the Notions of GOD among the Heathens were so low and base, and their ways of Worship so unsuitable and unseemly; that a Child of ours that is well catechized is able to explode the Falshood and Folly of them. For it is evident, that they sometimes offered up the Sacrifices of Men, and sometimes of their own Children, and sometimes used filthy Rites, not fit to be mentioned * which was indeed, as St. Paul says, to sacrifice to Devils. (1 E 2 Cor. p. 18.
The Divine Light, &c.  

Serm. II.

The most learned Heathens could not give any true or tolerable Account of the Origin of the World, or of the Order and Progress of the Production of it; and consequently, they did not well known the Ground of Man's absolute Dependence upon God, and of God's inviolable Right to Man's entire Service and Submission.

The Notion of a Creative Power, that could produce Things out of Nothing, was above the reach of their natural Conception; and whilst the great Aristotle thought it impossible to invalidate this grand Maxim, that Nothing can proceed out of Nothing, he fell into the absurd Notion of the Eternity of the World, which will be his perpetual Disgrace, being full of Contradictions. For it implies, that an Infinity can be increased daily and hourly; that a Thing which has Succession, had no Beginning; that there is such a Thing as infinite Number, that Things which Change every Day, are Eternal; that Causes and their
their effects, are both of them eternal, and consequently that one eternal is of longer duration than another, because the cause must of necessity be before its effect. Or if to shun this, they lay, that the world did not always consist of causes and effects, as we now see it; we reply, that thus they prove that the world was once another thing than it now is, and consequently is not eternal, because subject to changes and alterations.

Democritus and others saw the absurdity of this opinion, and set their brains to work to contrive a fanciful method of the world's beginning, which would be too ridiculous to be mentioned in this place, were it not that experience shews, that many have ruined themselves for ever by it. I mean the extravagant fancy of the forming of the universe, in the admirable order, harmony, and exactness in which we behold it, from a casual hit of innumerable atoms, which Democritus fancied to come by fate, and Epicurus by fortune. This, says the learned Cicero, is to fancy, not philosophize. We may
may say, it is to Dream, and to lay by all serious Judgment and Discretion. For they cannot tell us, how these Atoms came to have a Being, or how they began to move, or how they came to be differently shaped, or what occasioned their oblique Motion, to which they are not prone, and without which, they could not have met; or why some of them moved obliquely rather than the rest; or how the different Quantities of them came to be justly proportioned for such and such Productions; or how all Things in the World continue in such admirable Order without an Understanding Governor. The Legends of Rome, and the Fables of the Alchoran, have nothing more palpably Fabulous than this. But such as resolve to get loose from religious Restraints (which Lucretius freely owns to be the Bottom of the Design) and to set up for Licentiousness, will take any Occasion for it, be it never so absurd. A mere Fiction shall serve to put by the Thoughts of a Righteous GOD, and a Romantic Story shall be made use of to stop the Mouth of a Conscience that
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

that proclaims a future Account in Mens Ears.

The Wit of Des Cartes, who dres'd up this Dream with many Flourishes of ingenious Fancy, has undone many. It is evident, that Spinosa took the Hints of his Atheistical Principles from this French Philosopher. But Des Cartes was too discerning to believe it in Spinosa's Length. He plainly affirms the Being of Almighty God, and grants that He gave Being and Motion to all Things in Nature. But here we see the dexterity of some Modern Cartesians, who follow their Master where they think he leads them from God by some precarious Notions, but basely desert him when he brings them by true reasoning to own God's Being and Government.

But after all, the whole World cannot excuse Des Cartes in two Points. First, In that he renounces all Final Causes in God's creating the World : as if we might not say that the Glory of God was the End of the Creation. Secondly, In that he ascribes an undue Power to Matter alone when in Motion. For many Men...
Men have been led by the former Point to forget God, and by the latter, to exclude him. But both of these Errors are fully refuted, the former by the Honourable Mr. Robert Boyle, in his Disquisition about the final Causes of natural Things; the latter, by the learned Dr. Gudworth, in his Intellectual System; and by others.

Upon the whole: We cannot but say, that these fancifual Atomists have not dealt fairly by the World in setting forth their Books as a Scheme of Philosophy. They ought to have termed them the Sports of Wit, and Entertainments of Phantasy. Supercribing this running Tittle, A Fable of the Atoms that club'd together to compose the glorious Fabric of the Universe.

We see here, that the Heathens had no true Notion of the Origine of the World, and that their Followers are not able to support their feeble Conjectures in this Matter, tho' they have a Good Will to it.

But by Faith we learn, that the Worlds were made by the Word of God, so that the Things which are seen,
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

were not made of the Things that do appear. (Heb. XI. 10.)

III. We do not find in any uninspired Author any true Account of the Depravity and Misery of Mankind. It is very evident, that such Things as are Spiritually good, as the Image, the Love, and the Grace of God, are the greatest Happiness of Man, because they tend to the greatest Benefits, and these of the longest Duration that Man is capable of. How comes it then, that Men are generally adverse to these Things by natural Disposition, or rather Indisposition? Why are so many Persons very difficultly brought to serious Prayer to God, which is their greatest Privilege, and Advantage? Why are Men so prone to transgress God's Commands, since His Will must be owned to be the wisest and best?

The more judicious Sort of Heathens saw and lamented the universal tendency of Men to Vanity and Wickedness, and their Disregard of their chief Good; but were ignorant of the true Source of it. Both the

Peri-
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

Peripateticks and the Stoicks conceived that the chief Good of Man consisted in the perfect Exercise of Virtue; and the Platonists in being like God, which is all one: But all these complain'd of an invincible Anomalia, an irregular Sway in the Minds and Wills of Men, which render'd their Precepts of little Use to them; and Aristotle was so ingenuous as to confess, that he could only bring old People to observe his Morals; that is, such as were no longer able to prosecute their Lusts. But where was the Virtue of this?

Upon the whole Matter, it puzzled them to give a Reason, why Man, that has the noblest Faculties of any Being upon Earth, should be more averse to his chief Good than any of them? And why Multitudes of Men pursue the ways of their Destruction as industriously as a Bird or a Beast shuns them?

It was also difficult for them to assign a good Reason, why Man, that is undeniably the Superior Being in the whole visible World, should be more afflicted than any of the rest; and why a Person that is Sober and
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

Virtuous, many times suffers more Pain and Sorrow from Diseases, and other Accidents in his Life, than many Flocks of Birds, and Herds of Cattle. Especially, if to these we add the Anguish of a Man's Mind, which is the worst of his Case, and to which no visible Creature is liable, but himself. The Heathens call'd these humane Sufferings the Tributes of Life; but the Christians more properly, the Penances of Sin.

IV. We do not find in all the Pagan Volumes any Account of the Incarnation, Sufferings, and Mediation of the Son of God for Men: Which is the most comfortable Truth in the World, and the only ground of our Hope of Happiness beyond the Grave. They had no Knowledge of the Pardon and Justification of Sinful Men thro' the good Offices of a Mediator: Yea, the very Notion of a Man's being justified, when he was pardoned, could not but seem absurd to their natural Apprehensions. We see in the Text, that the Divine Method of our Salvation, which appeared to St. Paul (as it does to every inlighten'd Chri-
Christian) to be the admirable Con-
trivance of the only wise GOD, (v. 17. Tim. I.) was contemned by the
conceited Grecians as Foolishness; and
that, for two Reasons. First, because
they did not find the preaching of the
Apostles adorned with such a sort
of Eloquence and Rhetorick as was
in Vogue among them: And Second-
ly, because they preached Salvation
to Men by the Merit of a crucified
Messiah: As St. Paul shews, 1 Cor.
18. We preach Christ crucified, to the
Greeks Foolishness. Thus they tram-
pled on Pearls, because they knew
not the worth of them. As to what
is laid of the Writings of the Sybils,
the some few of the Fathers quoted
them, yet St. Augustine declares
his Dissatisfaction of the Truth of
them, in his Book of the City of God.
*Lib. 18. * Yea, he further adds (Chap. 47.)
That it is very credible, that all the
Prophecies relating to Jesus Christ,
that are not contained in the Holy
Scriptures, are forg'd! Monsieur Du
Pin presse this Matter upon the Con-
cidences of Christians with very
weighty Arguments, slighting the
Quotations made out of the Writ-
*Lib. 18. *
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

tings of Mercurius Trismegistus, Hystap-
pes, Lentulus, and Pilate; and the
Letters supposed to be written by
Seneca to St. Paul. It is true, Dr.
Parker and others are offended at
the giving away of these Heathen
Authorities from the Cause of Chri-
stianity, as if there were the Guilt of
the ancient Traditores in it. But the
Pillar of Truth needs not the pi-
tiful Prop of a Fiction, for GOD
hateth the Maker and Lover of a Lie:
And we do not find any clear Mani-
festation of Christ to the Gentiles in
Holy Scripture before that glorious
Epiphany, which is Annually celebrated
in the Christian Church; when a Star
led the Wise Men of the East, to the
Person of our Blessed Saviour (Matth.
II. 1.) before which Time, the Gen-
tiles are said to be a People that sat in Darkness, and in the Shadow of
Death. (Luk. I. 79.) Which is the
Point I am insisting on.

V. They had no Notion of any
way in which GOD would pardon
their Offences against him, that could
satisfy their Reason. Their natural
Light could shew them their Guilt,
but could not shew them a Remedy for it. They could not conceive a way wherein Infinite Justice could stoop to one Thought of pardoning Offences against his Infinite Majesty. The Sacrifices of Beasts could not in Reason be judg'd to be an Equivalent to the Execution of a Man for his Offences, in the Administration of Justice: Or if they had Hope that God would pardon them of his mere Good-Nature, as the Socinians imagine; how could they at this rate retain such venerable Ideas of God's perfect Righteousness and Majesty as are necessary to overawe Men into a Fear of Sinning against Him?

VI. The Sanctification of a Sinner by the Holy Spirit of GOD, which is the only way of attaining it, was a Thing foreign to their Notions by natural Light. The Spiritual New-Birth of a Person advanced in Years, was a Paradox to Jews and Gentiles. Nicodemus, a Master of the Jewish Learning, and one of the Sanhedrim, cries out, How can these Things be? And some of the Heathens, who were
were Masters too in their way, for bad Men to pray to their Gods to make them good; which was, they said, a lazy and hypocritical Sort of Cant; but that they ought to make themselves Good. Juvenal allows Men to pray for Health and Plenty, but is very Satyrical on such as pray’d for Amendment of Life, for that they ought to do it themselves. But what Hope could a vicious Person have of this, when their Rules for the Mortification of any Lust or Passion were utterly insufficient for that purpose.

They rather diverted or palliated the carnal Distemper, than crucified the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts. Their Catharticks were superficial, and never came to the Root of the Malady; which is indeed only to be laid in Regeneration, by the Spirit of GOD, and the Divine Gift of a new Heart.

VII. The Heathens had not any perfect Scheme of moral Rules for Piety and good Manners, and those they had were not carried up to a due Pitch of Virtue by the Principles of Love, Trust and Obedience to GOD.
GOD. They never taught it to be a general Duty to love Enemies, and to deal kindly by such as did them Wrong. They allowed Polygamy, and nourished Pride and Vain-Glory as proper Incentives to Virtue and great Actions; the Subduing of which is the first Lesson in true Virtue and Religion. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross daily, Luke IX. 23.

And then as to the interior Acts of the Soul; the Adultery of the Eye, the Murder of the Heart, and such Enormities as were unseen by Men; they were little regarded. As Piranho, that Adept in Stoicism, is said to have replied to his Sister, when she reproached him for being in Passion: It is not worth my while, said he, to keep up to my Principles in the Presence of so mean a Person.

VIII. Lastly, they had no Certainty of the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of a future State. They had indeed general Notions of a future Life: Plato wrote for it; but in a very uncertain Manner; and Socrates died with some Expectation of it, but with great Doubts. For in this very .

Socrates
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

Socrates, who was evidently one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, we find what Obscurity and Doubts lay on his Mind, as to this very Point. He confess'd his Uncertainty of the Matter to his Friends, the Night before his Execution; and his great Comfort was, that if there were no Life to come, he could not be miserable after Death; but if there was, that he should enjoy the Society of Palamedes and Ajax, and other excellent Men, he had known or read of. We also see with what Doubtfulness Cicero, Seneca, and the best Heathen Writers, treat of this Subject.

Now, the Doctrine of the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of the other World being the chief Support of Virtue, and the strongest Barrier against Vice, the Heathens wanting this, were very unhappy in this Respect, and in the other Points before-mentioned, for they nearly concern the Peace and Bliss of all Men.

Now since all these Eight Particulars are either the necessary Means or Method of our Salvation; and since none of these can be duly known
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

by our Natural Light; We may hence undoubtedly infer, that no mere humane Learning can be sufficient to make us good and happy.

But on the other Hand; Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, with all the necessary Directions to attain it: And not only so, but we find there such Supernatural Assistance as enables Men to perform what they are taught to be their Duty; which is the Second Prerogative of the Christian Religion, in which I am constrained to be very brief.

II. The Christian Religion communicates Supernatural Aids and Succours, in order to the Practice of what it teaches; by which such Divine Improvements are made upon humane Nature as cannot be attained by any other Means. Thus it pleases GOD to save them that believe.

The Holy Gospel comes in the Demonstration of the Spirit and with Power; And the principal Grant of the Gospel Covenant, in which it excels that of the Law, is, that GOD will
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him; to succour and affiit them in all Things necessary to their Spiritual Life: And that by this Divine Power, he will put his Laws in Mens Minds, and write them in their Hearts, Heb. VIII. 10. i. e.

He will fix them as Principles in the Souls of Men, and will make their Minds and Hearts agreeable there-to.

This is the most honourable, and most happy Change that can be wrought upon humane Nature. When a Man comes to make his Duty his Delight, and to take Pleasure in submitting his Will to the Will of GOD. This is effected by the Grace of GOD which bringeth Salvation, and teacheth us to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in this present World. Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great GOD and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Tit. II. 11, 12,) Which leads us to the last Excellency of the Christian Religion above all other; viz.

F 2 III. That
III. That it lays such a solid Foundation of Comfort in all Conditions, and in the Approaches of Death, and thereby leads us to such an honourable and comfortable State, in Life and Death, as no other Ways or Rules can possibly bring us to.

While we keep to those Directions, which we are assured are the Will of God revealed for our Salvation, as the Text affirms, we know that we are safe; and that we enjoy the Favour of the Governor of the World, who will make all Events work together for the Good of them that love him: Who will direct us in all our Doubts, comfort us in all our Tribulations, supply all our Wants, and after a little while, will finish our Labours, and receive us to everlasting Rest. This is the noble Life, and blessed Death of the true Christian: For so it is written (Isa. LIV. 13.) They shall all be taught of GOD, and great shall be the Peace of his Children. So that whilst the Atheistical Profligate, and the unbelieving Naturalist walk on from a dark State here, to utter Dark-
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion. 69

Darkness for ever: The Faithful Christian passes on from Glory to Glory:
From a State of Hope, which affords a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory,
according to our present Capacity;
to a State far more capable of glorious Manifestations and Communications from GOD, and from the Lamb for ever.

Let us now apply these Things briefly to our Practice.

I. We may, in the foregoing Particulars, see the infinite Blessings of the glorious Gospel: and be assured, that it is the chief Wisdom of Man to walk by this Heavenly Light, rather than by humane Imaginations, which are a Sort of Meteors of Earthly Extraction. The Entrance of GOD's word giveth Light, it giveth understanding to the simple, (Psal. CXIX. 130.) So that a well-instructed Christian may say, I know more than the Ancients, because I keep thy Precepts. (Psal. CXIX. 100.) We may learn more in the Church of Christ in one Sermon, than in attending many Years on the Schools of the Philosophers. So that it would be the
The Divine Light, &c. Serm. II.

worst of all Calamities to be deprived of the Light of the Gospel. Those poor Souls would be involved in horrible perplexity, that were to search among the wrangling Philosophers for every step they were to take towards everlasting Life. If the People of Old cried out, It were better the Sun should not shine, than that Chrysostome should not preach: We may add, it were better to be deprived of common Bread, than of the Bread of Life, the Manna that came down from Heaven.

II. We may hence learn, that such as neglect the Seasons of the Ministration of God's holy Word and Sacraments, are Enemies to their own Souls in their chief Interests. They that choose to spend the Lord's-Day in Idleness or ill Company, rather than among the Worshipers of God, and Hearers of his Word, will be confounded at last, when they shall consider with Regret and Anguish of Mind, that this was the way whereby it pleased GOD to save them that believe. Then the indecent Scoffs they have cast on the Ministers of the Gospel, as the

Greeks
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

Greeks in the Text did, will fall upon themselves, and they will own, that the Foolishness mentioned in the Text, did more properly belong to the Despisers, than to the Preachers of Salvation. The Ministers of the Gospel are the Messengers of God, and the Stewards of Christ, and their Message relates to the present and eternal Welfare of Men, and the Consequence of respecting or despising their Message will seal up the perfect Happiness or remediless Misery of every One of us: So that the Ministry of sacred Things cannot be despised till Religion and the Kingdom of God are.

And it is by this Order of Men, however despised, that Religion is kept on Foot in the World. The Good God make every one of them Examples of all Christian Duty to their Flocks, and cloath his Ministers with Righteousness, and his Priests with Salvation. They are call'd Angels from their Office, as being sent from God; may they ever be as like Angels, as this present State admits, in Purity and Zeal for GOD, and in a Proneness to good Offices towards Men.
III. We here see the Reason of the too little Efficacy and Progress of the blessed Gospel: Which is that which makes one of the most mournful Complaints of all serious Christians, viz. because of the general Want of true Faith. Too many want that Faith which is the Evidence of the Promises and Threats of the Gospel, those Things not seen as yet, and the substantial esteem of Things hoped for thereby. It is our extreme Unhappiness, that we have too many Instances of pleading and scoffing Infidelity; and that Rudeness which shews it is brought into the Christian Assemblies for Devotion. These Persons must be saved from their Unbelief, or they cannot enter into GOD's Rest. They dare not, for any Inducement, put their Hand into the Fire on their Hearth for a few Minutes, because they feel the Smart of so doing; but they dread not, because they believe not, the Fire that never can be quenched.

Did People consider every Line in their Bibles, as the Word of Him that cannot lie, they must, with the Psalmist, stand in awe of GOD's Word; and be most seriously reverent when they
Serm. II. of the Christian Religion.

they hear it preached; for tho' it be published by the Voice of Man, it is the Word and Will of GOD.

But this will not profit except it be mingled with Faith in them that hear it, for it pleaseth God, says my Text, to save them (that is, them only) that believe: Which GOD grant to us all, thro' the Merit of Jesus Christ his only SON, to whom with the Father and the eternal Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.
SERMON III.

Of the Truth of the Holy Scriptures.

Joh. VI. 68, 69.

LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life: And we believe, and are sure, that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living GOD.

HAVING already considered the Evidences of GOD’s Being and Attributes by the Light of Nature, and the more clear and full Display of them by the Beams of Revelation: We come now to consider upon what Grounds...
Grounds we believe that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, and his Gospel the Word of GOD. Now, blessed be GOD, we have as full Evidence of this as the Case can bear, and therefore as great as any one can in Reason desire. For we do not embrace the Christian Faith on the probability of bare Conjectures; or on the precarious Opinions of Men; but we have a Faith which is the Evidence of Things not seen, and the Substance of Things hoped for. Yea, we have a Plerophory and full Assurances of Hope, as St. Peter confesses in the Text; Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life; And we believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living GOD.

We find in the Verses before the Text, that some who had professed their Belief in Christ for some Time, did afterwards quit their Profession, and desert their Master, on the Account of some Expressions in his Doctrine, which they could not reconcile to their Reason. It was the Doctrine of eating the Flesh of Christ, and drinking his Blood, which they
they thought a barbarous and impracticable Thing; taking it in the wrong Sense, as the Romanists do, that is, the literal. But our blessed Saviour kindly corrected their Mistake, and told them that they must take these Words of his in a Spiritual Sense. (Ver. 63.) That he meant, they should receive Him as the Messiah, with as earnest and craving a Desire as any hungry and thirsty Person takes his Meat and Drink. But there is a Perverseness in the Corruption of Humane Nature. Many that are once disgusted to a Thing, are with difficulty brought to a Temper fit to receive Instruction.

It is said, (Ver. 66.) From that time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.

We have still some Persons, (O unhappy Case!) that object the same thing against the Christian Religion; namely, that it suits not their Reason, or rather indeed, their Appetites; and so they fall into a ruinous Apostacy. But I would beseech such, in the Bowels of Jesus Christ, to consider these Words of the Text; LORD, whither shall we go?
Serm. III. *Holy Scriptures*

30. Let them, before they flight or quit the Christian Faith, consider where they can do better. We challenge all the World to produce any Way of Life that is in it self more excellent, or has a greater Recompence of Reward; or that has any ground of Hope, that is more reasonable and sure, than that which is recommended by the blessed and glorious Gospel.

But the Truth of this is what they call in Question, and we are as ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in us; desiring only one Thing, which they cannot well deny us, that is, that they will be satisfied with a reasonable Proof of it. For we have, as the Text implies, such Reason for our Belief, that we are sure that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living GOD, and that his holy Gospel contains the Words of Eternal Life: i.e. the sure Directions and Aids that God has given to Men in order to everlasting Happiness.

We must here note, that St. Peter’s Confession of Christ, as the Son of the Living GOD, implies his believing him to be the begotten or co-essential Son of the GOD of all Life, that is, GOD
The Truth of the Serm. III.

GOD of GOD: Otherwise his Faith had not come up to that which Christ affirmeth of Himself: For he said, He had Life in Himself, and a Power to give Life to as many as he pleased, (Jo. V. 26.) and so he was that Eternal Life and vitality by whom the World was made, and now is the Life and Light of it. (Jo. I. 3, 4, 5.)

And by Him all Things consist, Col. I. 17.

This is the Account given of our Blessed Saviour in the Gospel; and we now come to shew upon what Grounds we believe this to be the Word of God, and how we come to be sure that these are the Words of Eternal Life.

In order to this, we must premise, that there are Three Sorts of Certainty or Assurance, according to the different Natures and Circumstances of Things.

I. There is a physical or natural Certainty, which depends upon the Evidence of Sense. As that I see such or such a Colour, or that I hear such or such a Sound: Which no
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

Body questions, where the Organ, the Medium and the Object are rightly disposed.

II. There is a Mathematical Certainty, about which no Man in his Wits can raise Scruples. As that Twenty are more than One: And that a Man's Finger is less than his Whole Body.

III. The Third sort of Certainty is that we call Moral, in which the Evidence depends upon a due Connexion of Circumstances and Cleanness of Testimony; and when these fully agree, the Thing will appear so certain and evident, as not to admit of any reasonable Doubt. As, that there is such a City as Rome, because we hear it affirmed by many People, that we have no Reason to suspect of Fraud, who assure us, that they have been there, and have had Commerce and Conversation in it. And that there was formerly such an Emperor there as Julius Caesar, (tho' it was before the Days of our Saviour) and that he wrote the Com-
Commentaries which pass under his Name: Because the Historians of those Times have left it upon Record, and no one has ever disproved it since.

This affords a Certainty, in common Sense, so great, that all the World would think him a Fantastick Fellow, next to a Fool or a Mad-Man, that should disbelieve these Things, or so much as call them in Question.

Now, we have far greater Evidence, that the Christian Religion was founded by Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and that GOD confirmed the same by miraculous Signs and Deeds; with many other Evidences. Insomuch, that tho' a prejudiced, or a vicious, or a vain Man may raise needless Scruples about it, yet a good and wise Man may comfortably say; I believe, and am sure, that Jesus Christ came forth from GOD, and that the Gospel of Christ is the Word of Eternal Life.

This is a Sort of Certainty that is proper to Religion: The Nature of the Thing depends very much upon the Truth of Matters of Fact (such as
as, that there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, celebrated for his strict Life and mighty Deeds. That he was born in the Reign of Augustus Caesar, and crucified under that of Tiberius. That several of his Followers preached and wrote of Him and his Doctrine, did many marvellous Works in his Name, and laid down their Lives in Confirmation of the Truth of what they said and wrote. With other things of like Importance; in which, if the Sacred Revelation which we embrace has but common Right done it, we shall soon come to a just Evidence of the Point before us.

In order to this, let us consider the following Arguments.

I. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, our adored LORD and SAVIOUR, appears to be the Will of GOD revealed for the Salvation of Men, by the unparallel'd Excellency of its Doctrine.

II. By the exact Completion of many ancient Prophecies relating to it.

III. By the Divine Power and Goodness, which appeared in the Miracles that attested it.

IV. By
The Truth of the Serm. III.

IV. By the vast Cloud of credible Witnesses that have attested it, by all the Ways that any thing can be testified.

V. By the marvellous Efficacy, Progress and Continuance of this Doctrine by Means in themselves insufficient to attain such Ends: Which therefore demonstrates the Assistance of a super-natural Power.

Here is a Complication of many kinds of Evidence together, for our full Assurance in a matter of such Importance. Here is both Divine and Humane Testimony; here is both inward and outward Evidence: sufficient to satisfy the most searching Inquiry: which we therefore recommend to every One that is capable of it; for our Religion never appears with greater Advantage than when it is set in a true Light.

I must here premise, that the Christian Religion, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are the same Thing. We embrace nothing as an Article of our Faith, or as necessary to Salvation, but what is contained in the Holy Scriptures, or evidently inferred therefrom,
from, as our Church declares in her Sixth Article. And according to this, the excellent Chillingworth cries out to the Popish Adversaries of this Truth: The Bible, the Bible is our Religion: No more, nor no less: Prove me any thing out of this Book, and I will embrace it with both my Arms: But I will rather lose my Life, than yield to any Thing contrary thereunto.

This is certainly the most prudent Resolution that can be taken, if the Bible be indeed the Word of God, which we now come to prove.

I. From the Divine Excellency of its Doctrine. This is the Foundation of all subsequent Proofs; For if the Gospel is not Holy, Just and Good; and altogether worthy of God in the Matter of it, nothing can prove it to come from GOD. But here we have all the Evidence that the Thing will bear. We see Rays of Divine Glory darting forth in every Page of the New-Testament, or (as Foreign Divines term it) the New-Covenant. Our Holy Bible is absolutely the Best Book in the World, and some part of it the most Ancient. It contains the most
important Truths, the most sublime Mysteries, the most improving Do-

crines, and the most perfect Morals that ever were published to the

World; together with the most sure Prophecies, the most bright Example, the

most powerful Persuasive, and the most Divine Aids; And with all the most

constraining Motives, the most heavenly Consolations, and the most aw-

ful Rewards and Punishments. It is a plentiful Magazine to supply all our

Spiritual Wants. If we are in never so great Doubts, there is something

in this Book, that is able to give us Counsel; if we are in any Darkness,

here is a sufficiency of Light; if in any Trouble, here is abundant Consola-

tion. In a Word, it is a Book worthy of God, and infinitely advantageous
to Men.

No Book in the World is so free from Error, as the Christian Bible. Here are the pure Streams flowing from the Fountain of Eternal Truth. No Book tends so fully and effectually to the Reformation and Improvement of humane Nature. In the Writings of the Heathen Philosophers, we have, as the learned Morna observes,
Serm. III. **Holy Scriptures.** observes, in one Century perhaps one Truth, and must wait till another Century for an Other: So that we have a Thousand Errors for one Truth, as *Amyraldus* complains. And if we consult their Poets, who were their Teachers too we find, a Rhapsody of Folly and Impurity, not to be endured. But in our Bible we find everywhere very excellent Doctrines relating to GOD and Ourselves, which cannot be discovered by the Light of Nature; with this great Satisfaction, that all the Malice in the World has not been able to find out one Untruth, or one unsound Doctrine, in the whole.

There are Two Things, which clearly demonstrate the Divinity of the Gospel from the more intrinsic Excellency, and unparallel’d Worth of the Doctrine itself.

The first is, in that it directly and connaturally improves and perfects the Moral Law, which is founded in the Nature of Man corresponding with the Nature of GOD. For since this Law was first written by the Finger of God, and was greatly demolished by Man’s Apostacy; there was

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no Hand, but that which first formed it, that could repair and restore it to its primitive Perfection. When the Two Tables of this Law engraven in Stone were broken, Moses could hew Two Tables of Stone like the former, but it was GOD alone that could write the same Words again upon them. How much more evidently must it be the only Work of God to write these Laws in the wicked Hearts of Men, contrary to their Lufts and corrupt Propensions, and to their violent Passions and Prejudices: And consequently, none but GOD can make good that Article of the New-Covenant, (Heb. VIII. 10) Of putting his Laws in our Minds, and writing them in our Hearts. And therefore GOD says, I will do it.

We see in the Gospel, particularly in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, what vast Advances and Improvements are made upon the Moral Law by Jesus Christ. For there the Moral Duty of acknowledging the true GOD, laid down in the First Commandment, is exalted to the Pitch of loving God with...
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

all our Heart and Soul, and Might, and Strength. The Moral Laws relating to our Duty to Men, are carried up to as true a Love to them as to our selves. So that we must be so far from shedding his Blood, that we must not give him a reviling Word, or harbour an Ill-wish towards him; but must in all Affairs deal by him as truly, and as kindly, as we would have him deal by as were we in his Cause.

Now, where these exalted Rules are so written in a Man's Breast, as to be the manifest Principles of his whole Life, after such a State of Degeneracy and Apostacy, as Men are fall'n into; this is without doubt as true a Demonstration of the Divine Power and Goodness, as any thing of this Nature can be. We are all satisfied, where we see a Child endued with Reason, that he descended from Rational Parents; and we have, I conceive, the same Reason to conclude, that the Person that is freed from the Prevalency of Sin, and lives according to the Divine Rules of the Gospel in Heart and Life, is born.
born of GOD, being renewed by his Holy Spirit. His Divine Temper shews him to be a partaker of the Divine Nature.

There have been, and doubtless now are, some particular Artists in various Sorts of Works, (as in Painting, Writing, and the like) who have so excelled others, that their Labours have been at first sight readily distinguish'd from all others; insomuch, that no other Hand could restore any of their Works, when any wise impair'd, to their original Beauty and Perfection. This is so well known in Painting, Sculpture, and other Arts, that it is undeniable. And by the same Reason, in a higher Instance, we may and must conclude, that the Repairs of Humane Nature by the Gospel, being so exactly correspondent with the first Lines of Morality drawn upon it by God in Man's Creation, are done by the same Hand. So then since none could be the Redeemer and Restorer of Men, but he that was their Creator; and since our Lord Jesus Christ does by his Gospel, effectually reimpress the Image of GOD upon Men, in true
Serm. III. *Holy Scriptures.*

in true Righteousness and Holiness; we may say, by this we believe and are sure, that He came forth from GOD, and that He only hath the Words of Eternal Life.

The Second Evidence of the Divinity and unparallel'd Excellency of the Gospel is, That it supplies us with the Revelation of those supernatural Truths which we extremely wanted, and which we could not have elsewhere. We have here an unparallel'd Method of Relief to such as find themselves under the Displeasure of the Almighty God; the just Sense of which is a Burthen intolerable. We see with what tender Affection, these broken Hearts and wounded Spirits are reliev'd in the Gospel, wherein the weary and heavy laden are kindly invited to come to a tender Saviour, with a Promise, that they shall find Rest. Here is the Antitype of the Cities of Refuge. What a Sacrifice for Sin is here made to the Righteous GOD! We find the Writers of all Nations and all Ages have continually harp'd upon a Sacrifice for Sin, but could never hit on it, but here it shines in its Brightness
The Truth of the Serm. III.

ness. What a Price is here paid for the Redemption of Men sold under Sin and Satan! It at once amazes and satisfies our Souls. The Gospel is like that happy Wood that Jonathan enter'd into, when he was faint and ready to die with Heat and Hunger; in which he found a cool Retreat, and such Plenty of Honey dropping from these Trees of Life, (as I may term them) as reviv'd his Spirits, and saved him from Death. Thus the Soul that is pressed by the Weight, and pursued by the Guilt of his Sins; and is even parched with the Desire of Happiness, and grown faint by the long Expectation of Relief; coming at last to the Blessed Gospel, he finds in every Page the Leaves of the Tree of Life that are for the healing these spiritual Sores. He there finds the Great and Terrible GOD, whose Displeasure had almost distracted him, sitting on a Throne of Mercy, and holding forth the golden Scepter to him; and, what increases his Consolation, he sees a merciful and acceptable Mediator sitting at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High. He there also finds a most
gracious Covenant with God, suited to his Infirmities; which promises Pardon to the penitent Believer in Jesus Christ, for the sake of the perfect Righteousness that was in this Saviour of Men, and of his meritorious Sufferings in their Behalf. And that they may be able to live up to the sincere Holiness required in this Covenant, they have the Grant of divine Support, Succour, and Assistance by the All-sufficient Spirit of God; who will be no less a Comforter than a Helper of all that sincerely enter into the Bonds of this Covenant; and will be as a Seal upon them, by the inherent Holiness he produces in them, thereby consigning them to everlasting Happiness.

This fills the utmost Cravings of an immortal Soul, and gives entire Relief to the wounded Spirit. That one Verse of the Gospel, (Luk. IV. 18.) surpasses all the humane Writings in the whole World: Where it is written, The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted to preach Deliverance to the Captives,
The Truth of the Serm. III

and recovering of Sight to the blind, to set at Liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable Year of the LORD. This is mentioned, as prophesied of our Blessed Saviour by the Prophet Isaiah, and as repeated by our LORD himself, in whom they were fulfilled, as he testifies (Ver. 21.) This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears.

I say then, since the blessed Gospel administers to us such supernatural Truths and Succours, as no other Book in the World ever did; and darts forth such divine Beams of Light and Love, as could not proceed from any, but the infinitely wise and good GOD: I am not more convinced that the Light of the Sun is more clear and excellent than that of the Moon, or of a Taper; than that the Bible excels all other Books, by a Glory of divine Light and matchless Excellency of Doctrine; and is therefore properly called the Book of GOD.

I now pass on to the Second Evidence of this.

II. The Gospel appears to be the Word of God, by the exact Accomplish-
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

Punishment of the many ancient Prophecies, relating to it. For the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy, (Rev. XIX. 10.) The whole System of Prophecies in the Old Testament, are punctually fulfilled in the New: what the one utters in Prediction, the other declares in Fact; and the Two Volumes agree as exactly as a pair of Tallies struck in the same Hand. The Prophecies concerning the Messiah were some of them of about Four Thousand Years Date before they were accomplish'd. They began at the Time of Man's Apostacy and Expulsion from Paradise, after which all the Hope of humane Happiness depended on the Promise of a Saviour, who, as a second Adam, or general Head, should repair the sinful and miserable Condition brought upon Mankind by the first Adam. In order to this, GOD was pleased to promife to enable the Seed of the Woman to bruise the Head of the Serpent, and to frustrate all his Envy and Malice against Man's Happiness.

After this, GOD was pleased to inspire a long Train of Prophets, who by degrees, foreshew'd the full Design,
The Truth of the

sign, Temper, and Office of the Messiah, the Divinity as well as the Humanity of his Nature, with all the material Circumstances of his Conception, Birth, Life, Doctrine, Contempt, Abuses, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Intercession, and sending the Holy Ghost; with the Deportment of the Jews, Gentiles, and his Disciples towards him. Yea, the very Times of his Birth and Death were so punctually foreshewn, that a Jewish Rabbi, Nechumias by Name, is said to have declared to the World, Fifty Years before the Birth of Christ, that the coming of the Messiah could not be prolonged above Fifty Years, according to the Prediction of the Prophet Daniel. The learned Grotius quotes two Authorities for this, one out of the Jewish Talmud, under the Title Sanhedrim; the other out of Abenada upon Daniel. At last the Prophet Malachi, who was the last of the Jewish Prophets, foretold the sending of St. John the Baptist, as the Messenger that was to usher in the Messiah in the Spirit of Elias: And with this eminent Prophecy, he closes the Canon of the Old Testament. And
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

And with the fulfilling of this Prophecy in the Zealous Baptist, the Evangelists begin the New Testament, and to relate regularly on to the accomplishment of all the rest.

Now, as this could not be imagined to be the contrivance of human Counsel, so it could not be effected by human Power; but is plainly the Work of the great Creator of the World, whose are Wisdom and Might; and who has herein given Testimony to his Son, by bringing those Things to pass which he foretold by all his Prophets, which have been fulfilled since the World began: that we should be redeemed from the Hands of our Enemies, and be Partakers of the Salvation which he hath raised up in the House of his Servant David. And by what we have seen fulfilled, concerning the Events foretold in the New-Testament, concerning the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Self-Exaltation of the Man of Sin, and the general Decay of Christian Faith and Piety; we may be assured, that every Title of it will be fulfilled in its Season, whether it relates to this Life,
Life, or that to come. St. John speaks of the Appearance of Jesus Christ, the Judge of the World, as of a Thing already in View, as indeed to Faith it is, Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see Him, even they that persecuted him; and shall weep and wail because of Him, even so, Amen, Rev. I. 7. Let us always remember this, and we cannot do amiss. Thus much of the Second Proof of the Divinity of the Blessed Gospel.

We now come to consider the Third Proof of it.

III. From the divine Power and Goodness which was manifested in the Miracles that attested it. The Works that I do, said our Blessed Saviour, they bear Witness of me, (Joh. X. 25.) A Miracle is a Thing done, either contrary to the Course of natural Causes, or above the Power of natural Agency. So that it can only be the Work of GOD's Hand; who, as he gave certain Powers to the Creatures he made, so he can suspend, abridge, or extend them, as He pleaseth.
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

pleaseth. It must therefore be noted, that in the working of a Miracle God himself doth the Work by his own immediate Power. It is not a peculiar Permission of secondary Causes, but an extraordinary Effect of supernatural Power. Wherefore, when the Prophet foretold the miraculous Power that would attend the Appearance of Christ, to verify his Mission; he terms it the revealing or uncovering of the Arm of the Lord. To whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? So that every Miracle wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ did as fully declare Him to be the Messiah, which was the Thing it was to attest, as if a Hand had visibly pointed from Heaven upon him, attended with a Voice from thence too, saying; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him. Yea, the Attestation by miraculous Deeds seems to be more unquestionable than such a Voice from Heaven: For tho’ our Blessed Saviour’s Messiahship was twice thus proclaimed from Heaven, yet it is not mentioned in the Gospel as the Motive which induc’d his Disciples to believe on him, so much as the Miracles
Trutly of the Serm. III.

racles they saw him do. For St. John relating the Miracle of our Saviour's turning Water into Wine, remarks in the Close of it, *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.*

This, faith the learned Grotius, induced those judicious and learned Men, who liv'd near the Time of our Saviour's Miracles, to believe on him. Such as Sergius the Governour of Cyprus, Dionisius the Areopagite, Policarp, Justin, Ireneus, Athenagoras, Origen, with many others, who, living near the Time when these Things were done, could easily be satisfied of the Truth of these Reports; and finding them unquestionably true, they renounced the false Religions in which most of them had been educated, and became Worshipers of Jesus, and exhibited due Honour to him as GOD; tho' they could expect nothing in this World for so doing, but Reproach, Imprisonment, Loss of Goods and of Life. The Reason of which can be only this, that they were assured, as Nicodemus (one of the Jewish Sanhedrim) was, that
none could do the Works that Jesus did, but by the Power of God; and that it is impossible that God should assist an Impostor in a Design to cheat and destroy the whole Race of Man-kind, by giving Testimony to him in such a Train of unquestionable Miracles.

Moreover, these Miracles were too many to be mistaken, being wrought almost every Day by our Lord himself, and by his Twelve Disciples and his Seventy Missionaries. They were also too great to be counterfeit; such as the controlling the Winds and Seas, the healing of the most inveterate Diseases, and raising the Dead. They were done too openly to be an Illusion, being done before Thousands of Enemies and prejudic’d Persons. In the miraculous feeding of Thousands at once, it was impossible that there could be a Mistake in them all: And so in the raising of Lazarus to Life before many malicious Jews, who ran officiously with the Account of it to the Sanhedrim, who would be sure to search into it. And lastly, they served to introduce a Doctrine so Divine and Beneficent, that
that all impartial Reason in the World
must say, This is the Religion by
which it is the Pleasure of GOD to
govern and save them that embrace
it, and to reject and condemn such as
despise it.

There can be no Room for Suspi-
cion that any Diabolical Power could
raise a Man to Life, or give Sight to
one whose Organs of Sight were
ruined before he was born, and the
like. There stood up no Jannes or
Jambres to dispute the Original of this
mighty Power: The Devil did not so
much as pretend to a Power to do
the like. And we know, that if he
had Power, yet he had no Inclination
to do so much Good to Men. The
roaring Lion has no such Bowels of
Mercy; nor is the old Serpent so de-
finitude of Policy, as to favour a Do-
ctrine that undermines his Kingdom.
Our Saviour loosed those whom Satan
had bound, and exorcised those whom
many Devils had possess'd: And Satan
cannot be imagin'd to cast out, and
cast down, Satan.

I must not, tho' somewhat streaigh-
ten'd in Time, pass on without tak-
ing Notice of that special Miracle which
our
our Saviour made the decisive One, which was the raising of his own Body on the third Day after his Death. We find, that as our LORD laid a great Strefs upon this Sign, as the Anti-type of the Prophet Jonas, so the Jews remember'd it, and took all possible Care to seal the Sepulchre, and to set a good Guard of Soldiers to secure it. They were the more intent on this Issue, because our LORD had said several Times that he had Power to raise up his own Body. I have Power, said he, to lay down my Life, and I have Power to take it up again: Destroy this Temple, (said he, speaking of his Body) and I will raise it up on the Third Day. The Jews therefore took particular Care to get this Point cleared, being resolved to see whether this dead Man could raise himself, as evidently as he did Lazarus. And when, in the Consequence, this verily came to pass, with what a pitiful Lie did they sham it off? Truly, they bring the Soldiers to accuse themselves of failing in their Watch, and allow them to be good Evidences of what was done when they were asleep, by their own Confession.
The greatest Absurdities that could be imagined.

It is matter of Grief to see, that the modern Pretenders to Prophecy and to Miracles, have publickly traduc'd this decisive Sign of our Blessed Saviour's Messiahhip, to countenance (O horrible) the Failure of the Miracles, they promised as decisive Signs of their divine Inspiration; one of which was, the raising of the dead Body of Mr. Emm's, that had lain many Weeks in the Grave. This fail'd; and to make some Apology, they betake themselves to what I cannot but account a horrible Pitch of Impiety; namely, to say that our Saviour's Resurrection was not literally fulfilled; because he says: *As Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly, so shall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth.* Now they plead that our Saviour was not in his Grave any Part of the third Night, and therefore did not exactly keep to the Time prefixed, Which is plainly to make Sport for Infidels, and to say, that He, who is *the Truth itself*, did not speak truly. But *let God be*
be true, and every one that contradicts Him, a Liar. The Vindication is very easy and very clear, which is this.

The true Sense of any common Expression, is that which it bears in common Estimation. Now in all common Estimate, any Part of the Twenty Four Hours which make the natural Day, passes in Account for the whole of the Day. It is said, *And the Evening and the Morning were the first Day.* Hence the Hebrews call'd the natural Day an *Even-Morn,* and the Greeks *νυκτέριον:* which implies the daily Circuit of the Sun from one Point till it comes to the same Point again, including the Time it is beneath the Horizon, which makes the Night, as well as the Time it is above the Horizon, which makes the Day: Now any Time of this natural Day justly passes in the Number of Days for the whole Day and Night. For Instance, the Child that was born at Eleven of the Clock last Night, will be as truly register'd two Days old this Day; as the Child that was born Twenty Two Hours before. And the Man that died *yesterday Morning,* died *yesterday,* as truly as he that died
at Noon, or in the Evening. So our Saviour rising early on the First Day of the Week, had the proper Calculation of the whole natural Day, which contains a Day and a Night, and arose truly according to what he foretold.

And besides, the Words of our Saviour imply nothing more than that he would remain in the Grave three Days and three Nights, in the same Sense that the Prophet Jonah lay in the Body of the Fish, which, without doubt, was no otherwise so, than as fulfilled in our Saviour's Resurrection. As Jonas was, so shall the Son of Man be. And indeed, if Jonas had remained three full Days and three whole Nights, that is, three full Natural Days in the Belly of the Fish, he must have been cast forth on the fourth Day; and so must it have been in our Saviour's Resurrection, which would have been contrary to his Prediction. It is therefore to be hop'd, that no Person will continue in the gross Delusions of these false Modern Prophets, who have been so notoriously self-condemn'd, and who have been so fully disprov'd by so many Events
Events directly contrary to what they foretold.

On the contrary, the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles was so Evident, that neither Celsus nor Julian, those early and prying Enemies of Christianity, could disprove them, but did both of them grant, that divers Prodigies were wrought by him: And the Jews in their Talmud do openly confess the same. Had there indeed been any Question of those Matters, St. Peter durst not have made that Appeal to them which he did, Act. II. 22. Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of GOD among you, by Miracles, Wonders and Signs, which GOD did by Him in the midst of you, as ye your selves also know—— Him hath God raised up, having loosed the Pains of Death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. The Apostle here appeals to the very Crucifiers of our LORD, concerning what themselves knew of his Miracles wrought among them, particularly of his glorious Resurrection; alledging the impossibility of his remaining under the
the Power of Death. And these plain and pathetick Remonstrances of the Apostle's became effectual, thro' the Grace of God, to the Conversion of Thousands of Souls to Christ that same Day.

IV. The Gospel is verified by a vast Cloud of credible Witnesses, who have attested it by all the Ways that any Thing can be testified. Thousands and Ten Thousands of the most sober and upright Persons that ever lived, and who held it to be a damnable Sin to tell a Lie, have by Word and Writing declared the Things which Jesus did and taught. They assured their Children, whose Salvation they tender'd as they did their own, that these were the Words of Eternal Life. And they persisted in the same Confession to their Enemies, tho' they were not only buffeted and imprison'd, but put on red hot Grid-irons, and into glowing Iron Chairs, and torn to pieces with wild Beasts for so doing: Not one of them ever discovering any Combination to set forth a false Report to the World. For what a Madness had
Serm. III.  *Holy Scriptures:*

had it been in them, to suffer all manner of Torments and Death in this World, for the sake of a *Lie,* for which they could expect nothing but *Damnation* in the World to come?

Moreover, they instituted *Anniversary Solemnities* upon the Days on which the principal Points of their Religion depended; as the Day of the Birth, *Death,* *Resurrection* and *Ascension* of their Lord and Master; and his sending down the *Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost:* Of which Facts, had not they themselves and others had the fullest Assurance, they never durst to have attempted the Anniversary Commemoration of them. *First,* because they durst not praise God for what they knew to be false; nor to *compass him about with Lies,* which they knew he hated. *Secondly,* because if those Facts had not been fully and generally known, their Enemies would have laughed them to scorn, and would have proved the contrary to the World: Which I have before shew'd they did not, but owned the Truth of divers of them;

These
These Enemies of Christianity were more ingenuous than the Modern Scepticks and Deists; who rather than allow the Truth of these notorious Facts, deny the Faith of all History, and the Kindness of Parents to their Children in the delivering these Matters to them; which is a Rudeness beyond parallel. Any Person that is about to inhabit a House, acts very reasonably in considering well the Strength of the Building, and the Firmness of the Foundation: But if he will not be satisfied, unless he may be permitted to unpin all the Timbers, and undermine the whole Foundation; it appears, that he rather desires to overturn the House, than to inhabit it.

I pass on therefore to the last Proof of the Divinity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Namely,

V. From the Marvellous Efficacy, Progress, and Continuance of this Doctrine, by means in themselves utterly insufficient to attain these Ends; which must demonstrate the Assistance of a Supernatural Power.
Serm. III. Holy Scriptures.

The Self-abasing and Flesh-crucifying Doctrine of the Gospel prevailed like a Torrent over whole Nations, and over some of the most remote Corners of the World. And this, contrary to the then reputed Learning of the World, and the darling Lusts of Men, and in Opposition to the Laws and Customs, and the utmost Endeavours of evil Men, and evil Spirits. It proselyted Jews and Gentiles: It advanced into the Jewish Sanhedrim, and into Cæsar's Household; and at last, after it had out-liv'd the Policy of Julian, and the Fury of Dioclesian, it got into the Throne; and was congratulated by general Consent, in that famous Confession in Constantine's Time, We are all Christians.

Yet nothing of this was carried on, either by the Power of Princes, or the Severity of Humane Laws; or by the Eloquence or Sophistry of Humane Learning: But contrary to all these, and to all the Wit and Malice of Men and Devils.

The Apostles and Others plainly declared the Things which they had heard and seen, and left it to the Con-
Consciences of Men to make a serious Judgment of them, as they lov'd their Souls. So that if this Thing had been of Men, it must have sunk in a very short Time; but it was of GOD, and so prevailed, and will continue to the Consummation of all Things: And we hope, will shine in greater Glory before that Time, than it has hitherto done.

So then; since the glorious Gospel contains the most Divine Instructions of all the Books in the World: Since it nobly exalts the Glory of GOD, and advances the Dignity of humane Nature: Since the whole Train of Prophecies, which ran thorough the Generations of Men for many Thousand Years before their Accomplishment, was exactly fulfilled in it: Since it has been attested by the Power of the Almighty in such numerous and glorious Miracles as never were done before in the World; and since these Miracles were as useful and comfortable to Men, as they were amazing in their Sight: Since so many pious and virtuous Persons have assured their Children, that this is the only way of Salvation, and have suffer'd the worst
of Deaths, rather than deny this before their Enemies: Since the blessed Gospel pierces and changes the Hearts of sinful Men, and makes them New Creatures, rendring them as like GOD as Men can be made on Earth, with the blessed Assurances of an Eternal Vision and Enjoyment of God in Heaven: All these Things duly considered, afford us undeniable Evidence of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his Holy Gospel. So that the Deist argues very vainly, when he says; "The Christian Religion is not so certain as the Light of Nature, and therefore Men must in Prudence keep only to their Natural Light in Matters of Religion. The Case is not truly stated. For our Natural Light is miserably impaired, and needs the Assistance of Supernatural Illumination; even as much as the Traveller who passes on the Way by Star-Light, in many Doubts and Dangers, needs the Rising of the Sun to enable him to go on directly and cheerfully in his Journey.

Yea, I must say, there is no Room left for a Christian, that knows the
The Truth of the Serm. III.

Foundation of his Religion, to admit of one reasonable Thought of changing it: For, all imaginable Evidences of GOD's Power, Wisdom, and Providence, have so fully appear'd in the Institution, Progress and Defence of the Christian Religion: That to say, all these are Impostures, is the same as to say, There is no God, and consequently, no such Thing as Religion. But these are such Violations of Reason, and Outrages upon Common Sense, that Humane Nature cannot bear them.

Let us now therefore seriously apply the whole.

I. since these Things are so, we must heartily embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the Rule of our Faith and Life, as we hope for Salvation. These are the Words of eternal Life; and this is that Prophet, that was foretold by Moses, with a Command, that we should hear him in whatsoever he should declare unto us, Acts III. Tho' some Things which he has revealed are great Mysteries, that surpass our Comprehension, these however are to be believed with
with great Firmness; for it was very likely that Revelations from GOD would be so; and it is a good Argument that they were not invented by Man, because they could never enter into the Mind of Man till revealed from above. And tho' many Commands of the Gospel are contrary to our carnal Inclinations, yet we must apply our Hearts to them; for this is their Excellency, and our necessary Medicine, and the Proof of our Obedience.

We have therefore a short Answer to make to that anti-scriptural Triumvirate, the profane Scoffer, who idolizes his Lusts; the self-exalting Deist, who sacrifices to his own Reason; and the deluded Enthusiast, who follows vain Imaginations: To all these we briefly reply, that as we have all reasonable Assurance, that our Bible is the Word of GOD, so we are sure, that no Reason in the World can be more clear than this; namely, that what GOD has said is true. And if so,

II. It must be the chief Interest of all Persons to be religious: Which
The Truth of the Serm. III.

may serve to break the Force of all Temptations to Sin that can assault us. We have the greatest Rewards and Punishments laid before us that can be made to Men. The Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal. If we believe this, it must affect us. Ah! How long will it be e're we believe the Contents of our Religion in good earnest, and e're we live as such who fully believe that GOD is true, and will do as he has said.

The Epicure himself could not consent to forbidden Pleasures, were he indeed perswaded that for every Hour thus spent, he should suffer the Torment of a Thousand Years: Nor would he decline any Service to GOD, were he sure, that every Hour thus employ'd would be rewarded with the Happiness of a Thousand Years. How much more, were he sure, that that the Rewards and Punishments of what we do in this mortal State would be everlasting. A Duration which Millions of Ages cannot diminish. And therefore,
Serm. III.  *Holy Scriptures.*

Lastly, The Gospel directs us to the most honourable and comfortable Life that Man can live on Earth, since the Loss of Paradise; for it comes from GOD to restore the Happiness of Man that was lost there. We are by our Corruption alienated from the Life of GOD; but we are by Christian Regeneration restored to the Hope of it, and set into a Way to regain it. Jesus Christ has brought Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel, where we may take a daily View of it, and rejoice in our rever- sional Interest in it, with a Joy un- speakable and full of Glory.

If we are of Christ's Fold, GOD is with us, the Devil is chain'd, the Soul is made bright and glorious, and we have this Cordial continually in our Bosoms, That our Hope is sure, and the End happy.

We have the Word of eternal Life in our Hearts, yea, Jesus himself dwells there, and Christ in us is the Hope of Glory; for we cannot be cast into Hell with the King of Heaven in our Breasts.

So that while our Integrity is clear, nothing can reasonably make us sad.
The Shortness of the present Life is a comfortable Consideration; Afflictions are then on our Side, and Death is the Gate to eternal Life.

We may daily celebrate the Triumphs of the Flesh crucified, the World conquer'd, and the Devil put under our Feet. And e're long the happy Hour will come, when we shall die, and then we shall cast off these frail Bodies, and put away all Pain, Weakness, and Corruption with them.

O glorious State! No sensual Epicurism can come near it; and nothing but the Paradise above can excel it; where they that formerly had the Promise, have now the Possession of Eternal Life.

Which GOD grant to us all, thro' the Merit of his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Praise and Glory for ever and ever. Amen.
SERMON IV.

The Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John I. Ver. 1.

In the Beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.

HAVING in the Three former Discourses opposed the Anti-scriptural Adversaries of the Christian Religion, we come now to consider the Opposition made to a fundamental Article of it, by some who own the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and
pretend to the Christian Name. I mean the Arians and Socinians, who deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ the Son of GOD, contrary to his own Assertion, and to the Faith of his universal Church.

The Doctrine of GOD manifest in the Flesh, and as St. John says, made Flesh, is the greatest Honour as well as Advantage of Mankind: It is the only Ground of Comfort to us in this Life, and of solid Hope concerning the Life to come. So that we have infinite Reason to contend for this Foundation of our Faith, as it was once deliver'd to the Saints, by the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord; among whom, St. John, his beloved Disciple, gives us this Account in the Text, That in the Beginning was the WORD, and that the WORD was with GOD, and that the Word was GOD.

A Socinian Writer, and indeed none of the meanest of them, finding this Text to bear hard on their Sentiments, pleads that it is not certain that by the Word in the Text, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ; but our holy Evangelist can best explain himself; and he speaking of Christ, (Rev. XIX. 13.)
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

13.) says expressly, *His Name is the WORD of GOD.*

Another of that Sect speaks more boldly and prophanely, affirming, that St. John took the Notions of this Chapter out of Plato. But this blasphemes the holy Spirit by which St. John spake; and it is as unreasonable and unjust to accuse him who had renounced the *Wisdom of the World* with Platonism, as to tax him of Covetousness, who had parted with all his Goods and Lands for Christ's sake.

To come to the Words then, it must be noted, that St. John living to the one Hundred and first Year after our Saviour's Incarnation, according to Monsieur du Pin's Calculation, liv'd to see the Heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus springing up, who deny'd the LORD that bought them; because by denying his Divinity, they accounted him unable to pay the Price of their Redemption. We therefore plainly see, that this Evangelist wholly omitted the Account of our Saviour's Generation as Man, which had been so fully declared by the Three former Evangelists, and applied him-
self expressly to declare the Eternal Generation of Jesus Christ the Son of GOD, as the Ground-Work of his Gospel. And we find both these Natures, the Divine and the Humane, expressly asserted by St. Paul, in the Beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, where, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, he faith, Who was made of the Seed of David according to the Flesh; and declared to be the SON of GOD with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead. For, since he rose from the Dead by his own Power, (Joh. X. 18.) it must be granted that this was GOD.

Now, this being the Article that our Evangelist here is directed by the Spirit of GOD to teach Men: We see how plainly and fully he declares it for many Verses together: And that he might leave no Room for Doubt in a Case of such Importance, he expressly declares the Eternity, omnipotence, and Vitality of Jesus Christ; neither of which can be affirmed of a Creature. Yea farther, (which is surely worth our Remark) he declares each of these Divine Attributes twice...
in express Terms in the Beginning of this Chapter.

1. His Eternity is twice asserted. For it is positively said, *In the BEGINNING was the Word,* (Ver. 1.) And again, *The same was in the BEGINNING with God,* (Ver. 2.) This declares our Blessed Saviour's Eternity. For whoever had a Being when the first created Being began, must be before all created Beings, and is therefore Eternal.

2. His Omnipotency is declared; Ver. 3. All Things were made by him; which one would think were plain enough; yet it being fore-seen by Divine Wisdom, that some would fall into the absurd Notion of a Made-GOD, the Evangelist repeats the Assertion, and adds, that without Him nothing was made, that was made. (Ver. 3.) This directly overthrows that vain Suggestion of Arius and Socinus; for since nothing was made but by Jesus Christ; to say that he himself is made, is to say, He made himself: And if so, he must be before himself, and greater than himself, which are direct Contradictions.

3. The Vitality or Self-Existency of Jesus Christ is also twice mentioned.
Ver. 4. In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of the World. The Life, (ὁ ζωὴ) the Life that was to restore Life to the Race of Mankind, that was fall’n into a State of Sin and Death. This is more fully declared by the same Apostle, Ἰωάν. I. 2. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear Witness, and shew unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

So that these Divine Attributes are here, I conceive, as positively and as vehemently affirmed of our Lord and Saviour, again and again, as if this Evangelist had said; Jesus Christ is Eternal, Omnipotent, and Self-sufficient, being Life itself; I say, He is Eternal, Omnipotent, and Life itself; and therefore this Essential Word of GOD is God.

A Word is the most clear Representation and Image of the Mind: and Jesus Christ is the Brightness of the Father’s Glory, and the express Image of his Person, and upholdeth all things by the Word of his Power. (Heb. I. 3.)

The Second Article of Religion in our Church relates to this Point of Faith, and is as follows:

"The
"The Son, who is the Word of the Father, begotten from Everlasting of the Father, the very and Eternal God, of one Substance with the Father, took Man's Nature in the Womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her Substance: So that Two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very GOD and very MAN, who truly suffer'd, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a Sacrifice, not only for Original Guilt, but also for actual Sins of Men. To these Truths, Arius and others of old, and Lalius and Faustus Socinus of a much later Date, have made great Opposition. Arius insists on a Priority of Time in GOD the Father, and on the Son's being created by the Father; which would prove that the Son is a finite, created Being, and consequently unable to be the Saviour of the degenerate Race of the First Adam. Socinus and his Followers do also oppose this Article, denying that our Blessed LORD had any Existence before
fore his Conception in the Blessed Virgin, being in their Opinion a mere Man. And they allegorize the whole Account of his Divinity in the Holy Scriptures, in a very harsh and unnatural Manner, to make way for this their novel Doctrine. It is about 150 Years ago, that the first Socinian Book came abroad into the World, under the Title of that Christian Verity, which it tended to overthrow, namely; Christ the Saviour. It was written by Faustus Socinus; for his Uncle Lalius publish'd nothing, but bequeath'd by Will his Papers to his Nephew. This first Book of his occasioned such a Tumult in Cracow, in the Kingdom of Poland, (a very unfit way, we grant, to determine Controversies) that he had lost his Life in it, had not Dr. Martin Vadovite, the Cracovian Professor, succour'd him in that Instant.

These are the principal Adversaries of the Truth delivered in my Text: And I shall take the most clear and plain Method that I can think of, to maintain and assert this Fundamental Article of the Christian Re-
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

Religion, to wit, the Divinity of the Author of it, by the Four Arguments which follow, viz.

I. The Scriptures of the old and new Testament speak of the Messiah in Terms and Attributes so manifestly Divine, that a serious Mind cannot but take them in the Sense of our Church; that is, as declaring Him to be God, of one Substance with the Father.

II. This has been the Doctrine of the Catholick Church of Christ in all Ages, tho' less open in the short Interval of the Arian Persecution, when the Sentiments of the Orthodox were for a while recluse and reserved.

III. No other Notion of our Blest Saviour clears the Justice and Honour of God in the Pardon of Sin.

IV. No other Notion of our Blest Lord Answers the principal Ends of his Messiah-ship: Which were,

I. To restore corrupt Men to the Image and Favour of the All-pure God.

2. To
2. To give the highest Glory to the infinitely wise and good GOD hereby.

3. To lay the greatest Obligations upon Men to serve GOD faithfully for the Future.

I. I begin with the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures, concerning the Nature of the Messiah, the SON of GOD, and Saviour of degenerate Men; as prophesied in the Old Testament, and fulfilled in the New. The Authority of these Oracles of God being on both sides granted to be binding and conclusive, we cannot take a better mean to end the Dispute.

Now here we find such high Expressions, and such Divine Attributes applied to Jesus Christ as would certainly lead serious and honest Minds into pernicious Mistakes, were they not intended to declare his Divine Nature: And we cannot conceive to unsuitable and intolerable a Thought of the infinitely wise and good GOD, as that he would reveal the most important Doctrines, concerning the Salvation of Men, in such Terms as were likely to lead those
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

those Persons into a most pernicious Snare, who take most heed to form their Sentiments according to the Declaration of his revealed Will.

As to the Old Testament; it is very observable, that after the Promise of a Redeemer to apostatized Mankind, Gen. III. 15, There was all along at various Times, some Appearances of a Divine Presence in the Jewish Church, either approving or directing that People. Of this St. Paul speaks, Rom. IX. 4. whose is the Glory and the Covenants, and the Jews called it the Shechinah. This was probably vouchsafed to Abel, as he made his Oblation to God: A Beam of Glory from the Clouds darted down on Abel, and on his Sacrifice, is thought by learned Men, to be that which moved his Brother Cain’s Envy, and excited his cruel Wrath. For in this Manner did God testify his Approbation of Abraham’s Sacrifice. Gen. XV. 17. A burning Lamp passed between the Sacrifices; that is, a divine Glory, like the Flame of a Lamp. The Answer of God by Urim, on the Breast-plate of the High-Priest, was of this Nature. Num. XXVII. 21.

* * As
As was the Cloud that filled the Tabernacle, *Exod. XL.* 34. And the Pillar of a Cloud which by Day, and the Pillar of Fire which by Night, directed, defended, and comforted the Israelites, in their Passage through the Wilderness, *Exod. XIII.* 21. Now the New Testament expressly shews us, that some of these bright Effulgen-<ref>ies</ref> (which is a Key to open the Nature of the rest of them) were Beams of Glory from the Eternal Son of GOD, to which St. Paul plainly directs the unbelieving Jews, when in the very Beginning of his Epistle to them, he tells them: That God had in these last Days spoken to them by his Son; *Heb. I.* 2. And that they might know who this Son of God was, he there minds them of the Shechinahs, to which their Fore-fathers had been long used, as a Dispensation from God, to train them up, to expect the Appearance of his Son in a Visible Manner. For (faith he) this SON of GOD is the Brightness of the Father’s Glory, (the Shechinah) and the express Image of his Person, *Ver. 3.* which is the very Word, that was often used by Philo the Learned Jew, in his Des-
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

Scripture of the Divine Logos, who frequently calls him the Image or personating Shechinah of GOD.

And as there were frequent Effulgencies of the Son of GOD, who is the Divine Brightness (as the Apostle says) so there were many Appearances of the same Divine Person in human Shape; for as Solomon says, His Delight was with the Children of Men, Prov. VIII. 31.

There is just Reason to conclude, that One of the Angels that appeared to Abraham, a little before the Destruction of Sodom, was the Son of God, prefiguring and foreshewing his Incarnation: For our Saviour himself says, that Abraham saw his Day, and was glad, (Joh. VIII. 56.) Now there were only Two Angels that went down to Sodom, Gen. XIX. 1. The Third stay'd behind, prone to save, not to destroy. And we find the Faithful Abraham praying to Him to spare Sodom; and he received several Grants from Him, as if he had seen GOD face to face, Gen. XVIII. 23, &c. saying, if I find Fifty Righteous Persons in Sodom, yea, if I find Forty Five, or but Forty; and at last, if
but Ten, I will save the Place for their Sake. Now, as none but GOD could make these Grants, to kill, and to save alive; and as this Faithful Patriarch would pray to none but GOD; so Abraham calls Him by the Name of Jehovah, which is a Name incommunicable to a Creature, for it implies the Being of all Beings; Yet is applied Four Times to this Angel in this Passage: And he is called the Judge of all the Earth, Ver. 25.

The same Angel of the Covenant appeared (as we must conclude) to Abraham out of Heaven, when he lifted up his Hand to offer up his Son, Gen. XXII. 12. saying, Now I know that thou fearest GOD, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son from ME, which no mere Angel would or durft apply to himself.

This was He, we may well conceive, that appeared to Jacob in the Form of a Man, with whom Jacob wrestled all Night, (laying hold on him probably as Moses did, Exod. XXXII. 9. by strong Efforts of Faith and Prayer) who blessed Jacob, and changed his Name to Israel, and who granted him every thing he ask'd,
Serm. IV.  of Jesus Christ.

ask'd, except the revealing of his Name, which was a Mysterious Secret, Gen. XXXII. 24. after which Jacob acknowledges with Thankfulness, that he had seen GOD Face to Face, yet his Life was preserved, Ver. 30.

When Manoah was favour'd with the like Appearance, he had a like Answer, Judges XIII. 18. Wherefore ask'st thou after my Name, seeing it is Secret? And Manoah said to his Wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen GOD, Ver. 22.

This was He, it is conceiv'd, that appear'd to Joshua, as Captain of the Lord's Host, whom Joshua worshiped with the most profound Prostrations, and who made the Ground Holy whereon he stood. Josh. V. 14.

This Angel is many Times call'd an Angel of God in one Verse, and GOD in another. As, Exod. III. 2, 4. And both the ancient Hebrew Paraphraasts, and the ancient Christian Fathers did conceive, that these Appearances were the Praludia Messie, the Prefigurations or Preludes of the Incarnation of the SON of God. Philo speaks of this Divine Logos, both in

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his Book of Dreams, and in that of the Confusion of Tongues: Which is the very Term of my Text, \( \Delta \Theta \Phi \omega \sigma \); and God was the Logos, or, the WORD was GOD.

The First Christian Martyr, St. Stephen, leaves this important Point of Instruction with the Jews, tho' his Murderers, that he might with his last Breath direct them to the Messiah, Act. VII. 38 This is He that was in the Church in the Wilderness, with the Angel that spake to him, (i.e. to Moses in Mount Sinai;) and with the Fathers who received the lively Oracles to give unto us. And to this the Old Testament agrees: For when God said he would not go with them, but would send his Angel with them, to dispossess the Seven Nations of the Heathens, and to seat the Jews in it, Exod. XXXIII. 2. It is said, When the People heard these Evil Tydings, they mourned, and no Man did put on his Ornaments, Ver. 4. Why were these evil Tydings? Here is no Alteration of any outward Grant, the Angel of God was to go with them, and to give them the Land flowing with Milk and Honey.

But
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

But the grand Point was, That an Angel, and not the Son of God, was to go with them. Infomuch, that Moses declares expressly, Ver. 15. If thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence: Which was the special Favour they had enjoyed before this their Sin of Baal-Peor, as St. Stephen affirms in the Words before cited.

So also, as to our Saviour’s giving the Law on Mount Sinai, Exod. XX. The Lord Jesus is affirmed to be with the Angels that were in the Mount. Psal. LXVIII. 17, 18. The Chariots of God are Twenty Thousand, even Thousands of Angels, the LORD is among them; as in Mount Sinai, in the Holy Place: Thou hast ascended on High, Thou hast led Captivity Captive, Thou hast received Gifts for Men, &c.

Now, since it is Evident, that these last Words are spoken of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Gifts he sent on Men by the Holy Ghost after his Ascension; the former also must be spoken of him. And moreover, these very Idolaters in the Case of Baal-Peor, who did Eat and Drink, and rose up to Play, are said by the Apostle to have tempted Christ; 1 Cor.
Cor. X. 9. i. e. to provoke Him with whose Presence they were honoured.

I have here a very large Field of Argument before me, relating to the Appearances of the Glory of the Son of GOD in the Old Testament: But I am confined to the narrow Limits of a Sermon; and do therefore refer such as are desirous to see further Instances of this kind, with the Proofs of the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ from them, to the excellent Treatise of Idolatry, written by His Grace the Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury: And to the late Account of the Reasons of the Conversion of Jonah Ben Jacob Xeres from the Jewish to the Christian Religion, drawn up by his own Hand.

Let me only add, that the Arians as well as the Orthodox of Old, asserted the Visibility of the Son, and the Invisibility of the Father, tho' upon different Reasons, as we see in the Epistles of St. Jerome. And Biflerfeldiius, in that very Treatise in which he defendeth the Natural Divinity of the Son of GOD against Crellius, maintains, "That the Father is
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

"invisible to the very Angels, and
"that Christ was the visible Image
"of the Father, even in the Ages
"long before the Gospel. Bisfr. contr.
"Crel. l. i. p. 298, &c.

Let us now consider the Divine Names and Attributes given to the Messiah in the Old Testament. He is called Jehovah, as we saw before. He is term'd the Mighty GOD, the Isa. IX. 6.

Everlasting Father, which is verified Ibid. by his being the Eternal Creator of Col. I. 15, all Things. He is term'd, The Man 6.

that is GOD's Fellow; To which that Zech.
of the Apostle agrees, that he thought XIII. 7.

it no Robbery to be equal with GOD. Phil.II.6.

He, whose Goings forth were from Ever-

is called Immanuel, that is, GOD Jer.

XXIII. 6.

with us: And is foretold to be born Ira. VII.
of a Virgin.

In the New Testament, Christ is named Immanuel by an Angel ofIbid. GOD when he was in the Virgin's Womb. He is positively affirmed to be GOD, which is spoken absolute-

ly, with the Attributes of Eternity, Heb. I. 8.

Omnipotency, and Eternal Vitality, as I before shew'd in the opening of my Text. It is said, that the Fulness of K 4
Col. II. 9. Godhead, dwells in him bodily. It is declared, That by him all Things were created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers: All Things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all Things, and by him all Things consist. These Words are full and expressive of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the Interpretations which our Adversaries put upon them, that ever I have seen, are forced and unnatural. Moreover, the Apostle affirms, That Christ took not on him the Nature of Angel, but the Seed of Abraham. This proves that he had a Pra-existence before his Incarnation, and that he was not of the Nature of an Angel; what could he then be that made the Choice of Abraham's Seed, but the All-wise and All-good GOD? As the Apostle himself proves in the Second Chapter of the Hebrews, and the 24th Verse, where he proves the Divinity of the Son of GOD by his Power to create. Now he that built all Things is GOD. If any say, that the Father lent the Son his Omnipotency in the Creation of the World,
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

World, they then say, that he lent him his Godhead. Or if they say, that GOD wrought by him as by an Instrument; they thus make Him only a Tool, as any Thing else might have been. But then it could never be affirmed, that all Things were made by Him and for Him, as (Col. I. 16.) Or if they say, these Expressions of Creation, are only meant of the new State of the Gospel in Man's Restoration to the Image and Favour of GOD:

We reply, that this could not be effected but by the same Fountain of Life by which Man was created even the working of GOD's mighty Power. And moreover, this is contrary to what is before-cited, By Him all Things were created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible.

I will add but one Text more, tho' Multitudes might be alleged, which is that of St. John, (Revel. I. 8.) I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, faith the L O R D, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Omnipotence and Eternity are incommunicable Attributes of the One GOD, and are only applicable to the Son, as One in Essence with the Father;
The Divine Nature  Serm. IV.

as himself said, I and my Father are One, &c. or, we are One Thing, or One Substance.

But tho' we prove many incommunicable Attributes of God to be applied to our Blessed Saviour, we shall not give Satisfaction to some of the Adversaries of this great Point, except we prove (they say) that the Title of the Most High, is given to the SON of GOD. I reply, it is most absurd and impious for dark Mortals, who, with their best Learning, fully know Nothing, to dictate to the infinite God, the Terms of his Revelation to us, where the Thing is sufficiently declared in other Words. But however, if it be granted that it was the Son of God that descended to divide the Tongues of the Builders of Babel, (as it may be proved from what is before alleged, and from many other Arguments) the Title of Most High, is given to the Son of God by Moses, in his Recapitulation of that memorable Passage,

Deut. XXXII.8. When the Most High divided to the Nations their Inheritance, when he separated the Sons of Adam. Novatian * proves this to be spoken of the Son of GOD, 

*De Trin. p. 723.
byundry Arguments, too large to be here repeated: And whereas, it is said (Gen. XI. 7.) Go to, let us go down, and there confound their Language. The Apostle seems to let us into the true Knowledge of him that went down from Heaven for that Purpose; when he saith (Eph. IV. 10.) Now he that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens. Tho' this is spoken of another Ascent and Descent of Christ, the Reason of it is equally valid. So that the Arabick Version, The Angels came down, must be interpreted (faith a most Reverend Author) of that part of the Shechinah, which was made up by the Attendance of Angels on the Son of GOD. (Discourse of Idol. p. 337, &c.) This then fully answers that Elusion of the Truth of my Text, to which the Socinians frequently resort; namely, that when our Lord Jesus Christ is called GOD, it must be taken as when it is applied to Princes, (whose Power is a Ray of Divine Majesty) and to Prophets, to whom the Word of the Lord came, (Joh. X. 35.) For no Prince or Prophet was ever call'd the true GOD, (as Joh. V. 20.) the Almighty
mighty God, as Rev. I. 8.) nor the Everlasting and most High God, as before alleged; nor is a creative and vital Power ascrib'd to any such, as in the Chapter to which my Text belongs. It is true, that since the Jews had a scriptural Acceptation of the Word of God, in this metaphorical Sense, they ought not to have condemn'd our Blessed Saviour of Blasphemy, till they had known in what Sense he called himself, the Son of God; and then he would, without doubt, have witnessed as full a Confession as he did of his being the King and Judge of the World before Pontius Pilate. And one Thing that is very material, is evident both from the Sentiments of the Jews, and the Words of our Saviour; namely, that the Son of God implies the same Thing with God. Thou blasphemest, said the Jews, because thou sayest, I am the Son of God, making thy self God. (John X. 33.) Our Saviour owns the Force of their Argument, and says, the Term God, is sometimes applicable to Men of Piety and Power. I have said, ye are Gods, but then their Mortality is immediately sub-join'd;
join'd; but ye shall die like Men. But of Christ it is said, Thy Throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever, (Heb. I. 8.) And it is evident that Christ is called the Son of God, and therefore GOD, in a higher Sense than it was ever acribed to the Prophets, to whom the Word of the Lord came; for it is said, God, who at sundry Times, and in divers manners spake in Time past to the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last Days spoken to us by his SON. This denotes a Dignity of Person superior to all preceding Prophets: For He is the only begotten Son of God. And whereas, God spake with Moses Face to Face; this Appearance to Moses, is supposed by St. Augustine (Ep. 119.) to be the Appearance of the Son of GOD, (Num. XII. 8.) For no Man hath seen God at any Time, the only begotten Son, who is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declar'd him. (Joh. I. 18.) And we beheld his Glory, faith St. John (Ver. 14.) the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father full, of Grace and Truth.

The WORD, as Tertullian observeth, was God's Minister before the Law, and under it; being the Angel of the

De Resur. Car.

P. 357.
of the Covenant; and then the Logos spake by some Principal Angel, and assisted the Angel, in a miraculous Motion of the Air, to form an articulate Voice; or by an intelligible Impression on the Brain of the Persons spoken to, equally miraculous. But now, under the Gospel, the Logos in my Text spake with his own Mouth, as having assumed Humane Nature into Unity of Person. For the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us.

If the Socinians and others would give these Things a free and due Consideration, they would forbear their Clamour so often expressed against the Term Person, especially as we now consider it, with Relation to Christ as the προσώπου, the Face, or personating Shechimah of the Father.

They also who rightly distinguish betwixt Christ, as GOD's Word and Shechimah under the former Covenants made with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, and as the Mediator and the incarnate Son of God, under the Gospel; will the better understand such Places of holy Scripture as speak of Christ's Pre-existence, and likewise those which speak
speak of his coming into the World in the *fulness of Time*. And consequently will be better able to solve the *Doubts*, and answer the *Arguments* made by *Socinians* on these Points.

And now, I conceive, it is apparent that the holy Scriptures abound with such Indications of the *Divinity* of the only begotten Son of God *Jesus Christ*, that it cannot be thought agreeable to the infinite Goodness and Philanthropy of GOD, to expose, or rather to lead Men to such a dangerous Error, as those Persons who give the greatest Heed to God's Word, could not but be likely to fall into, were these Expressions to denote any Thing less than what our Church understands by them; namely, That *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, of the Substance of the *Divine Nature*, as well as the Son of Man, of the Substance of *Humane Nature*.

Let us now consider in what Sense the primitive and succeeding Churches of Christ understood these Expressions: Which was the Second Evidence proposed.
II. The Catholick Church of Chrifl hath, in all Ages, acknowledged the Divinity of Jesus Christ the Son of God and Saviour of Men; tho' perhaps less openly in the short Interval of the Arian Perfeéluation, by reason of which, the Sentiments of the Orthodox were at that Time more reserved and reclufe.

The Grounds of our Belief of this Article are so copiously evident in the holy Scriptures, (as we have already seen in some Measure) that the Generality of Christians, who grounded their Faith on these divine Revelations, could not but afient to this Truth, tho' there might be here and there an unhumble Rationalist, or wild Enthufiaft, that thought other-wise.

We are initiated into the Church of Christ at our Baptifm, by the standing Order of Christ himself, in Words that cannot be well understood in any Sense but what implies the Doctrine of the Tri-une GOD. Go ye, teach (or disciple) all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. By this
this Sacrament they were solemnly dedicated to GOD their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and washed with Water, to denote the efficacious purifying of the blood of Jesus, which is called God's own Blood, (Acts XX. 28.) In this Blood they were washed in a Sacramental Sense, as the Laver of Regeneration, and by the Merit of this Blood, they trusted to be ransomed from the Power of Sin and the Devil, and were thenceforth denominated Christians. Now to be devoted to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit at the same Time, in the same Words, and with the same awful Solemnity as to the Father, making this the very Constitution of our Faith, and the Condition of our Salvation, is a very extraordinary Bond upon us to be stedfast in this Doctrine. As is also the Apostolick Blessing pronounced, (2 Cor. XIII. 14.) The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of GOD, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen. This is the Apostle's solemn Prayer to the Three Persons in the Holy Trinity, for the special Blessings of each particular Person. And what can be a greater
greater Proof of the Divinity of each Person, than a formal Prayer to each of them, in Hope of a special Blessing from each? Thus we own, from Scriptural Authority, a Distinction of Person, but a strict Unity of Essence in the Adored GOD-HEAD. When we use the Word Person here, we are sensible of the Disproportion of our common Words when applied to this Sacred Mystery; and do declare, that we do not use it here in the vulgar Sense, so as to denote three individual complete Beings; or in short, in any Sense that implies Tritheism, or denotes a Plurality of Gods; for we contend for the Unity of the GOD-HEAD with as true a Zeal as any of those who unduly appropriate to themselves the Name of Unitarians. This being the Doctrine of the Apostles, it must be the Doctrine of the Primitive Church. The Learned Grotius affirms of Dionisius the Areopagite, Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, and other Successors of the Apostles, that they exhibited due Honour to Jesus Christ as GOD. For as St. Cyril professeth, they had Man-Worship in Abhorrence [Truth of
When the Pagans carried away the dead Body of the Martyr Policarp, (A.D. 167.) under Pretence of preventing an Adoration of it by Christians: The Church of Smirna reply'd in a Letter to their Friends; Fools that they were, who did not know that Christians worship no Martyr but Jesus Christ, because he is the Son of God. Now this Church learn'd this Doctrine from Policarp their Bishop, who was the Disciple of St. John Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch, (A.D. 70.) refuted the Heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, who thought Jesus Christ a mere Man.

Tertullian, who flourish'd in the 194th Year after Christ, sets himself to manifest the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ in his Apology for Christians, where, in his Discourse of the Christian Faith, he says, Christians do not look on Jesus Christ as a mere Man, but as GOD; because he is the WORD of GOD, begotten of the same Substance: That he is thus God, and the Son of God, and that his Father and He are One: That the WORD came down into the Womb of the Virgin, and took L. 2 Flesh
The Divine Nature  
Serm. IV.

Flesh upon him, and was born GOD-MAN, (Du Pin, p. 74. Vol. i.)

Clemens of Alexandria wrote his Exhortation to the Gentiles about the latter End of the Second Century; in which he shews them, that Jesus Christ, who, from all Eternity, was the WORD of GOD, in tender Compassion to Men, took their Nature upon him, to free them from the Slavery of Demons.

In the Time of the Arian Persecution, Athanasius, and Vigilius Thapstanus, confessed the true Faith, and by Arguments defended it: And they who opposed the Doctrine of Arians, have been called the Orthodox by the Churches of Christ throughout the World, ever since.

And in the Year of our Lord 325, the Council of Nice, consisting, as it is said, of 318 Bishops, having heard Arian his Explanation and Defence of his Opinion, did utterly condemn it; with an Anathema against such as said, That there was a Time when the Son of GOD was not. And tho' there were some Disputes about the Word Consubstantial, they all consented to it at last, and signed it, except two Persons, viz. Secundus and Theonas.
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

nas, who join'd with Arius, and were all Three cenfured together by that Council, as Depravers of the Christian Doctrine.

Now if this had not been the Doctrine generally taught before this Time in the Christian Church, we cannot conceive that so many Hundred Persons of the most eminent Piety, Learning, and Station, in those early Days of Christianity, could have agreed so unanimously in a Doctrine of this high and important Nature. Important indeed, in the most eminent Degree: For where is that Manifestation of the inexpressible Love of God, which is mentioned very often in the Gospel, to appear in the Gift of his Son Jesus Christ, if he was a mere MAN, as others are? And if so, what wonderful Love did Christ shew to Men by suffering as he did, to be exalted as He is? So that the Glory of the Contrivance and Undertaking of our Redemption, which the Gospel represents as such a Heighth and Depth of divine Love, as exceeds humane Comprehension, (Eph. III. 18.) falls at once, and with it our Christian Hope and Trust.
by this Socinian Dream. Great Reason therefore had the Nicene Fathers to contend so earnestly for the Consubstantiality of the SON of GOD, which was no novel Term, tho' the Adversaries of this glorious Truth call it so; as the Learned Bishop Bull has fully proved against Episcopius.

And here, in common Christian Charity, we cannot but lament, that two Persons of such fine Parts as Episcopius and Curcellus trod so nigh the Steps of Socinus in many of his Errors. The chief Causes of their Halting seems to be these: Two; namely,

I. Their Unwillingness to come to the Confession of Original Corruption, which the great Pretenders to Reason are not prone to acknowledge.

II. Their Slighting the Writings of the Primitive Fathers, thro' a Conceit of their own Capacity and Comprehension. This, as well as the former, was also the Stumbling-Block by which Faustus Socinus fell; for he boasts in his Answer to Squarciupus, that the whole Stock of his Knowledge in Divinity was owing to no other Master, but
but his Uncle Lucius, and to his Manuscripts and Notes. And what was the Effect of this conceited Man's setting up a System of Divinity out of his own, and his Uncle's Stock of Reason? Truly, the same that often happens to other vain Free-Thinkers, who usually reason themselves out of their Christianity. He taught that Christ was a mere Man, yet was to be worship'd, with other impious Absurdities of the like Nature. But what Wonder is it, that Men of great Parts fall by Pride, when Angels, of a higher Nature, fell by it?

If we consider the Faith of the Jews as to this Article, we find that they were so well instructed by the Doctrine of their Prophets and Paraphrasts concerning the Divine Nature of the Messiah; that when they came to own Christ as their Saviour promised of Old, they easily admitted the Doctrine of his Divinity. For their Prophets gave him not only the Names of Elohim and Edonai; but even that of Jehovah, which implies Self-Sufficiency, and the Original Being; which cannot be ascribed to a Creature, as we before hinted. Hence

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the Jewish Talmud in Tannith (as Grotius observes in his Annotations) affirms, that in the Days of the Messiah, Jehovah shall be shown as with a Finger; and it shall be said, Lo! there is Jehovah, as Isa. XXV. 9. Lo! this is our GOD, q. d. Behold him cloath'd in Flesh, and so made Visible.

Eusebius takes Notice, in his Book of the Preparation of the Gospel, of an excellent Remark made by Philo the Jew, in his Treatise of the Confusion of Tongues: It is a Thing, says he, most becoming those who join Divine Knowledge and Fellowship together, to desire to see God, as we find Moses did. If this cannot be, they must content themselves with the sacred Image of GOD in his WORD; The divine Logos which he so often mentions: For the WORD was GOD, says my Text.

But if, after all, any think they find too little said upon this Article, by the Writers of the first Ages of Christianity: Let them consider, that it was a Doctrine daily laid before the Church in the Form of Baptism appointed by our LORD, and in many Parts of the Sacred Oracles. And there is a plain Reason, why such as set themselves
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

to propagate the Gospel, ought not, in Prudence, to begin with Discourses of the Mysterious Points of Religion to those they would proselyte; namely, because they are not prepared to hear them. *I have many Things to say unto you,* said our Blessed Saviour to his Disciples in his last Discourses with them, *but ye cannot hear them now,* (Jo. XVI. 13.) And St. Paul complains of the same Incapacity in his Country-men the Hebrews, (Chap. V. 11.) Of whom, (i.e. of the Heavenly Melchizedech) *I have many Things to say, and hard to be utter'd,* seeing *ye are dull of Hearing.* So that he tells them, he must yet feed them, as Catechumens, with the first Principles of Religion, like Children, who must be fed with Milk till they can bear strong Meat; reserving the more abstruse Points of the Christian Faith, till their Senses were, by Exercise and Application, render'd capable of higher Instruction.

However, every One that had St. John's Gospel before him, had not only the Assertion of the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour in the Words of my Text, but the Confession of it by St. Thomas
St. Thomas the Apostle to Christ himself, (Joh. XX. 28.) My LORD and my GOD; with our Saviour's Approbation, and his Blessing to all such as should afterwards confess the same Article of Faith, (Ver. 29.) Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen me, and yet have believed. Of which blessed Number, may we all be found, that we may be accepted of the Blessed Jesus, who is the AUTHOR of Eternal Salvation to them that obey him.

Let us therefore revere that Holy and Blessed Name of Jesus, which some Miscreants revile; and adore the Word made Flesh, which some deny: Let us heartily embrace him in his sacred Offices, and devoutly worship Him in his divine Glory: For to him every Knee shall bow both in Heaven and in Earth, and under the Earth. The Angels and Saints in Heaven and Earth shall worship him in zealous Affection; and wicked Men and Devils shall bow, with Terror to his Sceptre. For whoever is ashamed of the SON of MAN, and of his Words,
Serm. IV. of Jesus Christ.

in this adulterous and sinful Generation; of him will the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels, (Mar. VIII. 38.) And in like Manner, Such as confess Him before Men, shall he confess by Him before the Angels of God, (Luk. XII. 8.) that is, they shall be owned and applauded by him in the last Judgment.

Thus have I, tho' too defectively, gone through the Two first Proofs of the Divinity of the Son of God, our adored Lord and Saviour. I must refer the Two other Proofs to another Opportunity.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, one Eternal and Incomprehensible God, be all Honour and Glory, ascribed evermore. Amen.
SERMON V.

The Divine Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

JOHN I. Ver. 1.

In the Beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.

HAVING in my last Discourse on these Words, asserted the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ the SON of GOD, and Saviour of the World,

I. From those incommunicable Names and Attributes of GOD which are
are given to Him both by the Prophets and Apostles.

II. From the continued Consent of the Universal Church of GOD to this Article of Faith; even of the Jewish Church in some Measure, as well as of the Christian.

I now proceed as I promised, to a further Proof of this Fundamental Article of our Faith, by two other Arguments, which tend to confirm our Belief, that the WORD was GOD.

III. No other Notion of our Blessed Redeemer clears the Justice and Honour of Almighty GOD in the Pardon of Sin.

If we trace this Matter from the Beginning, we find in the Book of GOD an Account of the first Transgression and Pollution of Man, which no other Book or Author has, or could relate to us. Namely, that GOD having finished the beautiful Frame of this visible World, placed the first Man and Woman (then newly created) in a very commodious Part of it, which was a perfect Scene of true Delight and suitable Accommodation. So that every Thing they saw or par-
partook of, afforded them a Lecture of the Goodness and Bounty of their Maker, and refreshed the Sense of their infinite Obligations to love and serve him.

Yet they had scarce tasted every Kind of GOD's plentiful Provision for them in this Heavenly Paradise, before they gave Way to the Devil's Suggestion of such an unworthy Thought of their Maker, as amazes one to think of; which was, that GOD, notwithstanding all these Demonstrations of his Love and Bounty given them, was not a thorough Friend to them; and had reserved the Fruit of the forbidden Tree, to prevent their Exaltation to a more Divine State: That the Death he threaten'd, would not be executed if they sinn'd; and in short, that they now had found out a Being, that would be more free and true to them than their Creator.

It is very strange, that such black and absurd Conceits could find Entertainment in Minds so clear, and Breasts so pure, as theirs were. Whether it was, that the Evil Angel first climb'd the Tree in the Form of a Serpent, and upon eating the forbidden Fruit,
Fruit, transform'd himself into the Appearance of a glorious Angel, and then using the Voice of Man, attributed this advantageous Change to the Virtue of the Fruit of that Tree? Or whether, as others think, the Eternal Logos, or Son of GOD, having conversed with them in a visible Shechinah of glorious Angels, this envious Demon might appear like one of them, and being a Liar from the Beginning, might aver to them, that He was of the Retinue of the Son of GOD, and that he suggested this in Friendship to them? Tertullian gives us this Thought in his Book de Prescriptione Haereticorum, (Pag. 220.) where he says, Eve gave Attention to the Serpent as to the Son of GOD. And in his Book against the Valentinians, he says, that the Serpent from the Beginning was one that sacrilegiously usurped the divine Image.

However it came about, we here see the Proto-types and Roots of Man-kind fall'n from their Innocency and the Favour of GOD; and justly fallen under his Displeasure and vindictive Justice: And in them the Hope of a happy Posterity entirely cut off.
How can the Righteous GOD now forbear to take Vengeance, tho' we cannot but conceive it to be done with some Sounding of his Bowels, and great Inclinations to Mercy?

The Case seems attended with dark Consequences both Ways. If impartial Justice cuts off these two Criminals without Respit, there is an End of the Race of Mankind; and the Devil seems to have defeated the Honour proposed to come to God by their Creation. And if they are suffer'd to live, and multiply their Offspring on the Earth: This could not mend the Matter; for no clean Streams can be expected to flow from a polluted Fountain. Or, if this whole Race be swept away, and new Progenitors of Mankind be created, the latter Production might be as likely to offend as the former, and this might give Occasion for multiplied Creations, which would obscure the Brightness of infinite Wisdom, as if he fail'd in producing sufficient Means to attain his End. On the other Hand, if there were never so vehement Inclinations to Mercy in this Case, how could infinite Wisdom and Truth,
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

Truth, Righteousness and Purity yield to it? All Acts of Mercy are not virtuous and commendable. If a wealthy Man bestows his Alms on idle and vicious People, and maintains them in their wicked Way of Life; this is an imprudent and un-virtuous Liberality. And if a Prince pardons unnatural and unrelenting Parracides and Traytors, it blemishes his Administration; and he cannot be reverenced as a righteous and wise Magistrate.

We find, that a just Sense of the Veneration due to the Authority of Laws and the Legislature, hath put many great Men upon doing Justice even on Persons most near and dear to them, when they have fallen under the Penalties of them. When the Son of Zacheus had forfeited both his Eyes by his Adultery, according to the Decree of his Father’s Laws; the Father would not abate of his Indignation to Vice, and his Zeal for Justice: But to mingle the Compassion of a Father with the Impartiality of a Judge, he order’d one of his Son’s Eyes to be put out, and one of his own; which fully preserv’d the
the Honour of the Legislature. When King Darius found himself circumvented by the Envy and Malice of the Enemies of his beloved Daniel; and had strove, in vain, till the Evening, to find out Expedients to deliver him from the Penalty of the Law. The Prince at last gives up his Favourite as a Prey to the Lions, rather than suffer any Contempt to be put on the Sanction of his Laws, (Dan. VI. 16.)

There is nothing, I think, on Record that speaks the Princely Spirit of King Saul, so much as the Sentence he pronounced on his Son Jonathan for his Transgression, thro' Ignorance, and only against the rash Adultery of his Father, in the Case of his eating in the midst of the Pursuit of his Enemies; for, as soon as Jonathan was convicted thereof by the Divine Testimony, the King passes the Sentence of Death on his dear and dutiful Son, a Prince of intrepid Valour and great Accomplishments, and who had that very Day obtained the greatest Victory that ever the World heard of; having just then defeated and put to Flight, a vast opar. M. Ar.
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

Army of Philistines, encamp'd on a Hill almost inaccessible, with no other Forces but himself and his Armour-Bearer. Yet his Father's Honour makes him pronounce his Condemnation without any Appearance of relenting; and to shew that he had no Intention to do otherwise, he binds his Words with an awful Imprecation; GOD do so, and more also, (that is, to me if I spare thee) for thou shalt surely die Jonathan; (1 Sam. XIV. 44.)

But all Instances of wise and just Men fall infinitely short of the perfect Righteousness and Wisdom of GOD. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do righteously? Will the Sovereign of the World part with his Honour? Will he part with his Glory to his Enemy? Shall the Devil appear true in his Contradiction of the Sanction of GOD's Law; who said, ye shall not surely die, though ye eat of the forbidden Fruit? If Men transgress so heinously, and come off free, will any one fear to offend God for the future? And will it not be Partiality to pardon one in mere Mercy, and to punish another in mere Justice?
Moreover, was not the World then newly made to display the Glorious Attributes of God? And can infinite Majesty and Perfection flight the chief End of the World's Creation, in some of the first Acts of the reasonable Part of it? If so great an Offence committed against the first positive Law given to Man, against a Law so equitable and easy to be observed, a Law so newly and so solemnly made, shall be passed over without any Testimony of Divine Vengeance, how can Angels or Men retain just and awful Notions of God? viz. of his inviolable Love of Obedience, and of his inexorable Zeal for Justice, which are the strongest Ties on reasonable Beings to observe his Laws. Yea, would not the fallen Angels have complained of a Blot in divine Justice, Purity, and Perfection, had they seen sinful Men pardoned on the Motions of mere Mercy, and themselves condemned for ever without the least Glimpse of it? But this whole Matter is fully adjusted by the wonderful Expedient of the Sacrifice of the Son of God, to the great Glory of God in all his
his blessed Attributes, to the great Comfort of Men in all their Guilt and Infirmitics, and to the stopping of the Mouths of blaspheming Spirits in all their Envy and Misery.

Since the Eternal SON of GOD condescended to take on him the Nature of MAN, and in it to keep the whole Law inviolably, and to offer up himself a Sacrifice of Peace-Offering, as the Lamb of GOD that took away the Sins of the World; here is a full Satisfaction to the Demands of divine Justice, a full Redress to the Sin and Misery of Man, and a Display of such a high Pitch of Justice and Mercy together, as afford Matter of Speculation and Instruction to the glorious Angels; which seems to be typified in the Cherubims looking down on the Mercy-Seat, (Exod. XXV. 10.) and is expressed (1 Pet. I. 12.) Which Things the Angels desire to look into.

The Justice of God is fully satisfied hereby, for the Love of God to his Law, his Zeal for his Honour, and his Indignation against Sin, or in one Word, his Righteousness, is more brightly displayed in the Sufferings of his only begotten Son, as smitten by
The Hand of his Righteous Father, than it could have been in the Condemnation of the whole World. This is undeniable; for, a Judge that has a Cause brought before him, wherein his dear Relation is bound in Suretyship for a Stranger, acts more severely, tho' with equal Justice, in levying the Forfeiture on his beloved Relation, in Case the Stranger becomes insolvent, than if he had levied the Distress as first intended by the Bond. We find a Proneness to smite a Person that has provoked us; but to smite our most beloved Child, who has undertaken to make up the Difference betwixt us and our Adversary this Way, is such a Pain to our Bowels, as nothing, but a very high Indignation to the Fact of the Offender, could induce us to consent to.

But no Instance can come near that of the Sufferings of the Son of GOD, as our ἀνθινον, a Ransom for us. ἀν here signifies Commutation, as ἐφεδρῶς ἀνὶ ἐφεδρῆς, an, Eye for an Eye, as Grotius observes. For he bore our Grievances, and carried our Sorrows. He was wounded for our Transgressions, and was bruised for our Iniquities:
The Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed. All we, like Sheep, have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all. (Isa. LIII. 4, 5, 6.) Christ is our Passover that was sacrificed for us; (1 Cor. V. 7.) He is the Propitiation for our Sins; and not for ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World; (1 John. II. 2.) In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins, (Eph. I. 7.) This atoning, purifying, pleading, and redeeming Blood, is that which was prefigured by all the Rivers of Blood shed on the Jewish Altars; and the whole Scheme of our Salvation depends upon the Merit of it, both in the Old and New Testament: And the Merit of his Sufferings wholly depends on the Dignity of his Person, as the SON of GOD.

The Argument of Socinus against this, is so little to the Matter, that it falls short of his usual Subtily: For he argues, that since the Godhead (according to our Faith) did not suffer, it could add no Merit to the Sufferings of Christ, tho' he should be supposed to be GOD and MAN. Which is the same as to say, that a
Man that gives a Blow to a King, deserves no more Punishment than he that gave the like Blow to a private Man, because it was the Man, not the King, that felt the Blow given; which appears absurd at the first Hearing.

I dare not say, that there was no other Way to save Men beside the Death of the SON of God: But I may say, this was the best and fittest Expedient for it; because it seem'd best to infinite Wisdom. Ought not Christ to suffer, and to enter into his Glory? (Luk. XXIV. 26.) And we may be sure, that this glorious Way of our Redemption was not the Invention of Man, because only infinite Wisdom could ever have found it out. And tho' a shorter and a less painful and less shameful Death of the Son of God, might have been a sufficient Attonement; yet in such Mitigations, the Indignation of God against Sin had not been so fully seen. So that, on this Account, we see the Righteous GOD inexorable as to any Abatement of the Sufferings of his SON, appointed for a Sacrifice for sinful Men, though his dear Son
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

pleaded for a Passing by of the Cup (if possible) with strong Cries and dreadful Agonies, (Luk. XXII. 44.)

In the Case of Compensation, where a Friend offers to bring himself under a Penalty to exempt another from it; this being a Way of Payment, which the Person, to whom it is due, may accept or refuse at his Pleasure: More may be required very fairly, than a bare valuable Consideration.

So that it may here be said, to the Glory of God, He hath received of the Lord's Hand double for our Sins, (Isa. XL. 2.) And that he hath magnified his Law, and made it honourable, (Isa. XLII. 21.) For now it must be said, That God, infinite in Righteousness and Majesty, never dispensed with his Law but once, and that was on such a Consideration, as makes it terrible to be thought on. He pardon'd Sin indeed, but not without the Expence of the Blood of his only Son: Yea, and that Blood was not honourably or easily shed, but with the utmost Disgrace and Pain; in Mockery and many disdainful Insults from Men, and with deep Anguish of Soul, and Agonies of Spirit from God: That no Soul may hence-
henceforth ever admit a Thought of Impunity in Sin, except by bitter Repentance and an effectual Faith in this Blood of Jesus: For there remains no further Sacrifice for Sin. GOD has no other SON to slay, this is his only begotten. Wo, Wo therefore, to every Sinner that flees not for Refuge to this Hope; and that is not by the holy Spirit animated and united in this JESUS, as a Member of his mystical Body; for then he must suffer alone, and in his own Person for his Sins, and he will not come out of the Hands of the Tormentors till he has paid the last Mite, O fad! the last Mite of an infinite Debt! This can never be paid by a worthless, a polluted, an undone Creature; a Creature that has no Ransom to plead, no available Sacrifice to offer, and no Mediator to make his Peace. Let all that think of this perfect Righteousness of GOD, tremble at it in any other View, but in the sweet Conjunction of it with the free Grace and plenteous Mercy of the blessed Gospel. For there it is that Mercy and Truth have met together; and Righteous-
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

Teoufnefs and Peace have kissed each other, (Pfal. LXXXV. 10.) The Apostle explains this Agreement of divine Righteousness and Peace, in the Pardon of a Sinner interested in the Propitiation of his SON, in Words very remarkable, (Rom. III. 24, 25, 26.) Being justified freely thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, thro' Faith in his Blood; to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, thro' the Forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this Time, his Righteousness; that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The Righteousness of God was never so gloriously manifested as in this sublime Act of it on the Cross of his SON: So that the Apostle might well repeat the Assertion, to declare, I say, at this Time, his Righteousness: Even at that Time when he made his only begotten and dearly beloved SON to groan and agonize, to bleed and die, in the utmost outward Shame and Contempt, and in the heaviest inward Pressure and Darkness, when he stood in the Place of
of Sinners, as a Sacrifice for their Transgressions.

Let the Socinians, who say, that our Blessed Saviour died only for an Example of good Behaviour to Men, tell us what it was that made him so sorely amazed at the Prospect of his Sufferings? Why was his righteous Soul exceeding Sorrowsful, even unto Death, when the Spirits of holy Martyrs are usually revived by Joy unspeakable in their Sufferings? What caused his Agony and bloody Sweat in the Garden? and what meant that mournful Cry on the Cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? We here see, that he tasted the Bitterness of Death for every Man: And his Soul was made an Offering for Sin; and the Dignity of his Person, as GOD manifest in the Flesh, gave infinite Merit to his Sufferings; so that the Justice of God is hereby more glorified than if the whole Race of Mankind had underwent the Punishment threaten'd to their Sins; which was the Third Proof of the Divine Nature of the Son of GOD.
IV. Lastly, No other Notion of our Blessed Redeemer is sufficient to answer the principal Ends of his Messiahship. Which were,

I. To restore corrupt Men to the Image and Favour of GOD.

II. To give the highest Glory to the infinitely Great and Good GOD hereby.

III. To lay the greatest Obligations on Men, to love and serve God faithfully for the future.

I. If our Blessed Redeemer had been any Thing less than the Eternal WORD, which was GOD, and was made Flesh, he could not have been sufficient to restore corrupt Men to the Image and Favour of the pure and holy GOD.

It is a fundamental Truth, demonstrable from Reason, Experience, and the holy Scriptures, that Men are, by their Apostacy from GOD, cut off from the Source and Principle of Spiritual Life; and are, as of themselves, dead as to Spiritual Light, Affection, and Action. The Heart of Stone per-
Now the SON of GOD comes as the Spring of Divine Life, to communicate the Divine Nature to a dead and wretched World. To give Light to the Blind, Strength to the Lame, and Life to the Dead. In him was Life, and the Life was the Light of Men; (Joh. I. 4.) And now, he that hath the SON hath Life; which is the only Remedy for Men dead in Trespasses and Sins; and their only Hope.

This spiritual Resurrection of an abandoned Sinner to a holy Life, is said to be done by the same Power that raised up Jesus from the Dead, (Eph. I. 19, 20.) For as Christ had Power to raise his own Body from the Grave, (Joh. X. 18.) to had he Power to quicken whomsoever he would, (Joh. V. 21.) For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus sets Men free from the Law of Sin and Death, (Rom. VIII. 2.) not by superseding or overthrowing, but by quickening and sublimating, our humane Faculties.

It is thro' the gracious Gifts of this most bountiful Mediator ascended up on High, that the Work of Sanctifica-
The expression of spiritual regeneration, a new creation, and a divine
creation is advanced in all true Christians, who are consecrated by his Spirit as to many Temples of God. For of his fulness do they receive, Grace for Grace, (Joh. I. 16.) And it is through the ordinary Communication of the Gifts of this infinite Mediator, in whom all fulness dwells, that any Man is not as violently and incorrigibly set on Wickedness as Devils are. For we see some, in whom these common degrees of Grace (which are given them as talents to be employ'd for greater Measures of it) are utterly worn off and wasted; that they are impious and mischievous to the utmost Extent of their Capacity: And as St. James speaks, they are twice dead (even to Morality as well as Christianity) pluck'd up by the Roots, (Jude, Ver. 12.) Now where the root it self is with'erd, it is above all humane Art and Power to revive it. There must be a new Influence of the same Divine Power to restore this Sort of Life, as there was at first to give it Being, so that they must be created in Christ Jesus to good Works, (Eph. II. 12.)
Resurrection, which in Scripture describe our Restoration to the Image of GOD by Jesus Christ, were not revealed from Heaven to amuse or mislead us in the greatest Work we have to do upon Earth: But to shew us at once the Depth and Danger of our Distemper; and the infinite Goodness and Power which only can work a Cure upon us. The Rules of Moralists may polish a Man, but they cannot quicken or renew him, any more than the polishing of a Marble Statue by the Artist, can make it a living Creature.

Whether God was pleased to give any uncommon Degrees of Grace for his Son's Sake, to some sober and honest Heathens, we cannot say; nor how he will deal with them in the other World: For it does not appertain to us to judge them that are without. But one Thing we know, and it should never be out of our Minds; namely, that except our Righteousness exceeds the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (yea, and that of the Heathen Moralists and Philosophers too) we cannot enter into the Kingdom of GOD, (Matth. V. 20.)
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

It is the matchless Glory of the Christian Religion, and the principal End of Christ's coming in the Flesh, that he is a common Fountain of Life to all that receive him in his saving Offices: For *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins,* (Acts V. 31.) The Second Adam, as a common Root to his Church, communicates that divine Efflux of spiritual Life and Power, and of Light and Consolation, which was cut off from the First Adam and his Posterity, by their Departure from God. For the Son of God comes to *turn Men from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God,* (Acts XXVI. 18.) And as a Man in his corrupt State feels the Springs, Inclinations, and Urgings of a sinful Principle, tending to Impiety and Vice; so will the same Person, when renewed by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, feel the Motions, Persuasions, and Impelings of a Divine Principle, to Righteousness and Holiness. So that we must be born again of Water, and of the Holy Ghost, (brought into a truly Christian State by the Covenant of Baptism, and the
The Divine Nature  Serm. V.

Thing therein covenanted, that is, Spiritual Regeneration) or we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, (Joh. III. 5.)

Would to God, we were well appriz’d of the deplorable Damages the Christian Church has suffer’d for want of a due insisting on these Two grand Principles of the Christian Religion, which are the Characteristic of it, viz. the natural Depravity and Corruption of all Men, and the Necessity of Spiritual Regeneration throu’ Jesus Christ. The Holy Scriptures are very express and clear in both these Assertions, and the whole Scheme of Man’s Salvation in the Gospel turns upon them; so that they are cardinal and fundamental Principles: And, to our Comfort, no Church in the World is more Orthodox in both of them than the Church of England, as we see in her Ninth Article, and several other, and in the whole Composure of our Liturgy.

I have been often surpriz’d by the Complaints of several Foreign Divines, who have favoured me with their Correspondence, intimating that they have been inform’d, that the
Church of England is tinctur'd with Socinianism. This is a Calumny perfectly groundless; for no Church in the World is more firmly fortified against it. Our publick Confessions, Articles, and Devotions, are perfectly opposite thereunto; nor has any Church sent forth braver Champions against it, as these Learned Foreigners have afterwards fully owned.

We cannot teach any other Doctrine, without a manifest Deviation from the Doctrine of our Church. Yet the vain Conceit of a Sufficiency of Wisdom and Strength in our selves to become Good and Happy, seems to be a very pleasing Delusion to the natural Man. We see, the Deists profess it, and carnal Men are usually fond of it, thro' the Pride of their Hearts. Now to cure this radical Distemper in Men, the first Lessons of our divine Religion direct us to deny our selves, and to take up our Cross daily, and follow the meek and lowly Jesus. And the inspir'd wise Prince bequeath'd this Fundamental Maxim of Wisdom to Posterity, (Prov. III. 5.) Lean not to thine own Understanding. He that trusteth in his own Heart is a Fool.
Here therefore I cannot but say, that it deserves our serious remark, that while some Christian Divines have, by their mere moral Discourses, seem'd to bring down our divine Religion too near the Level of Heathen Morality; they have, by the righteous Providence of God, been permitted to be insulted and despis'd by the Deists and Rationalists; to the Rise and Progress of whole Errors, they themselves gave too great Occasion and Advantage.

Those who, in these Days of the Gospel, set themselves to imitate the Writings of the great Masters of Morality among the Heathens, will be despis'd by those who see that they come not up to their Original. And thus the Writings of Seneca and Cicero come to be more esteem'd by some, than some modern Books of Christian Theology.

And in Analog to this, it seems a very reasonable Conjecture, that as the Want of due Christian Discipline has given Occasion to the Prevalency of that Belial-Spirit, which vents itself in Books like that call'd, The Rights of the Christian Church: In which
Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.

which the Erastian seems to level the Way for the Hobbit, confounding the Order, that they may destroy the Being of the Christian Church: So the Pelagian Conceit of the Natural Re-stitude and Sufficiency of Man, has given too great Occasion to Socinians and others, to deny the Divinity of our LORD and Saviour. For while People entertain a Fancy, that they have no Need of such a MIGHTY Saviour, as the Scriptures represent, it is no Wonder that they do not believe in him, as the WORD made Flesh. While they see not their want of such a propitiatory Sacrifice, they care not to believe on him as the Lamb of GOD that taketh away the Sins of the World. They do not perceive their Want of Spiritual Life, and therefore do not believe on Him as that Life which is the Light of the World, whilst the broken Heart and the wounded Spirit thirst for these Doctrines as the Waters of Life.

It would be a Cure to many Divisions and Disorders among us, if there was a general Care to keep to the Articles of our Church in Points of Doctrine; especially those of Orig-
original Depravity, and Christian Regeneration: And could we also attain such a primitive Discipline as might distinguish such as honour their Profession, from such as are a Scandal to it, (which was certainly the Intention of our Church in the compiling of her publick Offices) we should obtain Favour in the Sight of God and all good Men.

If the Purposes of the Great and Good GOD are to establish us, and to make our Zion a Praise in the Earth, He will give us the Means of bringing these Things to pass, which, however difficult to attain, seem altogether necessary to the Honour and Subsistence of our divine Religion; which is, alas! at this Day made a Reproach and a Taunt by harden'd Jews, Turks, and Pagans abroad, and by petulant Hereticks at Home in the Want of them.

The Sum of this Particular is, that none but He that made Man after God's own Image, could reimpresse that Image of God upon Man after his Apostacy and Depravation, which proves the Divinity of the Son of God.
II. Another End of Christ's Messiahship was, to give the greatest Glory to the infinitely Great and Good GOD hereby. For this was proclaim'd by Angels at his Birth, (Luk. II. 14.) Glory to GOD in the Highest.

Now, let every reasonable Person judge, whether it be an equal Display of divine Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy, that a Man of extraordinary Goodness appear in the World to lead Men to God, as a perfect Example of a holy Life, and a patient Death, which is the Socinian Hypothesis; or that God himself, in the Person of his Eternal SON, unite the Soul and Body of Man into a personal Union with the Deity, and in this Divine Person becomes a Sacrifice of infinite Merit to redeem the lost Race of Men, and to be a Fountain of spiritual Life to them, which is the plain Gospel Account of the Matter? Whether of these two Suppositions, I say, do most truly answer the Divine Characters given of the Messiah, by all the Prophets that have been since the World began? And whether of the Two doth most fitly accomplish him
him to be a *Mediator between God and Man?* And in which of the two Schemes do *infinite Justice* and infinite *Mercy* shine most gloriously together? The Socinians give us only a View of God's great Mercy herein, but the *Apostles* represent at the same Time to us, GOD's perfect *Righteousness* in our Redemption. For, since God hath redeemed us with his own Blood, (Aft. XX. 28.) His Justice hath nothing further to demand, and his Mercy nothing more to crave. The Pleas of the *strictest Justice* are satisfied in Punishing; and the Pleas of the most *extensive Mercy* are gratified in Pardoning. We behold on the Cross of Christ the most awful Act of Justice that was ever seen in the World, and in the same View, the richest Mercy. For the *Just dies for the Unjust*, that he might *bring us to GOD*; and this through a most *righteous Mercy*, and a most *merciful Justice*. And therefore,

III. This lays the greatest *Obligations* on all Men to *love and serve God faithfully for the Future*; Which was
was the last End of Christ's Messiahship proposed to be spoken to.

Nothing in the World speaks such Terror to Sinners, as the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ: For it is here natural for the Sinner to say in his own Breast; "If GOD spared not his "own Son, how can I think he will "spare me? Yea, if his beloved Son, "who never offended him, groaned, "bled, and agoniz'd under the "Weight of imputed Guilt, how "shall I bear the Indignation of Al-"mighty GOD, who have so hei-"nously and habitually provoked him? On the other Hand, here is the greatest Argument and Inducement to bring us to the Love and Service of GOD. For we may reasonably conclude, that our good Creator will receive us with great Delight, when we forfake our Sins, and turn to him, since he sacrificed his only SON to make Way for this very Thing And how can we but love and serve such an infinite Lover of Men? For if when we were yet Sinners, God so pitied us as to give such a Ransom for us; who can conceive what Glories he has prepared for those that shall be
The Divine Nature. Serm. V.

be reconciled to him thereby? For he spared not his only Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all Things?

This fixes the Consolation of the Penitent who believes in Jesus; and fully answers that gracious Part of his mediatorial Office, in which he was to heal the broken in Heart, and bind up the bruised Spirit, (Luk.IV.18.)

Such as converse with Persons convinced of the infinite Evil of Sin, have often heard their mournful Expressions, full of Despondency and Darkness on this Subject. Let us then here suppose a Socinian approaching to visit and comfort such a Person. The bleeding Conscience complains of many Sins highly aggravated, lying on it as a Burden too heavy to be borne; and perhaps, thro' Ignorance or great Darkness on his Spirit, has not a sufficient View of the proper Way of Healing; and therefore cries out with Bitterness and Horror, How can I stand before the Holy LORD GOD? Tell me, Men and Brethren, what must I do to be saved? To this the Socinian would reply, God is infinitely merciful; you must rely
on that. But how vehemently would the convicted Person retort the Argument, and say; I believe that God is infinitely merciful; but I am sure, he is infinitely just too. How can he be a righteous GOD, and yet forgive such a sinful Wretch as I am? How is his Honour provided for as a Lawgiver and Governor? What satisfies his perfect Justice, and equally declares his Hatred of Sin, but my Eternal Sufferings? My Soul can be satisfied with nothing but what glorifies God’s Mercy in forgiving, without eclipsing the Glory of his Purity and Justice in so doing.

Truly, I cannot conceive, how such reasonable Doubts of Conscience can be solved by any Socinian Principles. They cry, God is plenteous in Mercy, but do not shew, how he can with Justice dispence it to the Guilty.

But in the Christian Doctrine of the Word made Flesh, and our Pas-sower sacrifice’d for us; the whole Matter is perfectly adjusted, to the infinite Glory of God, and the great Com-fort of every penitent believing Sin-ner. God herein appears perfectly Just,
Just, and yet the gracious Justifier of them that believe, Rom. III. 25.

This is also great Consolation to every sincere Christian that groans under many Infirmities, and the Imperfection of his best Performances. The Son of God is made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. He will help the Infirmities of sincere Christians, and assist their sincere Endeavours, and pardon their unavoidable Failures, and plead their Cause in the last Day.

Now, these Promises of divine Grace in the Scriptures, must not slacken, but quicken our utmost Endeavours; which is the End for which they are granted: God is pleased to promise to work in us to will and to do according to his good Pleasure; that we might hereby be encouraged to work out our Salvation; not with a presumptive Heedlessness, but with Fear and Trembling, (Phil. II. 12, 13.)

Let us then bless God with the utmost Fervency of Spirit, for his infinite Mercy to Sinners in his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, and for his great Love in bringing us to the Knowledge
ledge of it by the *Apostolick Doctrine*, which shines gloriously amongst us. Let us beseech *God* to keep us *steadfast* in this Faith, in the midst of those Swarms of *Errors* and *Heresies* that are permitted for our Trial. And may our Orthodox Faith be ever plentiful of genuine Fruits, like those produced among the primitive Embracers of it; that living by Faith, we may rejoice in Hope, and at last attain the *End of our Faith, the Salvation of our Souls*, through *Jesus Christ* our only Mediator and Redeemer; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all Glory and Praise for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

**Serm. V. of Jesus Christ.**
Causes of the Modern Infidelity.

R O M. I. Ver. 28.

And even as they did not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge, GOD gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do those Things which are not convenient.

HAVING endeavour'd in the former Discourses to shew, that the Denial of the Being of GOD, is a Thing perfectly monstrous and abhorrent to Reason; and that Unbelief
belief of the Christian Revelation, is altogether unworthy of a serious and discerning Mind: I come now to inquire, whence these impious Absurdities (which cast such Shame on humane Nature, and bring everlasting Ruine on the Souls of Men) took their Rise; and how they came to be nursed up to such a Bulk and Height of Stature, as we have seen them in our Days. And here, upon a due Inquiry, we shall find them principally owing, I conceive, to these Five general Causes.

I. The Violence of Mens carnal and worldly Inclinations.
II. The Want of careful Instruction and Restraint in the Time of Youth.
III. Undue Conceits of Humane Sufficiency.
IV. Gross Abuses of Prosperity.
V. The Impudence and Impunity of Persons scandalously Vicious and Prophane.

By these unhappy Steps, Men first come to a Dislike of Religion, then to a Contempt of it, and at last to an utter Renouncing of it; razing even the
the Foundations of Religion and Virtue, by denying the Being of GOD, and the Difference betwixt moral Good and Evil. The first Rise of which, I conceive, to be owing,

I. To the Violence of Mens carnal and worldly Inclinations. These, when they grow impetuous, and are unguarded, bear down all Opposition, whether made from Honour, Prudence, or Religion: It breaks thro' the Intreaties of Friends, the Fear of GOD, and the Remonstrances of their own Consciences; and makes a Sacrifice of all these to the Idol-Lust. Hence arises the obstinate Warfare betwixt the Law in the Members and the Law in the Mind. The Mind of many a carnal Person testifies and remonstrates against the Inrodes of sinful Concupiscence, especially in their first Irruptions and Indulgences. The Mind protests against them as evil, shameful, and dangerous: But then the Mind loses Ground by every wilful Act of Sin: And as the Mind waxes dim, the Heart grows insensible, and the Fear of GOD abates; the Conscience too, like a Spring long over-
over-born by a Weight upon it, grows weak, and is less and less apt to exert it's relucting and resisting Power. Till at last *Lust* and *Vice* triumph and carry all at their Will; like Thieves in the Night that have gagged the Family, bound the Watch, and put out the Candles, who then live at Discretion. Thus the People that do not like to retain *God* in their Knowledge, set themselves against every Thing that is on *God's* Side; against all the Ordinances of *God*, and Workings of his Spirit, and against that very Light of their Minds which approves them. Till at last their Darkness becomes gross, their Prejudices strong, and their Case in a manner desperate. For now they are, as it were, equip'd with the whole Armour of Darkness, and their Desire and Design is, to oppose the Light.

Thus *Jannes* and *Jambres* opposed *Moses*, having the Reverse of *Moses's* Choice in their View, namely, preferring the *Treasures of Egypt* before the *Promises* of the People of *God*. Thus we read of *Balaam* led by the inordinate Desire of King *Balak's* Rewards, against the Dictates and Re-
Causes of the Serm. VI.

monstrances of his Conscience; which was indeed the Madness of that Prophet. Thus the Jews, in their Fondness to carnal Ordinances, and ambitious Conceits of the Earthly Sovereignty of their Messiah, rejected and murder'd the Lord of Life; hardening their Hearts against the Things which belong'd to their Peace, till Wrath came upon them to the uttermost. The Pharisees being prejudiced against the spiritual and intrinsic Holiness of Christ's Doctrine, and the Sadducees bent against the Doctrine of the Resurrection and a future State; they both rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, and maliciously and unpardonably blasphemed against the Holy Ghost.

In Summ, it was this Aversion to spiritual Instruction that the Apostle in the Text assigns as the principal Cause of those uncommon and unnatural Heights, to which Impiety and Vice had ascended among the Romans at that Time. They did not like, says he, to retain GOD in their Knowledge. Non probarunt, immo improbarunt, says Zegerius, on the Text. They dislik'd that Knowledge of GOD which was
the Issue of natural Light. The primitive Fathers generally understand this as spoken of the Heathens, tho' a late Expositor, of great Worth, understands it of the Gnosticks. Now those wise Men, says the Apostle, among the Heathens, beholding the wonderful Frame of all Things in Heaven and Earth, could not but infer the glorious Attributes of the invisible Maker of all these; and did with good Reason conclude, that none could be before or above this wise and mighty Creator or Builder (tho' they did not know him to be the Creator) of all Things; so that they came, by natural Light, to the Knowledge of his eternal Power and Godhead, (Rom. I. 20.) Yet after all, they disliked these Notions of GOD and Religion, finding it troublesome to them in the Practice of their Vices, and therefore they discarded them.

Some of them set their Minds against the Being of GOD, as Diogenes, Theodorus, and others: Others some denied his Providence and Cognizance of sublunary Affairs, as Democritus, Epicurus, and the rest of that
Sect; embracing the senseless Dream of the World's being formed by Chance, in the desultory Play of Atoms; of whose first Make or Motion, they could give no Account. A Phancy to perfectly groundless and incoherent, that no Person, that is awake and in his Wits, can bring his Mind to think, that any one Creature was thus made: No, not a Gnat or an Ant.

But what will not a vicious Inclination impose on Mens Minds? What idle Stories do they embrace as an Expedient to thrust GOD out of their Thoughts, and if they could, out of the World? For the Thought of a Righteous GOD is very troublesome to a Mind disposed to offend him, and provoke his Vengeance.

How justly then does GOD give up such Obstinates to a reprobate Mind; (αὐτὸν οὐκ ἄσωμεν) to a distorted Judgment and a perverse Temper? permitting them to abound in the Delusions to which they desire to be abandoned. So that from henceforth they adored senseless Idols, and indulged unnatural Lusts; (Rom. I. 25.) and did Things that were not convenient; which is spoken
spoken by a Miojis, in the Words of my Text: in which more is meant than is expressed; for it implies that they did Things that were contrary to natural Inclination, and to Reason and common Sense; as they are related in the Context, and by their own Writers. Suetonius and Tacitus, the Roman Historians of those Times, give a dismal Account of the Vices which then over-ran the whole Roman Empire: They relate such Things of the Arbiter Neroniane libidinis; and of the Pranks of Messalina, and such studied Improvements of Vice as are only fit to be express'd by the τα μη καθηκοντα in the Text. Their Philosopers, Cicero and Seneca, exclaimed against them; and their Poets, Juvenal and Persius, lash'd them with their Satyrs. But it was only St. Paul and the Christian Writers that could discover the true Causes of these Enormities, and prescribe a Method of an effectual Cure. The Cause was, their Dislike to retain GOD in their Knowledge; and the only Cure was, their penitent Return to GOD thro' Faith in Jesus Christ.
We have just Reason to impute the Overflowings of Impiety in our Days to the same Cause. Multitudes give their Hearts to worldly and fleshly Lusts, and therefore do not like to retain God in their Knowledge. They shut their Eyes against the glorious Light of Divine Revelation, and against the Light of Nature itself. They draw the thick Curtains of Prejudice and Carnality as close as they can, because their Heart is fully set in them to do Evil, and to do it with as little Interruption from Conscience as they can.

And now, into what deep and ruinous Pits are they likely to fall, who are resolved not to open their Eyes to look before them? Especially considering, that a judicial Blindness and Hardness from God, is the Judgment often threaten'd in the Gospel to such as will not see with their Eyes, or understand with their Hearts. For, that most dreadful Threatning denounced by the Prophet Isaiah, (Chap. VI. 9.) is six Times repeated in the New-Testament. I shall only recite that Quotation of it which we find, Act. XXVIII. 25, 26. Well spake the
Serm. VI. Modern Infidelity.

the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet unto our Fathers; saying, Go to this People, and say: Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive; For the Heart of this People is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of Hearing, and their Eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them, i. e. save them.

This is one of the most terrible Texts in the whole Book of GOD, and ought to strike Terror on every One who finds his Heart cool and heedless under the Gospel-Ministration. Yet how terrible soever the Judgment of a closed Eye and a harden'd Heart is; it is, we see, of Mens own making and inflicting; their Heart is waxed gross, and their Eyes have they closed: So that the whole of this Judgment, as from GOD, is his giving them over to their affected Blindness and Insensibleness.

This, I conceive, fully accounts for the Infidelity and Atheism of the grossly immoral Part of Men; it is the Depth of their Mire and Dung that casts
cafts forth such rank Weeds, and occasions them to strike such deep Roots. They will not be taught of GOD, or controlled by the Fear of Invisibles, because they do not like to retain GOD in their Knowledge, and are fond of their Vices. The Notion of a just and holy GOD strikes a Damp upon their Appetites and Pleasures, and therefore they first cast it out of their Thoughts, and then out of their Creed. The ancient Observation of Plotinus will, I conceive, hold good in all Ages; namely, that he never knew a virtuous Man pleading against the Being of GOD, or the Immortality of the Soul. This Absurdity seems to be the daring and desperate Effort of such as have made it their Interest, that there should be no GOD, nor World to come: Of such who, considering the Righteousness of GOD's Nature and Government, cannot but conclude themselves undone for ever, if there be such a Being. This brings the Fool to say in his Heart, (in his secret Wishes) there is no GOD; (or, O! that there was none,) and at length his Wish slips into his Fancy, and then passes for his Faith,
Serm. VI.  Modern Infidelity.

Faith. And for ought we know, he may, in the more airy and jocund Part of his Life, think as he says, if GOD gives him up to his strong Delusions to believe so gross a Lie. But after all, it will be a very difficult Task to be a steady Atheist in long Sickness, or in any Train of heavy Afflictions. When the sick Atheist is, by the Necessity of his languishing Condition, separated from his worldly Affairs and carnal Pleasures, and from his Partners in Vice and Folly; and is now, by Fasting and Retirement, made capable of thinking like a Man; he cannot but be convinced of the Vanity of all Things in this World, and the Necessity of looking out for something higher and better than what the Brutes enjoy, with a Fear of something worse than Brutes can suffer. Now, the Thoughts of an Almighty Creator, a holy Governor, and a righteous Judge, break in upon him; and the Terrors of infinite Wrath to come make him tremble. So that as the Steams of Luft go off, the Light of Reason and Religion return to the Soul: Which verifies the Observation of a Learned and pious
Causes of the pious Author, That it is Uncleanliness of Spirit, not Distance of Place, that dissolves us from GOD. The Father of Lights would make our Bodies the Temples of his Spirit, did we not defile them by odious Impurities. Young Persons that are devoted to GOD in Baptism, are more especially intituled to these Impressions of divine Wisdom; if they seek them in GOD's appointed Way, with due Preparation of Soul. They that seek me early, shall find me, (Prov. VIII. 17.) as it was eminently verified in King Solomon, King Josiah, and others.

This leads me to consider the Second Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, namely,

II. The Want of careful Instruction and Restraint in the Time of Youth. When the young Person comes to enter on the Scene of rational Action, and is fixing Principles, and taking Measures for the Conduct of his Life; what can be a more seasonable Kindnels, and consequently, a more binding Duty on Parents and Governors, than to set young People right at the Beginning of their Course,
Serm. VI. Modern Infidelity.

Course, by convincing them of the infinite advantages of serving GOD. This is the proper duty and designation of spiritual parents, called God-fathers and God-mothers, who join with the natural parents to promote and cultivate the new birth of the child, and to nourish and strengthen that spiritual life, under God, which has the promise of life eternal. Of what invaluable use would this be, would the ghostly undertakers answer their obligations! We should then reap such visible benefits from this ancient usage of the Church, as would silence the objections made against it. But in the want of this spiritual cultivation, what can the corrupt soil bring forth but briers and thorns, things to wound and grieve all that have to do with them? The youth is weak in his judgment, and violent in his appetites. Temptations crowd in upon him, and infernal spirits blow up the flame. He has but little or no experience of things, and therefore has made few or no observations about them. Now, what will become of this poor forlorn youth, if no body stirrs to succour
Causes of the Serm. VI.

cour him? What can be the Issue, in the common Course of Things, but that he will first fall into Vice, and then into Hardness of Heart? Then to Scoffing, and thence to Atheism, or an Atheistical sort of Life, as without GOD in the World. A Sight very afflicting, but too common!

Much of this, I am persuaded, might be prevented by a due Regard to the Fourth Commandment, which is a Guard, (as many Divines observe) not only to the first Table, but to all the Laws that follow in the Second. Would Parents and Masters strictly inspect their Children and Servants on that Day, as they are commanded of GOD, it would prevent much of that infidel and belial Spirit that abounds. It is an Observation of long and general Credit, and it is founded on Reason as well as Experience, That more young People have been debauch'd on the Lord's Day, than on all the rest of the Week: And my Text gives us the Reason of it. The Lord's Day is design'd to improve Men in the Knowledge and Fear of GOD; such then as decline the due Observance of this Sacred Day,
Day, do not like to retain God in their Knowledge, and so he gives them up to vile Affections.

May this awaken Parents, Masters, and spiritual Sponsors, to a just Exercise of their respective Duties, to which the faithful Pastor cannot but excite them by Example as well as Counsel; and may it induce every Christian to contribute, according to his Ability, to those blessed Schools of Charity, which are one of the Ornaments and Bulwarks of this City and Nation, and afford us Ground to hope, that God will not utterly abandon us to our Sin and Folly. Though we, of this Generation, have been too barren, these young Plants may bring forth better Fruit, and enjoy better Times; which God grant.

III. Another Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, is an undue Conceit of Humane Sufficiency. The Man that fancies he is able of himself to know and do every Thing that concerns his Salvation, comes naturally to despise Divine Revelation, with the Deists and Humanists; or to bring all Revelation
lation to a Level with his own Notions, as the Arians and Socinians. Now, both of these proceed from a Pride of Spirit, whereby Men come to idolize their own Understanding. The same may be said of many Persons, who have overvalued their crude Notions in Philosophy, which has betray'd some to Atheistical Notions. But that Philosophy is falsely so call'd, which separates the Effect from the prime Cause. This is no better than vain Deceit. The Pride and Vanity of Pomponatius and Vaninus, and those other Aristotelian Atheists, who attributed the Agency of all Things, to the Influences of the Heavenly Bodies, are fully detected and exploded by the Learned Dr. Henry More in his Theological Works. The Pride of Julian, Porphyrie, and Celsus, appears in their many Objections against the Meanness of our Saviour's Birth and Rank, and against the Self-Abasement of his Doctrine. And the ingenious Dr. Scott conceives, that he can trace the Effects of the same Pride and Oftentation of Knowledge from Democritus to Protagoras, and from him to Epicurus, and thence to Mr. Hobbs, with
with a Sort of Transmigration of Temper, tho' not of Soul. And who can justify Sosinus from this Charge, who, in Disgust to some Doctrines then taught by the Church of Rome, formed out of his own Brain, a Scheme of Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline, which he calls Christian, tho' contrary to the Tenure of the Gospel, and unknown before in the Christian World?

So then, if there appears in the Unbelievers of the Gospel, such a Confidence in their own Understanding, as renders them incapable of submitting their Minds to the superior Dictates of Divine Revelation; if for this Reason they are not disposed to look unto Jesus, with an humble craving Faith, as the Source of Divine Light; if they have not such serious Convictions of the Want of supernatural Knowledge as makes them cry after Wisdom, and lift up their Voice for Understanding, and to search for it as for hid Treasure: In a Word, if, with the Pharisees, they say, We see; and with the Laodiceans they boast, that they are in Want of nothing, tho' at the same Time they are poor,
poor, and blind, and naked: And if, under these Misperceptions, they slight or diffuse the Ordinances of the Gospel, which are God's established Methods of teaching, renewing, and saving Men: It is no Wonder at all, if they not only remain in Infidelity, but are more and more hardened therein. And after this, it will be natural to them to scoff and mock at others, even for their revering those Mysteries, which the Holy Ghost assures us, were made known to all Nations by Jesus Christ, for the Obedience of Faith, (Rom. XVI. 26.) In this Case surely, the Mind of Man should yield an entire Deference to the Voice of God; which is the most reasonable Thing in the World, because nothing can be more infallibly true, than that which is spoken by Him that cannot lie.

Nothing is more evident, than that the Gospel every where speaks of Man, in his natural Estate, as dark and ignorant of Spiritual Things, (1 Cor. III.) and acquaints us, that this came on us by our Descent from the First Adam, who, by departing from the Foun-
Serm. VI. Modern Infidelity.

Fountain of Light, fell under the Power of Darkness. And the same Gospel directs us to Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of GOD, and the Power of God, to regain our spiritual Sight and Sense. And on this Account it is said, that the first Man Adam was made a living Soul, the last Adam a quickening Spirit, (1 Cor. XV. 45.) πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν, a Life-making Spirit. And thus it was prophesied, that Men should be taught of GOD, (Isa. LIV. 13.) And our Saviour expressly applies these Words of Isaiah to his Followers, saying, It is written in the Prophets, they shall all be taught of GOD, (Joh. VI. 45.) Such then as are too proud to seek Divine Instruction, or too unserious to apply it, are likely to die without Knowledge, and to be condemn'd of themselves, in their last Moments, as undone by their own Folly and Untractableness.

IV. Another Cause of Atheism and Infidelity, is the Abuse of Prosperity. For by the Affluence of outward Things, the Heart and Mind are often slacken'd and drawn away from GOD and spiritual Things; for we cannot serve GOD and Mammon. So that
Causes of the Serm. VI.
in this the Wisdom of Agur appear'd, that he fear'd to ask Riches and Prosperity of God, left he should be full, and deny God, and say, who is the Lord? (Prov. XXX. 9.) There are indeed but few Heads strong enough to bear the Height of worldly Exaltation without Giddiness. Solomon himself fell dreadfully under this Temptation; he laid aside his Armour and his Watch when there was no Adversary nor evil Occurrent, and so received many dangerous Wounds. Atheism scarce ever grows but in a fat and luxuriant Soil. The afflicted Person cannot forget God, his Misery drives him to his Benefactor, and he cannot restrain Prayer before him: But the Prosperity of Fools destroys them.

V. Lastly, The Impudence and Impunity of Persons scandalously vicious and prophane, contribute to the Advancement of Atheism and Unbelief.

Whenever Things come to such Extremity, that the Laws of God are trampled on with Insolence and Boasting, and the Mysteries of our Holy Faith are made the Scorn and Laugh-
Serm. VI.  Modern Infidelity.

Laughter of prophane Men: If Blasphemy and Obscenity come into Credit; and Religion and Virtue are pointed at as ridiculous: If it be thought a vain and mean Thing to fear God, and to make serious Mention of his Name: If it even become unfsashionable to praise our infinite Benefactor at our Tables, or to appear serious and devout in our Churches: If the holy and tremendous Name of the Great and Glorious God be not only vainly used, but vilely treated, his Sacred Day levelled in common with the rest, and his holy Sacraments rejected by some, and slighted by others: If these crying Enormities are publick and common, and there be no Power or Authority in Church or State put forth to stem or control them: Such a Nation or People will, without a Miracle, first become a horrible Scene of Atheism and Impiety, and then of Misery and Desolation. That one Sin of Perjury, where it is apparent and common, opens the ready Way to Atheism and all Impiety; because it not only lays the Conscience waste in the perjured Person, but tends to lessen the awful Fear.
Fear of GOD in others. Diagoras is said to have broke forth into professed Atheism, for that a Person whom he knew to be perjur'd, went off from the Place without a Mark of Divine Vengeance.

Here, alas! We cannot but take Notice of the great Pains some Persons take to disarm the Christian Church of that Discipline which its Divine Author instituted, and the primitive Church exercised; and without which, no Society can be supposed to subsist with any Strength or Reputation; viz. the Power of censuring the Faulty, chastizing the Dissolute, and casting out the Incorrigible. Till this Power be restored and reverenced in the Church of Christ, it will be infirm and inglorious. The vigorous Exercise of it, being no more than what Christ himself hath instituted; (Matth. XVIII. 17.) would not interfere with the Office of the Civil Magistrate, but they would justly harmonize in discouraging and correcting scandalous Offenders; to the Glory of GOD, and the Repute of the Christian Religion, which is now reproached
Whereas therefore the prudent Legislature of this Nation hath decreed various Penalties to sundry Acts of Impiety and Vice, we acknowledge it always with all Thankfulness; and we cannot but think those excellent Persons deserve uncommon Honours, especially from the Ministers of our Church and State, who have nobly exerted their Endeavours to make these Laws effectual to the good Ends for which they were made, by a due Execution of them. This, bles- sed be GOD, hath in a great Measure abated the Infolence of Vice, and given new Spirits to languishing Virtue and Religion, and made some Amends for the want of Discipline in the Church.

But then we must also say, with a late ingenious Author, that the Laws of the State are not the Discipline of the Church. The Things of Caesar and the Things of GOD are of quite different Natures, and have their proper Boundaries and Restrictions.

It is vainly said by some, that this would too much advance the Power of the
Causes of the Serm. VI.

the Ecclesiastic Body; and it is very indecently and unfairly suggested by others, that it would favour the Craft of the Priest. For, as nothing is here demanded but what Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, hath instituted and appointed; so by this Discipline the Negligence and ill Examples of Ministers would be censured and corrected no less than those of the People: And thus the whole Body of Christians would be more firmly kept up to the Rules of the Holy Gospel, which is the most desirable Thing in the World.

Others argue with as little Judgment who say, that these Powers of the Church and State are two Sovereign Independent Powers, and are therefore inconsistent and irreconcilable in the same political Body: For, as the holy Bible does no Way lessen the Authority of the civil Statute-Book; but on the contrary, does manifestly strengthen and enforce it. So the just Discipline of the Church, does no way interfere with the proper Rights or Power of the State; for it does not intermeddle with them. *It touches neither Life nor Limb* (says one) *nor civil*
civil Property; it does not disable any one from being a Member of the Common-Wealth, and therefore is not, in its own Nature, prejudicial to the Authority of the Civil Power. Yea, it is useful and subservient to it; because the better Christian any one is, the better Subject he must of Necessity be; and he that does not fear God, will never duly honour his Sovereign.

Thus have I laid before you some of the trodden Paths which lead to Atheism and Infidelity. Vain Men do not like to retain the awful Thoughts of God in their Minds, because it hinders the free Indulgence of their carnal and worldly Lusts; like those who put out the Candles when they do those Things which will not bear the Light. Others magnify their own Comprehension and Sufficiency, and despise supernatural Light and Assistance. And where these Maladies are not corrected by Christian Instruction and Correction in the Time of Youth; and where they grow insolent and heady by the Means of outward Wealth and Prosperity, and are hardened by reason of the Impudence and Impunity of others in the
same Enormities, the Case too often ends in *Atheism* and *Infidelity*.

There are sundry other Things which contribute to carry Men on in these Falsities, thro' the Vanity of their Minds. Such are the *Hypocrisy* of some who have been esteemed for Religion, and the carnal *Divisions* and Strivings among Christians, commonly so call'd. The Passions of Theological *Writers*, and the building our Faith on *Man*, or any Sett of Men: A superficial View of *Natural Philosophy*, without coming to the first Cause of all Things; and a general *Diffidence* and Distrust of every Thing: The Prosperity of profligate and prophane Men, and the common Fallhood in Dealing, and even in Appeals to the Almighty *G O D*: The burlesquing of the Holy Scriptures, mocking at holy Offices and Persons, and jesting on the awful Concerns of the World to come; with other too common, and too little resented, *Insults* on Religion and the Author of it: These, and many such Things, are many Times Irritations of an Atheistical Humour, tho' without any Colour of Reason. And infernal *Spirits*,...
Serm. VI.  Modern Infidelity.

rits, whose Business it is to destroy Men, are not wanting to push on the Mischief. He that put it into the Heart of Judas to betray his Master, and into the Mouth of Peter to deny him, will not be slack in prompting others to blaspheme and renounce him.

Upon the whole Matter, we have seen, that tho' it be most certain, that GOD hath given us such Evidence of the Divine Authority of the Christian Religion, as is abundantly sufficient to establish a rational Assent and Belief to it; yet this is to take Place upon us, as upon Rational and free Agents; such as are rightly disposed to make a free Inquiry into the Matter, and to take advised Resolutions thereupon.

We have seen also, that GOD is ready to assist the ignorant and weak by his holy Spirit, that they may judge and choose aright in these important Concerns; if they duly seek and attend on him for it in the Method he has prescrib'd: And on the contrary, it is most evident, that the proud and prejudic'd, and the unserious and indevout, are not rightly dispos'd for
for the Knowledge of these divine Truths, nor intitl'd to the Promise of divine Assistance. So that the neglected Soul is led first by its own Blindness and Perverseness to a Custom of slighting and forgetting GOD, and at last to an Obstinacy of Mind and Heart against Him. For as they like not to retain GOD in their Knowledge, he gives them up to vile Affections.

We may learn from this not only the Reasonableness, but the Necessity of walking humbly with our GOD. Our whole Dependance is on him continually, for in him we live; and his Aids are administered thro' Jesus Christ his Son, without whom we can do nothing.

Let us then esteem all the Means and Opportunities of Divine Communications as the most advantageous Enjoyments of humane Life, and learn to live by Faith, and not by Sense.

Let the Word of GOD be ever precious to us, and his sacred Day and Ordinances our chief Delight. Let us rejoice to meet together to worship GOD, and to unite our Prayers for publick and private Blessings:
Sings: And let us resolve that we, and our Houses will serve the Lord.

Lastly, Let us manifest such a constant Regard to the Will of GOD in all our Actions, that we may be truly said to walk with GOD, and to have Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

These are sure Methods to keep Atheistical Thoughts out of our own Breasts, and to banish such monstrous Imaginations out of the World: Which GOD Almighty grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.
SERMON VII.

The Reasonableness of the Christian Hope.

Titus I. Ver. 2, 3.

In Hope of Eternal Life, which God that cannot lie promised before the World began; but hath in due Time manifested his Word thro’ Preaching.

Having endeavour’d to wipe off the Dust which the Adversaries of the Christian Faith have thrown upon it, to obscure its Glory; I come now to consider the infinite Advantages
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope.

stages that our Faith secures to us, which are so Great and God-like, that they can only be surely known by Divine Revelation. So that the very Rewards proposed by the Christian Religion, make one great Proof of its divine Original; for who but the Eternal GOD can offer Eternal Life to his Servants.

We may here observe this infinite Difference betwixt the Christian and the Infidel at the first View; namely, that it is the principal Design and Labour of the Infidel, to raise out all Notions and Fears of a Life to come, tho' in this they run counter to the Sentiments and Desires of Mankind, and to the Honour of Humane Nature: Whilst, on the other Hand, the Christian and the best and most serious Part of Mankind live in Expectation of a future State, to commence after Death, and to be the Time of Re-compence to all Men, according to what they do in the Flesh.

The Atheists and Epicureans affirm, that the Soul of Man evaporates in the Instant of Death, and is extinct. It vanishes into soft Air, said they, in the Days of the Son of Syrac, which are
are the very Words of their favourite Author Lucretius, *Tenues evanescit in Auras.* And Cecilius, in *Minutius Felix,* affirms, that Man, and every Animal, are but the spontaneous Concretion of the Elements, into which, says he, they are again dissolv'd and dispers'd.

The Christian, on the contrary, with good Reason depends on the infallible Truth of the Word of GOD, who hath said, *The Wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment; but the Righteous into Life eternal,* (Matth. XXV. ult.) So that the Christian affirms, not only that there is a Life to come after Death, which most of the Heathens in all Ages supposed, but also that it will be Eternal, which could only be certainly known by divine Revelation; for this glorious immortal Life is brought to Light by the Gospel, (2 Tim. I. 10.) The best Heathens seem'd to wish it, and to have something of Hope concerning it; but they wanted the Assurance that Christians have of this glorious Reversion, much more of the Infinity of it. Socrates himself confessed his Uncertainty of it to his Friends, the Night
Serm. VII.  the Christian Hope.

Night before his Execution, tho' he died a Martyr for the Unity of the Deity. For his Support at the Approach of Death in this Cause was evidently this, (as we have it from his own Words) That if there was no future Life, he could not then be unhappy after Death: but if there was such a State, he expected Comfort in it. And therefore Tertullian remarks of him, Nil liquido sapuit Anima Socratis; So- crates, tho' one of the wisest and best of the Heathens, saw nothing clearly as to a future State.

How happy then is the Case of every Christian in this Respect! namely, that he hath a plain and particular Description of the invisible State after Death, drawn up for his Use by GOD himself; penned by a Hand that cannot err, and declared by a Mouth that cannot lie: As the Apostle shews us in the Text, In Hope of Eternal Life, which GOD, that cannot lie, promised before the World began; but hath in due Time manifested his Word thro' Preaching.

We have in these Words,

I. A Declaration of that glorious Article of the Christian Faith, the Life Ever-
The Reasonableness of Serm. VII.

Everlasting. In Hope of ETERNAL LIFE.

II. The sure Foundation upon which the Christian builds his Faith and Hope of this Article; that is, upon the Certainty of Divine Revelation; which GOD, that cannot lie, promised before the World began.

As to the Article itself, it is vast and amazing; it strikes our Mind at once with Pleasure and with Wonder.

By Eternal Life, we mean a Life of perfect Happiness for ever: And when this is applied to Man, we comprehend the Body of Man as well as his Soul: which makes the Case still more shocking to Reason and Humane Comprehension.

What Wonder does it create in us to think of these frail Bodies of ours, which we see and feel to be of a very crazy and decaying Frame, even so as to sink, if deprived of a Meal; to be cast down by a Blast of ill Air; and sometimes to be cut off by a mere Phancy; so that it may be said to be crush'd before the Moth: Yet, that after Death these very Bodies shall arise in a perfect and immortal State;
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope.

State; and that this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality: No more to be subject to Weariness or Wounds, or to any Distemper or Pain. How surprizing is it to us to think, that our present short-liv'd State shall be changed into a State of Perpetuity, and our little Summ of Three-Score Years and Ten devolved into Ages of Ages!

But tho' this amazes humane Rea

don, it does not invalidate the Chris

tian Faith. The Foundation being

of GOD, standeth sure. For the

Matter is not what we can do or

conceive, but what infinite Power

can do for us, and what infinite

Truth has declared that he will do.

Who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the Working, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself, Phil. III. 21.

The Man that sees every Thing in this World shifting and changing, withering and decaying, finds it difficult to conceive a State whose Foundations can never be shaken, and whose Glory will never wear away: And he that is sensible of his Corruption and Offen-

Q.
The Reasonableness of Serm. VII.

ces, will be apt to think such a State too good for him: And the poor crazy Valetudinarian, that by all his Care and Caution, with all the Help of Medicine and Advice he can take, finds it hard to prop up his distempered Body for a few Years, can scarce raise his Mind to contemplate perpetual Youth, and an indolent Immortality. We must therefore in our Minds quit this present State of Things, and resolve all into the infinite Wisdom and Power of GOD, keeping his Truth and Faithfulness as our Stay; and then we shall think better of the Invisibles of his holy Word. GOD thinks it best that his Church should at present endure the Tryals of Affliction, many Times even to Blood, in its State of Warfare; and he has as certainly prepared better Things for that State of Triumph, in which he will make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy.

The Jerusalem above, is that City that has Foundations; there are the Riches which no Man takes from the Possessors; there are the Mansions truly to call'd; and there the far more
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope. 217

more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.

This glorious Life is declared in the Text to be Eternal: 'Εν τοῖς αἰῶνισ, which, tho' it may be render'd a Life of Ages, and so would denote a numberless Revolution of Years, yet this comes not up to the Fulness of the Promise. For the same Apostle renders it in other Terms in his Epistle to the Thessalonicans, (1 Thess. IV. 17) So shall we be (says he) ever with the L O R D; Πάντως οὐδ ye ζωή: Ever happy in his Presence, ever full'd with his Goodness, ever blessed in his Kingdom; for his Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, (Psal. CXLV. 13.)

This is the glorious Article of the Christian Faith, laid open to Men in the blessed Gospel, as a leading Motive to engage all Men in the Vows of the Christian Religion. It was for this End laid before Titus, the Bishop of Crete, by St. Paul in the Text; that he might acquit himself faithfully and courageously in his Master's Cause, having such an immortal Crown of Glory in View.

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Now, he that thus fights the good Fight of Faith, will certainly lay hold on eternal Life. He does not strive for Uncertainties, the Reward is sure and unquestionable; for we have for it the Word of GOD that cannot lie: Which leads us to consider the Second Particular, viz.

II. The sure Foundation upon which a Christian builds his Faith and Hope of Eternal Life;) that is, upon the Certainty of Divine Revelation; for it is promised by GOD that cannot lie. This implies these Three Propositions.

1. That the State of Eternal Life in the World to come, is declared in Books which Christians call the Holy Scriptures.
2. That these Books of the Holy Scriptures are revealed by GOD, and contain his Will.
3. That GOD, who hath revealed those Things to Men, cannot lie: He is, as the Text says, the unfalse and unfalsifying GOD.

As
Serm.VII. the Christian Hope.

As to the First, That the Holy Scriptures affirm, that there will be a Resurrection of all Men after their Natural Death, whether just or unjust; and that the Wicked shall go away from the Judgment-Seat of Jesus Christ, into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal, is plain and undeniable, (Act. XXIV. 15; Matth. XXV. 46.) Every One that reads the New-Testament sees the Brightness of this Truth breaking forth in many Pages of it. But it has been question'd by many learned Men, whether the Old Testament gave the Jews sufficient Light to discover it. To this Question the Words of our Blessed Saviour seem to give full Satisfaction, (Joh. V. 39.) Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have Eternal Life. They might see there, that the Kingdom of the Messiah was to be Eternal. (Isa. IX. 7.) Of his Kingdom there will be no End. They might see that GOD's Covenant with them was an Everlasting Covenant, (Isa. LV. 3.) They might see how the Patriarchs despised this World, with all its Riches and Enjoyments, for the sake of invisible Glories.
Glories promised them. Abraham had a better Land of Promise in View than the Earthly Canaan: And Moses despis’d the Splendor of Pharaoh’s Court and Family, having an Eye to a Superior Recompence of Reward. But yet this great Truth of a future State, was not so clearly manifested to the Jews as to convince the Sadducees, who were a numerous and powerful Sect among them, and held that there is no such Thing as the Resurrection of the Body, and no such Being as a Spirit to live without a Body, (Acts XXIII. 8.) But this is so fully and frequently declared in the Gospel, that he that runneth may read it: So that it is most truly said, that Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel, (2 Tim. I. 10.) For here we see, not only the plain Assertion of the State of eternal Life, but the very Manner and Means of restoring Men to the Hope of it, when they had lost it. For as they lost the Happiness of eternal Life by their Apostacy from GOD, the Fountain of Life and Bliss; so they are restored to it by Jesus Christ, in whom is Life, yea, who is eternal Life, or Vitality, 1 John I. 2.

We
We are taught in the holy Gospel, that true Christians are begotten again by GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant Mercy, to a lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for them; who are kept by the Power of GOD thro' Faith unto Salvation, (1 Pet. I. 2, 3, 4.) And to make this spiritual Birth more clear, the Apostle adds, (Ver. 23.) Being born again, not of corruptible Seed, but of incorruptible; even by the Word of GOD which liveth and abideth for ever. Such as are born of GOD, that is, are truly renewed in their Hearts and Lives by the Principles and Grace of the Gospel; these are the Children of GOD, and if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of GOD, and joint Heirs with Christ: Being new born of that spiritual and incorruptible Seed, which actuateth and enliveneth them to Eternity, being incorruptible.

It is not therefore owing to our being rightly baptiz'd, that we become immortal, as has been lately suggested; for there will be a Resurrection.
The Reasonableness of Serm. VII.

...ection of all the Unjust in the World, as well as of the Just, (Acts XXIV. 15,) and the Wicked shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, (Matth. XXV. ult.) But it is by our Spiritual Washing in this Laver of Regeneration, thro' the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel-Covenant, that we become new Creatures, and are prepar'd for, and intitl'd to that Kingdom of our Lord above, which is Incorruptible and Eternal.

It is therefore, we see, undeniable, that Eternal Life is promised in the holy Scriptures: And that these Writings are the Word of God, and contain his Will, is the next Thing to be considered.

2. The Holy Scriptures are reveal'd by God, and are in a proper Sense, his Word.

Now, this appears in that God gave evident Testimony to his Word of his Grace, spoken by his Apostles, granting Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands. It is not in the Power of Men or Devils to cure inveterate Diseases by the Shadow of a Man passing by, as God did by the Shadow of St. Peter, (Acts V. 15.) Nor
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope.

Nor to make the Sick and Lame whole, and to dispossess Devils by Handkerchiefs, and Aprons carried from the Body of a Man, as in the Case of St. Paul, (Aet. XIX. 12.) This can only be done by the Power of the Almighty GOD; who hereby, and by innumerable other Miracles, demonstrated his Presence with these his Servants, and that the Word in their Mouths, was the Word of GOD.

The Lives also of these Holy Prophets and Apostles shone with a divine Brightness, like the Doctrine they taught; and tended no less to destroy the Kingdom of Darkness. No other Persons, as far as we can know it, did ever manifest such an eminent and unfeigned Pitch of Piety and Charity. We appeal to all the World, Did ever Men glorifie GOD in such an absolute Deference to his Will, and so entire a Submission of their own, as these holy Prophets and Apostles did? Were ever Men so truly and effectually crucified to the World and the Flesh? Did ever so many wise and good Men offer up their Lives so willingly for the Glory of their Maker? Were evil Spirits ever
ever fo subject to any others, tho' the last Interests of their Kingdom lay at Stake? Did any humane Eloquence ever reform so many Thousands of notorious Sinners, as the Preaching of the Apostles did in one Day? (Act. II. 41.) And the same Day were added to them Three Thousand Souls. Their Doctrine prevail'd by the mere Truth and Goodness of it, over the Minds and Hearts of Princes and Philosophers; over the Great and Wise, the Greeks and Barbarians; notwithstanding all their Prejudices and Corruptions, and made them new Creatures. And every Convert manifested such a divine Change of Heart and Life, that he was a living Witness of the glorious Power of the holy Gospel.

And this was not brought about by the Violence of the Sword, or the Gratification of the Flesh, as the Success of the Doctrine of Mahomet was; nor by the Force of humane Laws, or the Craft of Sophistry, or the Charms of Oratory; for all the Laws, and Learning, and Power of the World, were against it. The Apostles could propose nothing (as they freely own'd) more
more likely to come upon their Converts in this World, than the Trials of cruel Mockings, and of Bonds and Imprisonments: They told them plainly, that they must take up the Cross of Christ here, if they would enjoy his Crown hereafter. And this Hope of Eternal Life, proposed by GOD that cannot lie, won their Hearts thro' the mighty Grace of GOD: And they endur'd the Cross, and despis'd the Shame, looking unto Jesus, and to the Rewards at his Right Hand.

All these Things put together, make as full a Demonstration as the Thing is capable of, that the Writings which Christians call the Holy Scriptures, are the Will of GOD, reveal'd for the Salvation of Men.

So then, there remains but one Thing more to clear the Truth of an Eternal State to come, as asserted in the Text; and that is,

3. That GOD cannot lie: He is Θεὸς, uncapable of admitting or advancing Falsity.

It is the very Nature of GOD, to be a Being infinitely perfect; and therefore it is His very Nature to be infallible and Unfalse. He cannot lie.
Could he prevaricate or falsify, he would not be morally perfect, and consequently would not be G O D. It denotes either the Darkness of Men's Understandings, or the Corruption of their Wills, and the Faultines of their Intention, that they utter Lies. But in a Being of all Perfection, nothing of this can be imagined: A false God is a full Contradiction.

So then, if the holy Scriptures affirm, that the State of Recompenses will be to all Men Everlasting after Death: If these Scriptures are the true Will and Word of G O D: And if G O D, who affirms these Things, cannot lie: Here is a found and unshaken Foundation of the good Man's Hope, and the ill Man's Fear. For tho' the Text only touches on the bright Side of the Article, to encourage Christians in their pious Labours and Sufferings: Yet the eternal Sufferings of all wicked People, are as certain and indisputable. For it is a Part of the same Revelation from G O D; and the same Righteous Judge who hath pronounced, that the Faithful shall go away from his Judgment-Seat to Life Eternal, hath
declared, that the Wicked shall go away to everlasting Punishment; (Matt. XXV. 46.)

So then, as to the Ground of our Belief of the Eternal State of Men after Death, we place it wholly on the Truth of the Christian Revelation: It is declared by GOD that cannot lie.

As to the Date of the Promise of Eternal Life, it is said to be made before the World began: In the Original, (πᾶς οὐκ ἔχεται αἰώνίον) which, if it be taken in the largest Sense, (as our Translators seem to express it) must be meant of the secret Will and Purpose of GOD, even before he made Man, or this visible World for him; that he would give to Man an immortal Soul, capable of eternal Happiness. But if the Words be rendered, as they will bear, in ancient Times, or many Ages ago, then they relate to the Promise of Man's Restoration to the Hope of Eternal Life by the Seed of the Woman, (Gen. III. 15.) which was afterwards made plain and clear by the Preaching of the Gospel, according to the Commandment of GOD our Saviour, as it follows the Words of the Text.

But
The Reasonableness of Serm. VII.

But tho' this Article of our Faith, can only be duly asserted by the Authority of Revelation, yet there are many solid Arguments in Reason for it, worthy of our Consideration. For Instance,

I. According to the Principles of such as ascribe all Things to the Mechanism of Matter and Motion, there must be a perpetual Continuation of all Things in Being; because no Being can be brought to nothing but by a supernatural Omnipotent Power.

The proper Sphere and utmost Power of natural Action and Production, is to pass from one Term to another, and from one Thing to another: And therefore there can be no Action, in the Course of Nature, where there is nothing to act for, as surely as where there is nothing to act from. So that it requires the same infinite Power to annihilate, as to create; and no Being passes naturally from a State of Being to Nothing, any more than from Nothing to Being. This plainly refutes the Atheist, who must confess a GOD, or deny Annihilation, which is his poor Hope concerning his Soul.
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope.

If he pleads, that Men will be changed into other Beings by Death, and so made uncapable of future Rewards and Punishments, tho' not annihilated: This comes to be considered in the Third Particular.

As to such who own the Being of G.O.D, but deny his Providence; affirming, that all Things proceed according to the Course of Nature, without any Divine Interposition: These Assertors of the Course of Nature ought to consider, that nothing is more vehemently and more universally pursued in all the natural Course of Things, than to preserve every Being in its proper Order and Subsistence. For every Place is full, and the absolute Loss of any one Being, would break the Continuation and Perfection of the Compages of the Universe. We see, that when the Air is drawn or forc'd out of any Place, even heavy Bodies are thrust up to supply the Defect, by an Effort so wonderful, that the Force of Natural Agency is scarce anywhere so powerfully exerted. And as to the Preservation of the Being of every material Thing, we may observe a very
very strong and wise Concourse of Things to serve this End, which is one principal Tendency of Nature.

II. GOD, the prime Cause of all Things, will have his Being for Ever; and will be infinitely Wise, Just, and Good to Eternity. Nothing can limit or control the Cause of all Things. He that had his perfect Being before the Existence of any other Being, cannot be obstructed or incommoded in his Being by any Thing: So that the Fountain of Life and Being will flow for Ever; because nothing can stop it.

So then, whether GOD will continue Life and Being to Men in another World, is the only remaining Question. As to which, let us further remark.

III. GOD has put into the Nature of Man a perfect Aversion to Annihilation, or the being reduc'd to nothing: We can scarce bear the Thought, or allow the Notion of it. Yea further, we generally find, that the wiser and better Men grow, the more they advance in the Vehemency of this Desire. And we find that in such Persons, their Desire is prin-
Serm. VII.  The Christian Hope.

principally carried forth towards God, whom they earnestly desire, as their Portion for ever.

Now, if this Desire of immortal Happiness (which the Text calls Eternal Life) be in all Men, it is implanted in their Nature: And if it prevails chiefly upon good and wise Men, it is a right and honourable Desire, and tends to a proper and satisfactory End. Christians may say truly and philosophers, that this Desire of Immortality was implanted in Man by his Creator, and is invigorated by his Redeemer. Nature impress'd it, and Religion improves it. For GOD made Man for himself, as the suitable Eternal Happiness of Man; and his Divine Grace fits Man for this Enjoyment. Let us therefore carry the Argument yet further.

IV. It is highly agreeable to Reason, that as an infinitely good GOD hath given Being to many reasonable Creatures which he has made capable of Knowing Him, and acknowledging his Benefits: And as he hath brought many of them, by his Goodness, to delight in their GOD, and to love his Commands: It is, I say,
highly agreeable to this infinite Goodness to preserve, not to destroy these his pious and faithful Servants, yea, these his dear and dutiful Children, that they may feel themselves happy in his Love, replenish'd out of his Stores, and made perfect in his Kingdom; where they will praise his Goodness, and extol his Mercy for ever.

All the visible Works of God declare his immense Goodness. We cannot behold the Glory of the Heavens, or the Fruitfulness of the Earth, or the Supplies of his bountiful Providence to all his Creatures, without enlarged Ideas of the infinite Goodness of the Lord of All. We cannot therefore, in Reason, think otherwise of God's Dealing with Men in another World. He is too good to forswake such as cleave to Him: He is not as the cruel Ostrich, that forgeteth and forsaketh her Offspring. He cannot but love his own Image. It is demonstrably clear, that infinite Goodness will communicate itself, and that very plentifully, to such as are capable of it, and where his great Name will be glorified in it.

We
Serm. VII. the Christian Hope.

We see daily the great Goodness of GOD to wicked Men: He bears long with his professed Enemies; he fills the Cup of the Drunkard, and spreads the Table of the Glutton: And has he not prepared better Things for them that serve him? Will not he that is patient towards the Man that blasphemes his Name, be bountiful to him that exalts his Praise? If there be such present Indulgence to the Wicked, will there not verily be a Reward for the Righteous?

This Argument will be further advanced, if we consider what exalted Affection and eminent Service, some holy Men and Women have render'd to their Creator, thro' his Grace. They have offer'd up their Goods and Lives with Joy, as a Sacrifice to his Glory. They have chosen the Rack, the Sav, and the Grid-Iron, rather than offend their GOD. Their Love to GOD has transcended all other Affections, and could not be diverted, much less extinguish'd, by all the Malice of Men and Devils. And now, how can it enter into the Heart of a sober Man to imagine, that when their infinitely good GOD has
has seen them pass all these sharp Trials of their Faith and Integrity, and that they have acquitted themselves with the truest Honour; that he will then rob these his Servants of their very Being, and not suffer them to have Place in the World?

Moreover, Does the wise and good GOD ever put an Appetite into any of his Creatures, without preparing a suitable Object to satisfy it? This would not suit the infinite Goodness of GOD; because then there would be Matter of Dissatisfaction and of Torment to the Creature, interwoven with his very Nature. Since then there is a strong Desire of Eternal Life in the Nature of Man, placed in it by his Creator; and since it is the Aim and Business of Religion, and the leading Principle of it, to cherish and invigorate this Hope, as we see in the Text, who can doubt of the Certainty of the Enjoyment of the Thing hoped for?

Where Men are, by fix'd Habits of Mortification and Self-Denial, wean'd from all inordinate Affection to sublunary Things, and are, by a long Train of religious Exercises, brought
Serm. VII. *the Christian Hope.*

brought to the highest Esteem of GOD, and a most ardent Desire of Him, (which was the End for which they were made) will infinite Goodness disappoint these good Dispositions at the last? Will he tear these his Children from the Breast? Will he *for Bread, give them a Stone,* and for a *Fish,* give them a *Serpent?* Can infinite Love cast off his faithful Servants for Ever? This is a Thought so unsuitable to the Divine Nature, and so unworthy of his infinite Perfections, that such as have but the Light of Nature, can never admit it.

I will only add one Point more, to push on this Argument to its just Height; which is, That it cannot but be a true Pleasure to infinite Goodness to find Objects meet for his Bounty and Beneficence. This is so agreeable to a truly bountiful Being, that we cannot but conclude it to be highly so in GOD; for indeed we see it eminently so in Men of singular Goodness and Liberality, who are glad to distribute, willing to com-

Thus,
The Reasonableness of Serm. VII.

Thus, we see, there are in common Reason many solid Pleas for the Immortality of Man on the other Side of the Grave; whilst the Atheistical Person has not one solid Argument to refute it. But if the Arguments on both Sides were equal, and it were as probable that there is no Life to come, as that there is: In this Case, the Consequence is so vastly disproportionate, that every prudent Person must choose the safest Side. For if there be no Life to come, the virtuous Man has lost nothing but Vice and Vanity, with that inward Regret and Vexation, and those Reproaches and Diseases which attend them in this Life, which is his great Advantage; and he cannot possibly be unhappy after Death.

But if the Atheist be mistaken in his Notions of Things, as there is all the Reason in the World to conclude he is, then he is the most wretched of all Men in his Death, and is undone for Ever. Wherefore let all the World judge, whether the Life of the lowd Atheist, or the devout Christian, be the most wise and safe, and the most honourable and pleasant.

There
There remain somewhat to be spoken to, relating to the Resurrection of the Body, and the Equitableness of Everlasting Punishments; which must be referred to the next Discourse.

In the mean Time, let every One of us fix his Heart on the Divine Glories of our Heavenly Religion; which, if compar'd with other Religions, shines as the Sun in the Firmament amidst other little Lumina ries, which have no Luster but what they borrow from it. It is therefore evident, that we must live better than others, or be cover'd with greater Shame, and fall under a more terrible Condemnation. Every Thing is Divine, Glorious, and Immortal in our Religion; wherefore let nothing that is vile, base, and sordid, appear in our Lives; for nothing less than a heavenly Life and Temper can suit such a heavenly Dispensation. It shews us, that we are always under the Eye of a most holy and righteous God, and are every Moment passing on to Everlasting Bliss or Misery. With what Care therefore ought we to take every Step; and with what
The Reasonableness, &c. Serm. VII.

Diligence should we press after that Hope of Eternal Life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised.

Which God grant, &c.
SERMON VIII.

The due Practice of the Christian Religion, a good Refutation of Infidels and Scoffers.

Wherefore, Beloved, seeing that ye look for such Things; be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.

We find both St. Peter and St. Jude carried forth with a Vehemency of holy Zeal against many vicious
The Practice of Christianity, Ser. VIII.

World to come, reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures; it is the Property of Christians to reverence them, and to frame their whole Lives suitably to them. Seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent.

II. That no Person can find Acceptance with the LORD Jesus Christ at his coming, or Happiness in his Eternal Kingdom, without a pure and peaceable Disposition and Deportment. Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.

The first Remark is, That Christians reverence and principally regard those Things which are revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning a World to come, tho' Infidels and Atheists mock at them. The Apostle describes his beloved Brethren in the Text, as those who look'd for these Things. Yea, as those who looked for, and hasten to the Coming of the Day of GOD, wherein the Heavens being on Fire, shall be dissolved, the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up, (1 Pet. III. 12.) They hasten their Work, and in their Longings antedate that Day of their LORD, which is as immensely comfortable to them, as terrible to all wicked Men. The Faith of a Chri-
Chriftian takes frequent Views of this Great Day, and speaks of it, as of a Thing present and in Sight; saying, Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him. (Rev. I. 7.) The Enemies of the Blessed Jesus, even those who crucified him of Old, and those who crucify him afresh now, fhall fee Him with their fleshly Eyes, to their unspeakable Terror, at his Appearance, tho' only the Regenerate fee him now by Faith, and will fee him then to their infinite Comfort. These look for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great GOD, and our Saviour Jesu Christ, who gave himfelf for them, (Tit. II. 13.) This is their Character in the Text: The Christian prudently regards and prepares for thofe future Things which Infidels mock and scorn.

The Apostle instances in two Things which are thus differently treated by the ferious Chriftian, and the wanton Scoffer.

The one is, the End of this present World, with the Dissolution of all Things therein, (Ver 10.) The Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night,
in the which, the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat. But with what Scorn has this Prediction been treated by the ancient and modern Infidels! The Prophets, say they, who foretold these Things, are fallen asleep by the common Fate of Men, and indeed, say they, they seem'd to us but to tell their Dreams when they were awake; for we have seen all Things proceed according to the Course of Nature ever since. Thus they scoff, as we read in the Fourth Verse of this Chapter.

The other Point revealed concerning a future State is, The Distribution of Eternal Rewards and Punishments by Jesus Christ at his Coming, (Ver. 4,) Concerning which, the Scoffers said then; Where is the Promise of his Coming? q. d. How long have these credulous Christians been bawk'd of their Expectation? and how, like Fools, do they go on with their chimerical Amusements?

There is another Article co-incident with this, which is treated by Infidels with the same Scorn; that is, the
Serm. VIII. a Refutation of Infidels. 245

Refutation of the Bodies of Men; which the conceited Athenians mock'd as Babling, (Acts XVII. 32.) And other Heathens of those Days fancied they had effectually refuted it, when they carried the Ashes of Christian Martyrs to the Top of some high Hill on a stormy Day, and there scatter'd them abroad as far as the fiercest Winds could carry them. But to this, we reply in Reason, that since Almighty GOD has given Power to the Load-Stone, (a little senseless Lump) to separate every Atom of the Filings of Iron out of a Heap of Sand; so that the Iron-particles will throw off a very great Weight of Sand to join themselves to that Stone: It cannot, in Reason, be thought impossible for the GOD of all Power, to re-unite the Dust of humane Bodies; or that He who gave them Life at first, should revive them. So that as their Ignorance of the Holy Scripture is one great Cause of their Mistake herein, so their not knowing the Power of GOD, is most certainly another. This is most justly determin'd by Truth itself, (Matth. XXII. 29.) Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of
of GOD. " We have full Expectation, says Justin Martyr, of being restored to these Bodies, after they are dead and rotten; because we know, that with GOD nothing is impossible. Would it not be as incredible, says that Learned Father, that the Bones, and Nerves, and Flesh of humane Bodies (in that curious and exact Mechanism that we behold them) could be spun out of a little Seminal Drop, if we had never known the Experience of such a Production? Had not this been verified in Fact before the Eyes of Men, how many Objections would disputatious Persons have raised against it? And how often should we have been ask'd, How can such a strange Thing be? And in the End, trusting to the Comprehension of their own Understanding, they would have disbeliev'd it, and condemn'd it as a Notion unworthy of the Head of a Philosopher.

There is, methinks, a Hint in St. Paul's arguing about the Resurrection, (1 Cor. XV. 35) that GOD may have given a Seminal Virtue to the Body of Man, which, at the quickening Call of
Serm. VIII. A Refutation of Infidels. 247

of God, may arise fresh and vigorous out of the Dust, as the Body of Wheat, or any other Grain, does at the Return of the Sun's Warmth. But as I mention this only as a Hint, so all the Stress I shall lay on it is only this, namely, to stop the Mouths of Atheists and Unbelievers by this Supposition; desiring them to produce a Reason, why he that thus restores the Body of a Grain of Corn in Millions of Instances every Spring, may not do the same Thing in the Bodies of Men at the general Resurrection? We may also very well argue in the same Manner concerning the Credibility of all that the Great God has revealed concerning a World to come, from the Wonders we behold in the World we now inhabit. Had Men been created out of this visible World, and had it been reveal'd to them by Men inspir'd of God, that their Maker would e're long translate them into a very glorious World, in which a vast Globe of Earth, of many Thousand Leagues in Diameter, hangs in the Air without any visible Support; and where Millions of glorious Orbs of Light, vastly big-
The Practice of Christianity, Ser. VIII.

bigger than the Earth, move regularly round about it, without any visible Mover or Director. Adding to this, the true Descriptions of the Earth, and the Sea, and all the living Creatures therein; with the Seasons, and those other Wonders of the Creation which we know to be true. Would not sensual and sceptical Men have formed the very same Arguments against this Account of the present World, that they now do against the wonderful Things of the World to come? Would they not ask, How can you demonstrate all this? And how can you prove it is impossible that it should be otherwise? And yet we know not the Thousandth Part of GOD’s Wisdom and Power that is exemplified in this visible World. Had we any competent Knowledge of the Heavens above us, and of the Earth beneath, and of the vast Ocean, and all the living Creatures in this visible World, we should see such Wonders of Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, in the Works of our glorious Creator, that there would be no Spirit left in us. The Wonder would exceed our Thought, and we should believe any Thing
Serm. VIII. a Refutation of Infidels.

Thing possible which the Almighty GOD, who made this World, should reveal to us concerning another.

And as to the Eternity of the Rewards and Punishments of that future State: It is very reasonable to grant, that as the Nature, Majesty, and Glory of GOD, are infinite; that he will reward and punish, in a Manner suitable to himself. The Demerit of Sin, against a Being that is infinite in all Perfection, is certainly infinite: so that the Sinner thereby contracts infinite Guilt, and is bound over to infinite Punishment. It is by this Guilt, that the Angels, who sinned, are bound in everlasting Chains under Darkness, i.e. in perfect Despair, (Jude, 6.) They have no Crevice of Hope to lighten their dark Condition, because they have no Redeemer to pay their Ransom. Now, if sinful Men slight their Saviour, they fall into the same utter Darkness. They will have such Matter of everlasting Regret on their Spirits, that the Worm can never die; and there being then no Propitiation for Sin, the Fire of just Vengeance can never be quench'd. We are sensible, that the Perfection of divine Justice does not appear in the
The Practice of Christianity, Ser.VIII. 

The present Dispensations of Providence. Many a cruel and profane Man dies on his Bed, and many a pious Martyr in the Flames. It is therefore reasonable to conceive, that GOD will shew his Wrath in another World on the Vessels fitted for Destruction; as St. Paul assures us he will, (Rom. IX. 22.)

We see, in the best of humane Governments, that a treasonable Word against a Prince is punished with Death; yea, and brings an Attainder on the Posterity of the Traytor, which is as much as Man can do to perpetuate the Punishment. Yet the greatest of Men did not create us, nor do we subsist in them: Which shews, that the Eternal Punishment of Crimes committed against GOD, is not (all Circumstances duly considered) so severe as these Punishments of Offences against Men, which are both Capital and Hereditary.

Now, all these Arguments serve to demonstrate, how reasonable and well-grounded the good Man's Hopes and Fears are, with Reference to the infinite Retributions of another World. And how foolish and stupid they are, who
Refutation of Infidels. 251

who mock and despise them? And now, that all serious Christians may be directed to the certain Means of finding Favour in the Sight of their Supreme Judge at his Appearance, we come next to consider the Second general Observation; which is,

II. That no Person can find Acceptance with the Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming, or Happiness in his Eternal Kingdom, without a peaceable and holy Frame and Deportment. Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blameless; that is, be peaceable and holy.

These Two Divine Qualifications answer the Two Tables of God's Commands to Men; and are the most lively Transcript of the Life and Temper of Jesus Christ. They are the Two principal Gifts of the Wisdom from above; which is first pure, and then peaceable; and they are the Summ of the Blessed Gospel, which is a System of exalted Love towards God and Men; and a good Preparation for the State of the Blessed.

For Purity and Charity will never cease, tho' Faith and Hope will evermore.
The Practice of Christianity, Ser. VIII.

These are also the best Means to settle the Prosperity and Safety of Families and Kingdoms: For, wherever Ais and Vairiance prevail, both the Church and State are, without Doubt, in great Peril. To such therefore as are in this unhappy Case, no Advice can be more seasonable, or more kind, than that of the Text:

Be diligent, that ye may be found of your LORD in Peace, without Spot and Blameless. Nothing can be more disagreeable to the Master of the House, than to find his Servants in Broils and Riot at his Return Home. Wherefore be diligent; spare no Pains, delay no Time, to compose your Divisions, and suppress your Vices. For if the evil Servant shall say in his Heart, my LORD delayeth his Coming; and shall begin to smite his Fellow-Servants, and to eat and drink with the Drunken: The Lord of that Servant shall come in a Day that he looketh not for him, and in an Hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites: There shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth, (Matt. XXIV. 48, &c.) To these awful Words of our LORD, I cannot but sub-
subjoin those other, (Matth. XI. 15.)
He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.
The Matter is too important to be wav’d or postpon’d. We must look
well to it, that when our Great Master comes to Us, or calls for Us, we
be not found in the Broils of intemperate Passion, or the Spots of allowed Lust.

I come now to a general Application of what has been said, not only
in this, but the foregoing Discourses; and left I should be too prolix on so
great and moving a Subject, I shall confine my self to Four practical Con-
clusions.

I. Since Christians have unquestionably the best Religion, they ought
to be the best of Men. Other Rel-
ligions are but by a hard and
improper Use of the Word, call’d
by that Name. The Religions of the
Heathens, as far as they are oppos’d
to Christianity, are like their Idols,
Nothing in the World; but the Chri-
stian Religion is the Way of Life and
Everlasting Glory. But then to what
Purpose do we profess a holy and di-
vine Religion, if we have no real
Esteem or Regard for it? Such as
We acknowledge the Being of Almighty GOD, and the Universal Sovereignty of his Son Jesus Christ; and yet do oftener mention these sacred and awful Names in vile Blasphemy, than in due Devotion, do but pollute the Name of the Christian Religion by their Pretences to it, and thereby harden Infidels against it; and consequently they do but prepare the Way of a more aggravated Self-Condemnation, and of more piercing Regret for Ever.

It was early suggested to Christians by their LORD, even to the First that had the Honour to bear that venerable Name, that they must do more than others, (Matth. V. 47.) We have stricter Rules, better Helps, vaster Motives, brighter Examples, and are under more awful Vows, than the rest of Mankind, and are therefore fairly put to it for a brighter Crown, or a more dismal Punishment. Except Christians are pure in Heart, and unblameable in Life; except they unfeignedly love GOD and MEN, and delight in all the requisite Acts of Devotion to their Creator, and good Offices to their Fellow-
Creatures; they come not up to their Rules, they blemish their Character, and undermine their Hopes. It is not enough for Christians, that they be free from Scandals; they must be eminent Examples, and shine as Lights.

"It is impossible (says Athenagoras in his Apology to the Emperor) "for a Christian to be an ill Man, except he be a mere Dissembler; which is not a Christian, but the Image of One. And for a Proof of this he appeals to the Lives of the whole Body of Christians of those Days; and challenges their worst Enemies to refute it. This State of the Church was truly genuine and glorious; agreeable to its Author, and to its End. For the Strength and Splendor of a Christian Church do not consist in an Arm of Flesh, or in worldly Pomp; but in the whole Armour of GOD, and in his Protection: And wherever the Passions and Luxis of such as bear the Name of Christ, are exorbitant and epidemic, they are in a weak Condition, and the Glory is departed from their Israel. Such therefore as endeavour to asswage the
Passions, and suppress the Scandals that abound, are the best Christians; and the best Citizens; and such as cherish and foment them must needs be the worst, excepting the principal Actors. The Vineyard that brings forth nothing but wild Grapes will be pluck’d up and laid waste. Wherefore,

II. Let us esteem the Means and Seasons which God hath sanctified and bless’d for our Purification and Salvation, as the most advantageous Enjoyments of our whole Lives. That glorious weekly Festival of Christians, which St. John calls the Lord’s-Day, is a most joyful Jubile. It brings to our Mind the Foundation of our Faith, the Resurrection of our Hope, and the Perfection of our Redemption. It is most worthily called the LORD’s Day, since our blessed Saviour not only rose from the Dead upon it, but appeared twice to his Disciples in their religious Assemblies on that Day. And if we meet together in his true Faith and Fear on this sacred Day, we shall enjoy the Blessings of his spiritual Presence amongst us.

He
He also that was seen of his Disciples in the Breaking of Bread, will manifest himself to such as duly celebrate the Lord's-Supper. What Christ purchased for Men upon the Cross, he seals and conveys to them by the Symbols of his Blood in Baptism and the Lord's-Supper, for this is the New Testament in his Blood: And such as have tasted the Sweetness and Usefulness of these Ordinances, can no more be persuaded that they are empty or needless, than that the Breast is of no Benefit to a Child, or strong Meat to such as are of riper Years.

I shall name but one Christian Institution more, as the Means of supernatural Light, Strength and Comfort; and that must never be omitted, namely, our Attendance on the good Word of GOD, that Word of his Grace which is able to build us up, and to give us an Inheritance amongst them that are sanctified. This is our Light, and our Food; our Medicine and our Armour. It tends so universally to the Glory of GOD and the Good of Men; It establishes such Principles of heroic Piety and Charity: It brings such a State of Serenity and Peace to our Minds and
and Hearts, and gives such useful Laws to Relations and Societies, that it every where shews its heavenly Nature and Original. The Reply of St. Cyril to the Emperor Julian was very apposite; You may have read it, said he, but you did not understand it; for had you understood it, you could not have condemned it. If the People of old were moved to say, It were better that the Sun should not shine, than that Chrysostome should not Preach: We may with good Assurance say, we can better spare the Light of our Eyes, than the Light of the Gospel: For this is the Way whereby it pleases God to save them that believe. So that our blessed Saviour may be supposed to say to us every Lord's-Day as to Cornelius; Go to my Minister, and carry thy Family with thee, He shall tell thee Words whereby thou and thy House shall be saved.

They are happy, says the inspired wife Prince, who wait at the Doors of Wisdom, (Prov. VIII. 34.) that attend and improve the Seasons of hearing the Word of Life, which is the Wisdom of God unto Salvation, (1 Cor. I. 21.) Let us therefore exert that Diligence in these great Concerns which the Text prescribes upon
Serm. VIII. a Refutation of Infidels.

Let us in the Morning sow our Seed; and in the Evening, let us not slack our Hand, as the wise Man advises, (Eccl. XI. 6.) we cannot spend too many of our Hours to secure a blessed and glorious Eternity.

III. Be we fully persuaded, and ever mindful, of the Everlasting Retributions of the Life to come. Let us not retain them as uncertain Opinions, or unexamined Notions; nor look on them as Things at a great Distance: but as certain Events that will quickly come to our View and Experience: and then all the Offers of worldly Profit, Pleasure and Honour on the one Hand, and the Threats of Racks and Flames on the other, will appear little and contemptible.

This Article is the Pilgrim's Staff, which enables him to walk uprightly in the roughest Way; and it is his Armour against all Temptations on the right Hand and on the left. This sweetens the most bitter Afflictions, and makes the Cross of Christ preferable to the Luxury of Courts. "We might, says Justin Martyr, by denying the Faith, escape the Torments of our Persecutors; but we scorn to pur-
purchase our Lives with the Charge of a Lie; for our Souls are wing'd with the Desire of a Life of perfect Purity and eternal Duration.

This Faith is the only way to overcome the Fear of Death, and it will most certainly do it: For it made Ignatius rejoice with uncommon Joy, when he drew nigh to the Place of his Execution; professing that he would provoke the wild Beasts to devour him speedily. And Thousands of others have rejoiced in Tribulation, and welcom'd Death with exalted Comfort, as the End of their Toils and Troubles, and the Beginning of their everlasting Rest. Hear one of them giving the Reason of this for all the rest: For we look not at the Things which are seen, but Things not seen; for the Things which are seen, are Temporal; but the Things not seen are Eternal. (2 Cor. IV. 18.)

A vigorous Faith in this Article, such as is the Evidence of things not seen, would burnish the sullied Lives of Christians, and to restore them to their primitive Lustre, making them shine as Heavenly Lights, for such indeed they
they are. What honourable Steps will that Person take, that has the infinite Glory and everlasting Misery of the neighbouring World continually before his Eyes! What can cast him down, or lead him wrong? His Faith is almost Vision: and fore-stalls in part the Triumphs of the Church above: And demonstrates the divine Power of the Christian Religion, by giving Joy in Tribulation, and Triumph in the Hour of Death.

IV. Be we assured, that such as in their present Delusions reject and de-ride the Doctrines of the blessed Gospel, will one Day confess them with unspeakable Horror. The Mirth of Infidels and the Triumphs of Scorners cannot be long. There is a Lamp in the Mind of Man, and the Flashes of the future Flames will light it, if the Beams of the glorious Gospel do not.

When that last most awful Hour shall come, which is not far from any of us; when we shall perceive our selves to stand betwixt Time and Eternity, in the short Interval of a few Minutes; and shall look backward on what had pass'd, and forward on what is to come, with a piercing
and unbyass'd Judgment; we shall then disdain many Things as Trifles, or perhaps as Follies, which we now fondly applaud. All our superficial Religion without the spiritual Life and Power of it, our Controversies about the Modes of Religious Worship without a real Concern for the Thing; our intemperate Heat for Parties, and excessive Concern for the Accommodations of this present Life, will be Matter of Grief and piercing Regret. Then will Men look back, with Anguish of Soul, on those many precious Hours which have been lavish'd in Gaming, and idle Discourse, in polluting Plays and Romances, and in tedious dressing and feeding our Bodies; and then will those Hours appear the most comfortable, yea, the only comfortable Ones; that were spent in serious Devotion and true Charity.

Then the witty Atheist will apply the Words of the Psalmist to himself, with greater Sharpness than any One else ever did; and say, Fool that I was, to admit so absurd a Thought into my Heart, as that there is no GOD: That I did not see him who filleth all
Serm. VIII. A Refutation of Infidels.

all Places with his Presence; and did not know him who has impress'd the Characters of his Perfections on the Forehead of every Creature.

Then those conceited Rationalists, who once fancied they had engross'd the Monopoly of humane Knowledge, will stand amaz'd at their own Stupidity, and will upbraid themselves in the sharpest Invectives, for turning their Understanding against their Maker, which was indeed to become Fools. And in Truth, what greater Instances of Folly can be imagined, than to affirm, that insensible Matter was its own Maker and Manager; and that stupid Materials were their own Builders and Surveyers; that Chance produced the most exact, steady, and universal Order; and that all Things in Nature constantly produce the Effects of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, by mere Casualty.

These Absurdities cannot long prevail on the Mind of Man, nor will the Abettors of them long vaunt themselves as the Rabbies and Adepts of Wisdom and Knowledge. For even those who have really attained much useful Knowledge in the Nature T

of
The Practice of Christianity, Ser. VIII.

of Things, and in humane Literature, will at last upbraid their own Ignorance, if they know not GOD, and his SON Jesus Christ. Then, with wise Agur, they will condemn themselves, as void of the Understanding of Man; because they have not the Wisdom of the Holy: and with the Learned Grotius, they will reflect with Sorrow upon their high Employment and hard Studies about Secondary Things, as a laborious Idleness, if they have been too much diverted by these, from the One Thing necessary.

Be we all assured, that however we may be amuz'd at present by the vain Show of temporal Things, yet in our most serious Hours, nothing can truly satisfy us, but the Sense of our Return to GOD by Jesus Christ, and the Recovery of his Likeness and Favour by the Grace and Mercy of the blessed Gospel.

To sum up all, It is very evident, That the Being of the Eternal GOD, is as certain as our own Being and Reason: And that the Laws of Moral Good and Evil are as unquestionable, as that GOD made and governs the World.
Serm. VIII. a Refutation of Infidels.

It is also certain, that the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of GOD are plainly discover'd to us, by the wise and gracious Contrivance and Management of all Things in Heaven and Earth: And therefore that the Voice of Nature demands our supreme Love and Fear of the Greatest and Best of Beings.

And since, we see the whole Frame and Course of Nature graciously disposed by GOD, for the Good of all his Creatures; this naturally prescribes a Law to us, to do all the Good we can, in our several Stations and Capacities; without which, we shall thwart the Will of our Maker, and swerve from the general Tendency of the Universe.

We are further assured, That seeing all Persons do not receive according to their Observance or Contempt of these Laws of GOD on Earth, that every One will receive according to his Doings in another World; because the Nature of a Law requires a Sanction, by suitable Rewards and Punishments.

It is moreover, very just and reasonable to conclude, that since the
Nature of GOD is infinite, and his Kingdom Everlasting; that the Rewards and Punishments of the future State will be so too.

We see also, and Blessed are the Eyes that see it, That the glorious Gospel does greatly improve and enliven these Moral Truths: Instructing us withal in the only Way to be deliver'd from all Iniquity, through a Divine Saviour; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, through a Divine Sanctifier.

And the reasonable Conclusion from all these important Premisses is, That we must deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live in all good Conscience towards GOD and Man: And that if we shall be found of our LORD without Spot, we shall be rewarded of him with Glory without End, thro' the Mercy of GOD the Father, the Merit of his only begotten SON, and the Operations of his Eternal Spirit: to which most glorious Trinity, in the perfect Unity of the Deity, be continual Praise, Worship, and Obedience, given by Angels and Men, for ever and ever.

FINIS.