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**A short and  
easy method  
with the deists.  
Wherein the  
certainty of ...**

**Charles Leslie**

(Character of Mr Leslie)

"Consummate Learning, attended  
"by the lowest humility, the strictest  
"purity, without the least tincture of  
"moroseness, a conversation to the  
"last degree lively & spirited, yet  
"to the last degree innocent, made  
"him the delight of Mankind,  
"and leaves, what Dr. Hickey  
"says of him unquestionable  
"that he made more con-  
"verts to a sound faith and  
"holy life than any other  
"Man of our times."

Dr Gleig.

On this Book.

"One of the ablest works  
"that ever was written in  
"proof of the Divine ori-  
"gin of the Jewish &  
"Christian Scriptures."

Dr Gleig

## The Publisher to the Reader.

*W*hilst infidelity prevails, and the most sacred truths are daily called in question, it cannot be thought unseasonable to reprint this small treatise, first published above fifty years ago. Its shortness and plainness will recommend it; especially to those who may want money to purchase, or time to read larger books.

How highly it has been esteemed by several eminent writers, as well of the laity as of the clergy, appears, by their having transcribed part of it into their works.

There is subjoined, with some little variation, a letter written by the same author to Mr Gildon, once a noted writer amongst the Deists, and the publisher of Blount's oracles of reason; who, by reading this Short Method, became a thorough convert to Christianity, and wrote, in defence of it, an excellent book, intitled, The Deists Manual.

As the Short Method serves to establish the truth of Christianity in general; so will the Letter annexed, point out the way to a regular communion in the church, amidst the many different sects of professed Christians.

Praying God, that he may bless both with success, in helping to reclaim the infidel, and confirm the faithful, I bid the candid reader farewell.



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**A Letter from the author of the short Method  
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Such minute contents to so short an essay, may seem disproportionable and needless: but it was done for ease to the memory of some, for whom it was more particularly designed; and can prejudice none who need not such helps.

A Short and Easy

M E T H O D

W I T H T H E

D E I S T S.

*S I R,*

I. **I**N answer to your's of the 3d instant, I much condole with you your unhappy circumstances, of being placed amongst such company, where, as you say, you continually hear the sacred scriptures, and the histories therein contained, particularly of Moses, and of Christ, and all revealed religion, turned into ridicule, by men who set up for sense and reason. And they say, That there is no greater ground to believe in Christ, than in Mahomet: That all these pretences to revelation are cheats, and ever have been, among Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians: That they are all alike impositions of cunning and designing men, upon the credulity, at first, of simple and unthinking people; till, their numbers increasing, their delusions grew popular, came at last to be established

A

by

by laws; and then the force of education and custom gives a bias to the judgments of after ages, till such deceits come really to be believed, being received upon trust from the ages foregoing, without examining into the original and bottom of them. Which these our modern men of sense, (as they desire to be esteemed) say, that they only do; that they only have their judgments freed from the slavish authority of precedents and laws, in matters of truth; which, they say, ought only to be decided by reason: though, by a prudent compliance with popularity and laws, they preserve themselves from outrage, and legal penalties; for none of their complexion are addicted to sufferings, or martyrdom.

Now, Sir, that which you desire from me, is, some short topic of reason, if such can be found, without running to authorities, and the intricate mazes of learning, which breed long disputes; and which these men of reason deny by wholesale, though they can give no reason for it, only suppose that authors have been trumped upon us, interpolated, and corrupted, so that no stress can be laid upon them: though it cannot be shewn wherein they are so corrupted; which, in reason, ought to lie upon them to prove, who alledge it; otherwise it is not only a precarious, but a guilty plea: and the more, that they refrain not to quote books on their side, for whose authority there are no better, or not so good grounds. However, you say, it makes your disputes endless, and they go away with  
noise

noise and clamour, and a boast, that there is nothing, at least nothing certain, to be said on the Christian side. Therefore you are desirous to find some one topic of reason, which should demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion, and at the same time distinguish it from the impostures of Mahomet, and the old Pagan world; that our Deists may be brought to this test, and be either obliged to renounce their reason, and the common reason of mankind, or to submit to the clear proof, from reason, of the Christian religion: which must be such a proof, as no imposture can pretend to, otherwise it cannot prove the Christian religion not to be an imposture. And whether such a proof, one single proof, (to avoid confusion), is not to be found out, you desire to know from me.

And you say, that you cannot imagine but there must be such a proof, because every truth is in itself clear, and one. And therefore that one reason for it, if it be the true reason, must be sufficient: and if sufficient, it is better than many; for multiplicity confounds, especially to weak judgments.

Sir, you have imposed an hard task upon me. I wish I could perform it. For though every truth is one; yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together.

But I think, that, in the case before us, there is such a proof as you require; and I will set it down as short and plain as I can.

II. FIRST, then, I suppose, that the truth of the doctrine of Christ will be sufficiently evinced, if the matters of fact which are recorded of him in the gospels, be true: for his miracles, if true, do vouch the truth of what he delivered.

The same is to be said as to Moses. If he brought the children of Israel through the Red sea, in that miraculous manner which is related in Exodus, and did such other wonderful things as are there told of him, it must necessarily follow, that he was sent from God: these being the strongest proofs we can desire; and which every Deist will confess he would acquiesce in, if he saw them with his eyes. Therefore the stress of this cause will depend upon the proof of these matters of fact.

1. And the method I will take, is, *First*, To lay down such rules, as to the truth of matters of fact in general, that where they all meet, such matters of fact cannot be false. And then, *Secondly*, To shew, that all these rules do meet in the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ: and that they do not meet in the matters of fact of Mahomet, of the Heathen deities, or can possibly meet in any imposture whatsoever.

2. The rules are these.

I. That the matter of fact be such, as that mens outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it.

II. That

II. That it be done publicly, in the face of the world.

III. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions to be performed.

IV. That such monuments, and such actions, or observances, be instituted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.

3. The two first rules make it impossible for any such matter of fact to be imposed upon men, at the time when such matter of fact was said to be done, because every man's eyes and senses would contradict it. For example, Suppose any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark, on dry land; the waters standing like walls on both sides; I say, it is morally impossible, that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child, could contradict him, and say, That this was a notorious falsehood; for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land. Therefore I take it for granted, (and, I suppose, with the allowance of all the Deists in the world), that no such imposition could

be put upon men, at the time when such public matter of fact was said to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains that such matter of fact might be invented some time after, when the men of that generation wherein the thing was said to be done, are all past and gone; and the credulity of after ages might be imposed upon, to believe that things were done in former ages which were not.

And for this, the two last rules secure us as much, as the two first rules in the former case: for whenever such a matter of fact came to be invented, if not only monuments were said to remain of it, but likewise that public actions and observances were constantly used, ever since the matter of fact was said to be done, the deceit must be detected, by no such monuments appearing, and by the experience of every man, woman, and child, who must know that no such actions, or observances, were ever used by them. For example, Suppose I should now invent a story of such a thing done a thousand years ago, I might perhaps get some to believe it: but if I say, that not only such a thing was done, but that from that day to this, every man at the age of twelve years had a joint of his little finger cut off; and that every man in the nation did want a joint of such a finger; and that this institution was said to be part of the matter of fact done so many years ago, and vouched as a proof and confirmation of it, and as having descended, without interruption, and been constantly

constantly practised, in memory of such matter of fact all along from the time that such matter of fact was done: I say, it is impossible I should be believed in such a case; because every one could contradict me, as to the mark of cutting off a joint of the finger; and that being part of my original matter of fact, must demonstrate the whole to be false.

III. LET us now come to the second point, To shew, that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have all these rules or marks before mentioned; and that neither the matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is reported of the Heathen deities, have the like; and that no imposture can have them all.

1. As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded 600,000 men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna; and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true; because every man's senses that were then alive, must have contradicted it: and therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false, and no such things done. So that here are the first and second of the above mentioned four marks.

For the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books as truth, and not to have rejected them, as a manifest imposture, which told of  
all



all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, *Deut. xi. 2.—8. And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm; and his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day; and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came unto this place; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did, &c.*

From hence we must suppose it impossible, that these books of Moses, if an imposture, could have been invented, and put upon the people who were then alive when all these things were said to be done.

The utmost therefore that even a *suppose* can stretch to, is, That these books were wrote in some age after Moses, and put out in his name.

And to this I say, that if it was so, it was  
impossible

impossible that those books should have been received as the books of Moses, in that age wherein they may have been supposed to have been first invented. Why? Because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. *And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished; that Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee, Deut. xxxi. 24. 25. 26.* And there was a copy of this book to be left likewise with the king. *And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them, Deut. xvii. 18. 19.*

Here you see, that this book of the law speaks of itself, not only as an history or relation of what things were then done; but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the king as well as the people.

Now, in whatever age after Moses you will suppose this book to have been forged, it was impossible it could be received as truth; because it was not then to be found; either in  
the

the ark, or with the king, or any where else : for when first invented, every body must know, that they had never heard of it before.

And therefore they could less believe it to be the book of their statutes, and the standing law of the land, which they had all along received, and by which they had been governed.

Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes, or acts of parliament, for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, *viz.* the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews; and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books, as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but this one short question, Was there ever a book of sham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of the laws of the Jews?

Jews? Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people?

But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a further demonstration of their truth, than even other law-books have: for they not only contain the laws, but give an historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time: As of the passover, in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt\*: and that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God; and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel: That Aaron's rod which budded, was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi: As likewise, the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness: That the brazen serpent was kept (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 *Kings* xviii. 4.) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpent, *Numb.* xxi. 9.: The feast of Pentecost, in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon mount Horeb, &c.

And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which

\* *Numb.* viii. 17. 18.

included

included all the particulars: as of the Sabbath, *Deut.* v. 15.; their daily sacrifices, and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated: That it was death for any other to approach the altar: That their high priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God's own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given \*: That, at his word, the king, and all the people, were to go out, and to come in: That these Levites were likewise the chief judges, even in all civil causes; and that it was death to resist their sentence †. Now, whenever it can be supposed, that these books of Moses were forged, in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe, that they had received these books from their fathers; had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to

\* *Numb.* xxvii. 21. † *Deut.* xvii. 8.—13. 1 *Chron.* xxiii. 4.  
what

what was commanded in these books; that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly sabbath, the new moons, and all these several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies, commanded in these books; that they had never eaten any swines flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books; that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to the tribe of Levi; over whom was placed a glorious high priest, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives; whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge\*; and that these priests were their ordinary judges, even in civil matters: I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it? or, *secondly*, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice? So that here are the third and fourth of the marks above mentioned.

But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, *viz.* That these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged; and that these books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe, that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things as were inserted in those books.

Well, then, let us proceed upon this supposition, however groundless. And now, will

\* *Numb. xxxv. 25. 28.*

not the same impossibilities occur as in the former case? For, *first*, This must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them: whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept; as the passover, in memory of God's passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt; and so of the rest. But,

*Secondly*, Let us suppose, contrary both to reason, and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances; yet was it possible to put it upon them, that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged? For example, Suppose I should now forge some romantic story, of strange things done 1000 years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world, that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such an hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book, (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before), in their public judicatures; that this book was their gospel, and law, which they had ever since that time, these 1000 years past,

past, universally received and owned, and none other: I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible, that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received, as the gospel of Christians? and that they could be made believe, that they never had had any other gospel? The same reason is as to the books of Moses; and must be as to every matter of fact which has all the four marks before mentioned. And these marks secure any such matter of fact as much from being invented and imposed in any after ages, as at the time when such matters of fact were said to be done.

Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury plain, every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

Now, suppose I should write a book tomorrow, and tell there, that these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Gargantua, in memory of such and such of their actions; and, for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was wrote at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye-witnesses; and that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since; moreover, that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by act of parliament to be taught our children; and that we did



teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children: I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England? and whether, if I, or any other, should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam?

Now, let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones set up at Gilgal, which is told in the 4th chapter of *Joshua*. There it is said, *v* 6. that the reason why they were set up, was, that when their children, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them.

And the thing in memory of which they were set up, was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that time when it was said to be done. It was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red sea.

And withal free from a very poor objection, which the Deists have advanced against that miracle of the Red sea: thinking to solve it by a spring-tide, with the concurrence of a strong wind happening at the same time; which left the sand so dry, as that the Israelites, being all foot, might pass through the oozy places and holes, which, it must be supposed, the sea left behind it: but that the Egyptians, being all horse and chariots, stuck in those holes, and were intangled, so as that they could not march so fast as the Israelites: and that this was all the meaning of its being said, that God took off their (the Egyptians) chariot-wheels, that they drove them heavily.

ly. So that they would make nothing extraordinary, at least not miraculous, in all this action.

This is advanced in Le Clerc's dissertations upon *Genesis*, lately printed in Holland. And that part, with others of the like tendency, endeavouring to resolve other miracles, as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. into the mere natural causes, are put into English by the well known T. Brown, for the edification of the Deists in England.

But these gentlemen have forgot, that the Israelites had great herds of many thousand cattle with them; which would be apter to stray, and fall into those holes and oozy places in the sand, than horses, with riders, who might direct them. -itionis

But such precarious and silly supposes are not worth the answering. If there had been no more in this passage through the Red sea than that of a spring-tide, &c. it had been impossible for Moses to have made the Israelites believe that relation given of it in *Exodus*, with so many particulars, which themselves saw, to be true.

And all those scriptures which magnify this action, and appeal to it as a full demonstration of the miraculous power of God, must be reputed as romance or legend.

I say this for the sake of some Christians, who think it no prejudice to the truth of the Holy Bible, but rather an advantage, as rendering it more easy to be believed, if they can solve whatever seems miraculous in it, by the

power of second causes; and so to make all, as they speak, natural and easy. Wherein, if they could prevail, the natural and easy result would be, not to believe one word in all those sacred oracles: for if things be not as they are told in any relation, that relation must be false; and if false in part, we cannot trust to it, either in whole, or in part.

Here are to be excepted mistranslations and errors, either in copy, or in press. But where there is no room for supposing of these, as where all copies do agree, there we must either receive all, or reject all: I mean, in any book that pretends to be written from the mouth of God; for in other common histories, we may believe part, and reject part, as we see cause.

But to return: The passage of the Israelites over Jordan, in memory of which those stones at Gilgal were set up, is free from all those little carpings before mentioned, that are made as to the passage through the Red sea; for notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this great miracle to be done, *Josh. iii. 5.* It was done at noon-day, before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks, *ψ 15.* And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds must take to do it; but all on the sudden: As soon as *the feet of the priests that bare the ark, were dipped in the brim of the water; then the waters which came down*  
*from*

*from above, stood and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt-sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. The priests stood in the midst of Jordan, until all the armies of Israel had passed over. And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests feet were lift up upon the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever, chap. iv. from v 18.*

If the passage over the Red sea had been only taking advantage of a spring-tide, or the like ;

like; how would this teach all the people of the earth, that the hand of the Lord was mighty! How would a thing no more remarkable, have been taken notice of through all the world! How would it have taught Israel to fear the Lord, when they must know, that, notwithstanding of all these big words, there was so little in it! How could they have believed, or received a book as truth, which they knew told the matter so far otherwise from what it was!

But, as I said, this passage over Jordan, which is here compared to that of the Red sea, is free from all those cavils that are made as to that of the Red sea; and is a further attestation to it, being said to be done in the same manner as was that of the Red sea.

Now, to form our argument, let us suppose, that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occasion, in some after age; and then that some designing man invented this book of *Joshua*, and said, that it was wrote by Joshua at that time; and gave this stonage at Gilgal, for a testimony of the truth of it: Would not every body say to him, We know the stonage at Gilgal; but we never heard before of this reason for it, nor of this book of *Joshua*: Where has it been all this while? and where, and how came you, after so many ages, to find it? Besides, this book tells us, that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age; and therefore  
that

that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it: but we were never taught it when we were children, nor did ever teach our children any such thing: And it is not likely that could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage did continue, which was set up for that, and no other end.

And if, for the reasons before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in Salisbury plain; how much less could it be as to the stonage at Gilgal?

And if, where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a sham reason cannot be imposed; how much more is it impossible to impose upon us in actions and observances which we celebrate in memory of particular passages? how impossible to make us forget those passages which we daily commemorate, and persuade us, that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before; that is, that we knew it before we knew it?

And if we find it thus impossible for an imposition to be put upon us, even in some things which have not all the four marks before mentioned; how much more impossible is it, that any deceit should be in that thing where all the four marks do meet?

This has been shewed, in the first place, as to the matters of fact of Moses.

2. Therefore I come now, *secondly*, to shew, that, as in the matters of fact of Moses, so likewise all these four marks do meet in the matters

matters of fact which are recorded in the gospel, of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be the shorter; because all that is said before, of Moses and his books, is every way applicable to Christ and his gospel. His works and miracles are there said to be done publicly, in the face of the world; as he argued to his accusers, *I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing*, John xviii. 20. It is told, *Acts* ii. 41. that three thousand at one time, and, *Acts* iv. 4. that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first of the rules before mentioned.

Then for the two second: Baptism and the Lord's supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things: and they were not instituted in after ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain apostles, and other ministers of his gospel, to preach, and administer these sacraments, and to govern his church; and that always, even unto the end of the world \*. Accordingly they have continued by regular succession, to this day; and, no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall

\* *Matth.* xxviii. 20.

last. So that the Christian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the book of Moses to the Jews: and it being part of the matters of fact related in the gospel, that such an order of men were appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world; consequently, if the gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ; then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of clergy, as derived themselves from the institution of Christ; which must give the lye to the gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was, at that time, (whenever the Deists will suppose the gospel to be forged), not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of clergy likewise, of his appointment, to administer them; and it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

3. The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the Heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated.



strated. First, For Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, chap. 6. &c.; and those which are commonly told of him, pass among the Mahometans themselves but as legendary fables; and as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them, as the legends of their saints are in the church of Rome. See Dr Prideaux's life of Mahomet, p. 34.

But, in the next place, those which are told of him do all want the two first rules before mentioned. For his pretended converse with the moon; his merca, or night-journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c. were not performed before any body. We have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of Fox, or Muggleton, among ourselves.

The same is to be said, in the second place, of the fables of the Heathen gods, of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like: besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles. And moreover, the wise among the Heathen did reckon no otherwise of these but as fables, which had a mythology, or mystical meaning in them; of which several of them have given us the *rationale*, or explication. And it is plain enough, that Ovid meant no other by all his metamorphoses.

It is true, the Heathen deities had their priests: they had likewise feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them. But all these want the fourth mark, *viz.* That such

such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done; otherwise they cannot secure after ages from the imposture, by detecting it at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the *Bacchanalia*, and other Heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and therefore can be no proof of them. And the priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c. were not ordained by these supposed gods; but were appointed by others, in after ages, only in honour to them. And therefore these orders of priests are no evidence to the truth of the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

IV. Now, to apply what has been said, you may challenge all the Deists in the world to shew any action that is fabulous, which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No; it is impossible. And, to resume a little what is spoke to before, the histories of Exodus, and the gospel, could never have been received, if they had not been true; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi, and of Christ, of the sabbath, the passover, of circumcision, of baptism, and the Lord's supper, &c. are there related, as descending all the way down from those times without interruption. And it is full as impossible, to persuade men that they had been circumcised, baptized, had circumcised, or baptized their  
 G children,

children, celebrated passovers, sabbaths, sacraments, &c. under the government and administration of a certain order of priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c. And without believing of these, it was impossible that either the law or the gospel could have been received.

And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the gospel, being no otherwise pressed upon men than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them: and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after ages, without a palpable detection of the cheat, when first invented; as impossible as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.

V. I do not say, that every thing which wants these four marks, is false; but that nothing can be false which has them all.

There is no manner of doubt that there was such a man as Julius Cæsar, that he fought at Pharsalia, was killed in the senate-house, and many other matters of fact of ancient times, though we keep no public observances in memory of them.

But this shews, that the matters of fact of Moses, and of Christ, have come down to us better guarded than any other matters of fact, how true soever.

And

And yet our Deists, who would laugh any man out of the world, as an irrational brute, that should offer to deny Cæsar or Alexander, Homer or Virgil, their public works and actions, do, at the same time, value themselves as the only men of wit and sense, of free, generous, and unbiassed judgments, for ridiculing the histories of Moses and Christ, that are infinitely better attested, and guarded with infallible marks, which the others want.

VI. BESIDES, that the importance of the subject would oblige all men to inquire more narrowly into the one than the other. For what consequence is it to me, or to the world, whether there was such a man as Cæsar; whether he beat, or was beaten, at Pharsalia; whether Homer or Virgil wrote such books; and whether what is related in the Iliads or Æneids, be true, or false? It is not two pence up or down to any man in the world. And therefore it is worth no man's while to inquire into it, either to oppose or justify the truth of these relations.

But our very souls and bodies, both this life and eternity, are concerned in the truth of what is related in the holy scriptures; and therefore men would be more inquisitive to search into the truth of these, than of any other matters of fact, examine and sift them narrowly, and find out the deceit, if any such could be found: for it concerned them nearly, and was of the last importance to them.

How unreasonable, then, is it to reject these

matters of fact, so sifted, so examined, and so attested, as no other matters of fact in the world ever were; and yet to think it the most highly unreasonable, even to madness, to deny other matters of fact, which have not the thousandth part of their evidence, and are of no consequence at all to us whether true or false?

VII. **T**HERE are several other topics, from whence the truth of the Christian religion is evinced to all who will judge by reason, and give themselves leave to consider: As the improbability that ten or twelve poor illiterate fishermen should form a design of converting the whole world to believe their delusions; and the impossibility of their effecting it, without force of arms, learning, oratory, or any one visible thing that could recommend them; and to impose a doctrine quite opposite to the lusts and pleasures of men, and all worldly advantages or enjoyments; and this in an age of so great learning and sagacity, as that wherein the gospel was first preached: That these apostles should not only undergo all the scorn and contempt, but the severest persecutions, and most cruel deaths, that could be inflicted, in attestation to what themselves knew to be a mere deceit and forgery, of their own contriving. Some have suffered for errors which they thought to be truth; but never any for what themselves knew to be lyes. And the apostles must know what they taught to be lyes, if it was so; because they spoke of those  
those

those things which they said they had both seen and heard, had looked upon, and handled with their hands, &c. \*

Neither can it be said, that they perhaps might have proposed some temporal advantages to themselves, but missed of them, and met with sufferings instead of them: for if it had been so, it is more than probable, that when they saw their disappointment, they would have discovered their conspiracy; especially when they might not only have saved their lives, but got great rewards for doing of it. How improbable, then, is it, that not one of them should ever have been brought to do this?

But this is not all. For they tell us, that their Master bid them expect nothing but sufferings in this world. This is the tenure of all that gospel which they taught: and they told the same to all whom they converted. So that here was no disappointment.

For all that were converted by them, were converted upon the certain expectation of sufferings, and bidden prepare for it. Christ commanded his disciples to take up their cross daily, and follow him; and told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; that whoever did not forsake father, mother, wife, children, lands, and their very lives, could not be his disciples; that he who sought to save his life in this world, should lose it in the next.

Now, that this despised doctrine of the

\* *Acts* iv. 20. 1 *John* i. 1.

cross should prevail so universally, against the allurements of flesh and blood, and all the blindingments of this world, against the rage and persecution of all the kings and powers of the earth, must shew its original to be divine, and its protector almighty. What is it else could conquer without arms, persuade without rhetoric, overcome enemies, disarm tyrants, and subdue empires, without opposition?

VIII. WE may add to all this, the testimonies of the most bitter enemies and persecutors of Christianity, both Jews and Gentiles, to the truth of the matter of fact of Christ; such as Josephus and Tacitus; of which the first flourished about forty years after the death of Christ; and the other about seventy years after. So that they were capable of examining into the truth, and wanted not prejudice and malice sufficient to have inclined them to deny the matter of fact itself of Christ. But their confessing to it, as likewise Lucian, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian the Apostate, the Mahometans since, and all other enemies of Christianity that have arisen in the world, is an undeniable attestation to the truth of the matter of fact.

IX. BUT there is another argument more strong and convincing than even this matter of fact; more than the certainty of what I see with my eyes; and which the Apostle Peter called a *more sure word*, that is, proof, than

than what he saw and heard upon the holy mount, when our blessed Saviour was transfigured before him and two other of the apostles: for having repeated that passage as a proof of that whereof they were eye-witnesses, and heard the voice from heaven giving attestation to our Lord Christ, 2 *Pet.* i. 16. 17. 18. he says, *ψ* 19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, for the proof of this Jesus being the Messiah; that is, the prophecies which had gone before of him, from the beginning of the world; and all exactly fulfilled in him.*

Men may dispute an imposition or delusion upon our outward senses: but how can that be false which has been so long, even from the beginning of the world, and so often, by all the prophets, in several ages, foretold? how can this be an imposition, or a forgery?

This is particularly insisted on, in the *Method with the Jews*. And even the Deists must confess, that that book we call the *Old Testament*, was in being, in the hands of the Jews, long before our Saviour came into the world. And if they will be at the pains to compare the prophecies that are there of the Messiah, with the fulfilling of them, as to time, place, and all other circumstances, in the person, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, of our blessed Saviour, they will find this prove what our Apostle here calls it, *a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*



hearts. Which God grant. Here is no possibility of deceit or imposture.

Old prophecies, and all so agreeing, could not have been contrived to countenance a new cheat; and nothing could be a cheat, that could fulfil all these.

For this therefore I refer the Deists to the *Method with the Jews*.

I desire them likewise to look there, *sect. 11.* and consider the prophecies given so long ago, of which they see the fulfilling at this day, with their own eyes, of the state of the Jews, for many ages past, and at present; without a king, or priest, or temple, or sacrifice, scattered to the four winds, sifted as with a sieve, among all nations; yet preserved, and always so to be, a distinct people from all others of the whole earth. Whereas those mighty monarchies which oppressed the Jews, and which commanded the world, in their turns, and had the greatest human prospect of perpetuity, were to be extinguished, as they have been, even that their names should be blotted out from under heaven.

As likewise, that as remarkable of our blessed Saviour, concerning the preservation and progress of the Christian church, when in her swaddling-cloaths, consisting only of a few poor fishermen; not by the sword, as that of Mahomet, but under all the persecution of men and hell; which yet should not prevail against her.

But though I offer these, as not to be slighted by the Deists, to which they can shew  
nothing.

nothing equal in all profane history, and in which it is impossible any cheat can lie; yet I put them not upon the same foot as the prophecies before mentioned of the marks and coming of the Messiah, which have been since the world began.

And that general expectation of the whole earth at the time of his coming, insisted upon in the *Method with the Jews*, *sect. 5.* is greatly to be noticed.

But, I say, the foregoing prophecies of our Saviour, are so strong a proof, as even miracles would not be sufficient to break their authority.

I mean, if it were possible that a true miracle could be wrought in contradiction to them: for that would be for God to contradict himself.

But no sign, or wonder, that could possibly be solved, should shake this evidence.

It is this that keeps the Jews in their obstinacy. Though they cannot deny the matters of fact done by our blessed Saviour to be truly miracles, if so done as said; nor can they deny that they were so done, because they have all the four marks before mentioned: yet they cannot yield! Why? Because they think that the gospel is in contradiction to the law. Which if it were, the consequence would be unavoidable, that both could not be true. To solve this, is the business of the *Method with the Jews*. But the contradiction which they suppose, is in their comments that they put upon the law; especially

cially they expect a literal fulfilling of those promises of the restoration of Jerusalem, and outward glories of the church; of which there is such frequent mention in the books of Moses, the Psalms, and all the prophets. And many Christians do expect the same, and take those texts as literally as the Jews do. We do believe, and pray for the conversion of the Jews. For this end they have been so miraculously preserved, according to the prophecies so long before of it. And when that time shall come, as they are the most honourable and ancient of all the nations on the earth; so will their church return to be the mother Christian church as she was at first; and Rome must surrender to Jerusalem. Then all nations will flow thither; and even Eze- kiel's temple may be literally built there, in the metropolis of the whole earth; which Jerusalem must be, when the fulness of the Gen- tiles shall meet with the conversion of the Jews: for no nation will then contend with the Jews, nor church with Jerusalem for su- premacy. All nations will be ambitious to draw their original from the Jews, whose are he fathers, and from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

Then will be fulfilled that outward gran- deur and restoration of the Jews, and of Je- rusalem, which they expect, pursuant to the prophecies.

They pretend not that this is limited to any particular time of the reign of the Messiah. They are sure it will not be at the beginning; for

for they expect to go through great conflicts and trials with their Messiah, (as the Christian church has done), before his final conquest, and that they come to reign with him. So that this is no obstruction to their embracing of Christianity. They see the same things fulfilled in us, which they expect themselves; and we expect the same things they do.

I tell this to the Deists, lest they may think that the Jews have some stronger arguments than they know of; that they are not persuaded by the miracles of our blessed Saviour, and by the fulfilling of all the prophecies in him, that were made concerning the Messiah.

As I said before, I would not plead even miracles against these.

And if this is sufficient to persuade a Jew, it is much more so to a Deist, who labours not under these objections.

Besides, I would not seem to clash with that (in a sound sense) reasonable caution, used by Christian writers, not to put the issue of the truth wholly upon miracles, without this addition, when not done in contradiction to the revelations already given in the holy scriptures.

And they do it upon this consideration, That though it is impossible to suppose, that God would work a real miracle, in contradiction to what he has already revealed; yet men may be imposed upon by false and seeming miracles, and pretended revelations, (as there are many examples, especially in the church of Rome), and so may be shaken in the faith,  
if

if they keep not to the holy scriptures as their rule.

We are told, 2 *Theff.* ii. 9. of *him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders*; and *Rev.* xiii. 14. xvi. 14. and xix. 20. of the devil and false prophets working miracles. But the word in all these places is only *σημεία*, *signs*, that is as it is rendered, *Matth.* xxv. 24.; which, though sometimes it may be used to signify real miracles; yet not always, not in these places: for though every miracle be a sign, and a wonder; yet every sign, or wonder, is not a miracle.

X. HERE it may be proper to consider a common topic of the Deists, who, when they are not able to stand out against the evidence of fact, that such and such miracles have been done, then turn about, and deny such things to be miracles, at least that we can never be sure whether any wonderful thing that is shewn to us, be a true or a false miracle.

And the great argument they go upon, is this, That a miracle being that which exceeds the power of nature, we cannot know what exceeds it, unless we know the utmost extent of the power of nature; and no man pretends to know that: therefore that no man can certainly know whether any event be miraculous: and, consequently, he may be cheated in his judgment betwixt true and false miracles.

To which I answer, That men may be so cheated; and there are many examples of it.

But

But that though we may not always know when we are cheated; yet we can certainly tell, in many cases, when we are not cheated.

For though we do not know the utmost extent of the power of nature, perhaps in any one thing; yet it does not follow, that we know not the nature of any thing, in some measure; and that certainly too. For example: Though I do not know the utmost extent of the power of fire; yet I certainly know, that it is the nature of fire to burn; and that when proper fuel is administered to it, it is contrary to the nature of fire not to consume it. Therefore if I see three men taken off the street, in their common wearing apparel, and, without any preparation, cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and that the flame was so fierce, that it burnt up those men that threw them in; and yet that those who were thrown in should walk up and down in the bottom of the furnace, and I should see a fourth person with them, of glorious appearance, like the Son of God; and that these men should come up again out of the furnace, without any harm, or so much as the smell of fire upon themselves, or their cloaths: I could not be deceived, in thinking there was a stop put to the nature of fire as to these men; and that it had its effect upon the men whom it burned, at the same time.

Again, though I cannot tell how wonderful and sudden an increase of corn might be produced by the concurrence of many causes; as a warm climate, the fertility of the  
D soil,

soil, &c. : yet this I can certainly know, that there is not that natural force in the breath of two or three words spoken, to multiply one small loaf of bread, so fast, in the breaking of it, as truly and really, not only in appearance and shew to the eye, but to fill the bellies of several thousand hungry persons; and that the fragments should be much more than the bread was at first.

So neither in a word spoken, to raise the dead, cure diseases, &c.

Therefore though we know not the utmost extent of the power of nature; yet we can certainly know what is contrary to the nature of several such things as we do know.

And therefore, though we may be cheated and imposed upon in many seeming miracles and wonders; yet there are some things wherein we may be certain.

But further, the Deists acknowledge a God of an almighty power, who made all things.

Yet they would put it out of his power to make any revelation of his will to mankind. For if we cannot be certain of any miracle, how should we know when God sent any thing extraordinary to us?

Nay, how should we know the ordinary power of nature, if we knew not what exceeded it? If we knew not what is natural, how do we know there is such a thing as nature? that all is not supernatural, all miracles, and so disputable, till we come to downright scepticism, and doubt the certainty of our out-  
ward



ward senses, whether we see, hear, or feel, or all be not a miraculous illusion?

Which because I know the Deists are not inclined to do, therefore I will return to pursue my argument upon the conviction of our outward senses; desiring only this, that they would allow the senses of other men to be as certain as their own. Which they cannot refuse, since without this they can have no certainty of their own.

XI. THEREFORE, from what has been said, the cause is summed up shortly in this: That though we cannot see what was done before our time; yet, by the marks which I have laid down concerning the certainty of matters of fact done before our time, we may be as much assured of the truth of them, as if we saw them with our eyes; because whatever matter of fact has all the four marks before mentioned, could never have been invented, and received, but upon the conviction of the outward senses of all those who did receive it, as before is demonstrated. And therefore this topic which I have chosen, does stand upon the conviction even of mens outward senses. And since you have confined me to one topic, I have not insisted upon the other, which I have only named.

XII. AND now it lies upon the Deists, if they would appear as men of reason, to shew some matter of fact of former ages, which they allow to be true, that has greater evi-



dence of its truth, than the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ; otherwise they cannot, with any shew of reason, reject the one, and yet admit of the other.

But I have given them greater latitude than this; for I have shewn such marks of the truth of the matters of fact of Moses and of Christ, as no other matters of fact of those times, however true, have, but these only: and I put it upon them to shew any forgery that has all these marks.

This is a short issue. Keep them close to this. This determines the cause all at once.

Let them produce their Apollonius Tyanæus, whose life was put into English by the execrable Charles Blount\*; and compared, with all the wit and malice he was master of, to the life and miracles of our blessed Saviour.

Let them take aid from all the legends in the church of Rome, those pious cheats, the forest disgraces of Christianity; and which have bid the fairest, of any one contrivance, to overturn the certainty of the miracles of Christ, and his apostles, and whole truth of the gospel, by putting them all upon the same foot; at least, they are so understood by the generality of their devotees, though disowned and laughed at by the learned, and men of sense, among them.

Let them pick and chuse the most probable of all the fables of the Heathen deities; and

\* Who became his own executioner.

see if they can find, in any of these, the four marks before mentioned.

Otherwise let them submit to the irrefragable certainty of the Christian religion.

XIII. BUT if, notwithstanding of all that is said, the Deists will still contend, That all this is but priestcraft, the invention of priests, for their own profit, &c.; then they will give us an idea of priests far different from what they intend: for then we must look upon these priests, not only as the cunningest and wisest of mankind, but we shall be tempted to adore them as deities, who have such power as to impose, at their pleasure, upon the senses of mankind, to make them believe, that they had practised such public institutions, enacted them by laws, taught them to their children, &c. when they had never done any of these things, or ever so much as heard of them before: and then, upon the credit of their believing that they had done such things as they never did, to make them further believe, upon the same foundation, whatever they pleased to impose upon them, as to former ages: I say, such a power as this must exceed all that is human; and, consequently, make us rank these priests far above the condition of mortals.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been related of the infernal powers: for though their legerdemain has extended to deceive some unwary beholders; and their power of working some seeming mi-

acles has been great; yet it never reached, nor ever was supposed to reach so far, as to deceive the senses of all mankind, in matters of such public and notorious nature as those of which we now speak; to make them believe, that they had enacted laws for such public observances, continually practised them, taught them to their children, and had been instructed in them themselves from their childhood, if they had never enacted, practised, taught, or been taught such things.

3. And as this exceeds all the power of hell and devils, so is it more than ever God almighty has done since the foundation of the world. None of the miracles that he has shewn, or belief which he has required to any thing that he has revealed, has ever contradicted the outward senses of any one man in the world, much less of all mankind together: for miracles being appeals to our outward senses, if they should overthrow the certainty of our outward senses, must destroy, with it, all their own certainty, as to us; since we have no other way to judge of a miracle exhibited to our senses, than upon the supposition of the certainty of our senses, upon which we give credit to a miracle that is shewn to our senses.

4. This, by the way, is a yet unanswered argument against the miracle of transubstantiation, and shews the weakness of the defence which the church of Rome offers for it, (from whom the Socinians have licked it up, and, of late, have gloried much in it amongst us),  
That

That the doctrines of the Trinity, or incarnation, contain as great seeming absurdities as that of transubstantiation: for I would ask, Which of our senses is it which the doctrines of the Trinity, or incarnation, do contradict? Is it our seeing, hearing, feeling, taste, or smell? Whereas transubstantiation does contradict all of these. Therefore the comparison is exceedingly short, and out of purpose. But to return:

If the Christian religion be a cheat, and nothing else but the invention of priests, and carried on by their craft, it makes their power and wisdom greater than that of men, angels, or devils; and more than God himself ever yet shewed or expressed, to deceive and impose upon the senses of mankind, in such public and notorious matters of fact.

XIV. AND this miracle, which the Deists must run into to avoid those recorded of Moses and Christ, is much greater, and more astonishing, than all the scriptures tell of them.

So that these men, who laugh at all miracles, are now obliged to account for the greatest of all; how the senses of mankind could be imposed upon in such public matters of fact.

And how then can they make the priests the most contemptible of all mankind, since they make them the sole authors of this the greatest of miracles?

XV. AND since the Deists (these men of  
sense

sense and reason) have so vile and mean an idea of the priests of all religions, why do they not recover the world out of the possession and government of such blockheads? why do they suffer kings and states to be led by them; to establish their deceits by laws, and inflict penalties upon the opposers of them? Let the Deists try their hands; they have been trying, and are now busy about it. And free liberty they have. Yet have they not prevailed, nor ever yet did prevail in any civilized or generous nation. And though they have made some inroads among the Hottentots, and some other the most brutal part of mankind; yet are they still exploded; and priests have, and do prevail against them, among not only the greatest, but best part of the world, and the most glorious for arts, learning, and war.

XVI. FOR as the devil does ape God, in his institutions of religion, his feasts, sacrifices, &c.; so likewise in his priests; without whom, no religion, whether true or false, can stand. False religion is but a corruption of the true. The true was before it, though it be followed close upon the heels.

The revelation made to Moses is elder than any history extant in the Heathen world. The Heathens, in imitation of him, pretended, likewise, to their revelations. But I have given those marks which distinguish them from the true. None of them have those four marks before mentioned.

Now,

Now, the Deists think all revelations to be equally pretended, and a cheat; and the priests of all religions to be the same contrivers and jugglers: and therefore they proclaim war equally against all, and are equally engaged to bear the brunt of all.

And if the contest be only betwixt the Deists and the priests, which of them are the men of the greatest parts and sense, let the effects determine it: and let the Deists yield the victory to their conquerors, who, by their own confession, carry all the world before them.

XVII. IF the Deists say, That this is because all the world are blockheads, as well as those priests who govern them; that all are blockheads, except the Deists, who vote themselves only to be men of sense: this (besides the modesty of it) will spoil their great and beloved topic, in behalf of what they call natural religion, against the revealed, *viz.* appealing to the common reason of mankind. This they set up against revelation; think this to be sufficient for all the uses of men, here or hereafter, (if there be any after state); and therefore that there is no use of revelation. This common reason they advance as infallible, at least as the surest guide; yet now cry out upon it when it turns against them. When this common reason runs after revelation, as it always has done, then common reason is a beast; and we must look for reason, not from the common sentiments  
of

of mankind, but only among the beaus, the Deists.

XVIII. THEREFORE if the Deists would avoid the mortification, (which will be very uneasy to them), to yield, and submit to be subdued and hewed down before the priests, whom of all mankind they hate and despise; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the truth is, That religion is no invention of priests, but of divine original: That priests were instituted by the same author of religion; and that their order is a perpetual and living monument of the matters of fact of their religion, instituted from the time that such matters of fact were said to be done; as the Levites from Moses; the apostles, and succeeding clergy, from Christ, to this day: That no Heathen priests can say the same: they were not appointed by the gods whom they served, but by others in after ages: they cannot stand the test of the four rules before mentioned; which the Christian priests can do, and they only. Now, the Christian priesthood, as instituted by Christ himself, and continued by succession to this day, being as impregnable and flagrant a testimony to the truth of the matters of fact of Christ, as the sacraments, or any other public institutions; besides that, if the priesthood were taken away, the sacraments, and other public institutions, which are administered by their hands, must fall with them: therefore the devil has been most busy, and bent his greatest

greatest force, in all ages, against the priesthood; knowing, that if that goes down, all goes with it.

XIX. WITH the Deists, in this cause, are joined the Quakers, and other of our dissenters, who throw off the succession of our priesthood, (by which only it can be demonstrated), together with the sacraments, and public festivals. And if the devil could have prevailed to have these dropt, the Christian religion would lose the most undeniable and demonstrative proof for the truth of the matter of fact of our Saviour, upon which the truth of his doctrine does depend. Therefore we may see the artifice and malice of the devil, in all these attempts. And let the wretched instruments whom he ignorantly (and some, by a misguided zeal) has deluded thus to undermine Christianity, now at last look back, and see the snare in which they have been taken: for if they had prevailed, or ever should, Christianity dies with them; at least, it will be rendered precarious, as a thing of which no certain proof can be given. Therefore let those of them who have any zeal for the truth, bless God that they have not prevailed, and quickly leave them; and let all others be aware of them.

And let us consider, and honour the priesthood, sacraments, and other public institutions of Christ, not only as means of grace, and helps to devotion, but as the great evidence of the Christian religion:

Such



Such evidences as no pretended revelation ever had, or can have; such as do plainly distinguish it from all foolish legends and impostures whatsoever.

XX. AND now, last of all, if one word of advice would not be lost upon men who think so unmeasurably of themselves, as the Deists, you may represent to them, what a condition they are in, who spend that life and sense which God has given them, in ridiculing the greatest of his blessings, his revelations of Christ, and by Christ, to redeem those from eternal misery who shall believe in him, and obey his laws: and that God, in his wonderful mercy and wisdom, has so guarded his revelations, as that it is past the power of men or devils to counterfeit: and that there is no denying of them, unless we will be so absurd, as to deny, not only the reason, but the certainty of the outward senses, not only of one, or two, or three, but of mankind in general: That this case is so very plain, that nothing but want of thought can hinder any to discover it: That they must yield it to be so plain, unless they can shew some forgery which has all the four marks before set down. But if they cannot do this, they must quit their cause, and yield a happy victory over themselves; or else sit down under all that ignominy, with which they have loaded the priests, of being, not only the most pernicious, but (what will gall them more) the most  
most

most inconsiderate, and inconsiderable of mankind.

Therefore let them not think it an undervaluing of their worthiness, that their whole cause is comprised within so narrow a compass, and no more time bestowed upon it than it is worth.

But let them rather reflect, how far they have been all this time from Christianity, whose rudiments they are yet to learn; how far from the way of salvation; how far the race of their lives is run, before they have set one step in the road to heaven: and therefore how much diligence they ought to use, to redeem all that time they have lost, lest they lose themselves for ever; and be convinced, by a dreadful experience, when it is too late, that the gospel is a truth, and of the last consequence.

*July 17.*  
1697.

*P O S T.*

P O S T S C R I P T.

**A**lthough our author has sufficiently proved the authority of the holy scriptures by his four marks, as an external evidence; yet, that the reader may also see how high an opinion he had of their internal character, I have here subjoined an excellent observation made by him, in another work \*, in the following words.

“—The Heathen orators have admired  
“ the sublime of the style of our scriptures.  
“ No writing in the world comes near it, e-  
“ ven with all the disadvantage of our trans-  
“ lation; which, being obliged to be literal,  
“ must lose much of the beauty of it. The  
“ plainness and succinctness of the historical  
“ part, the melody of the Psalms, the in-  
“ struction of the Proverbs, the majesty of  
“ the Prophets, and, above all, that easy  
“ sweetness in the New Testament, where  
“ the glory of heaven is set forth in grave  
“ and moving expression; which yet reaches  
“ not the height of the subject: not like the  
“ flights of rhetoric, which set out small mat-  
“ ters in great words. But the holy scrip-  
“ tures touch the heart, raise expectation,  
“ confirm our hope, strengthen our faith,  
“ give peace of conscience, and joy in the  
“ Holy Ghost which is inexpressible. All  
“ which you will experience when you once  
“ come to believe; you will then bring forth  
“ these fruits of the Spirit, when you receive  
“ the word with pure affection, as we pray  
“ in our *Litany*.”

\* *Truth of Christianity demonstrated.*

A Letter from the Author of the  
*Short Method with the Deists*, to  
Mr GILDON, upon his publish-  
ing the *Deists Manual*.

S I R,

I Have read over your papers with great satisfaction; and I heartily bless God with you, and for you, that he has had mercy upon you, and opened your eyes, to see the wondrous things of his law, to convince you of those irrefragable proofs he has afforded for the truth and authority of the holy scriptures, such as no other writing upon earth can pretend to, and which are incompatible with any forgery or deceit. He has given you likewise that true spirit of repentance, to bring forth the fruits thereof; that is, to make what satisfaction you can for the injuries you have done to religion, by answering what has been published formerly by yourself against it\*; and being converted, you endeavour to strengthen your brethren.

I. *Of Creation.*

You have laid the true foundation of the being of God, against the Atheist; of his creation of the world, and providence, a-

\* viz. *Blount's Oracles of reason.*

gainst the asserters of blind chance. If all be chance, then their thoughts are so too, and there is no reasoning or argument in the world.

Others, because they know not what to say, suppose the world, and all things in it, to have been from eternity, and to have gone on, as now, in a constant succession, of men begetting men, trees springing from trees, &c. without any beginning.

Therefore, as it is evident, that nothing can make itself, it is equally evident, that a succession of things made, must have a beginning. A succession of beginnings cannot be without a beginning; for that would be literally a beginning without a beginning, which is a contradiction in terms.

## II. *Of Providence.*

AND to deny providence in the first cause, is the denying of a God. Whence had we our providence? for we find we have a providence to forecast and contrive how to preserve and govern that which we make or acquire: therefore there must be a providence much more eminently in God, to preserve and govern all the works which he has made. *He that made the eye, does he not see?* and he who put providence into the heart of man, has he none himself?

And the glory of his wisdom and power seems greater to us, in the acts of his providence, than even in those of creation; especially in his governing the actions of tree agents,

gents, without taking from them the freedom of their will to do as they list, and turning their evil into good, by the almightiness of his wisdom. We see great part of this every day before our eyes, in his turning the counsels of the wise to foolishness, and trapping the wicked in the works of their own hands. This strikes us more sensibly, and is nearer to us, than the making of a tree or a star; and we feel that over-ruling power in his providence, which we contemplate in his creation.

When the sins of men are increased to provoke God to take vengeance, he permits the spirit of fury to incline their wills to war, and destruction of each other, and nation rise up against nation; and when in his mercy he thinks the punishment is sufficient, he calms their rage, like the roaring of the sea, and there is peace. And they are so free agents in all this, that they think it is all their own doing. And so really it is, though under the unseen direction of a superior power.

But not only in the public transactions of the world, his providence is observable. There is no man who takes notice of his own life, but must find it as to his very private affairs; a thought sometimes darting into his mind, to rid him out of a difficulty, or shew him an advantage, which he could not find in much considering before. At other times, a man's mind is so clouded, as if his eyes were shut, that he cannot see his way. Again, several events which he thought most unlucky, and his utter ruin, he finds after-

wards to be much for the best; and that he had been undone, if that had not happened which he feared. On the other hand, many things which he thought for his great benefit, he has found to be for his hurt. This shews a providence, which sees farther than we can, and disposes all our actions, though done in the full freedom of our own will, to what events, either good or bad for us, God pleases.

### III. *Of Revelation.*

BUT these considerations from the creation and providence, though admirable and glorious, are within the *oracles of reason*, and are but earthly things, in comparison of those heavenly things, which God has revealed to man *at sundry times, and in divers manners*, and are recorded in the holy scriptures; and which otherwise it was impossible for man to have known. \* “For what man is he that  
 “ can know the counsel of God? or who can  
 “ think what the will of the Lord is? For  
 “ the thoughts of mortal men are miserable,  
 “ and our devices are but uncertain. For the  
 “ corruptible body presseth down the soul,  
 “ and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down  
 “ the mind that museth upon many things.  
 “ And hardly do we guess aright at things  
 “ that are upon earth, and with labour do  
 “ we find the things that are before us: but  
 “ the things that are in heaven, who hath  
 “ searched out?”

\* *Wisdom, chap. ix, ver. 13. &c.*

This then must be purely the subject of revelation. But when the Deist is come thus far, he is entered into a wide field: for all religions, Jewish, Heathen, Christian, and Mahometan, pretend to revelation for their original.

To clear this point, was the design of *the short Method with the Deists*, which gave the first opportunity to our conversation.

The Heathen and Mahometan religions not only want those marks (there set down) which ascertain the truth of fact, but their morals and worship are impure, and inconsistent with the attributes of God; as the indulgence of fornication and uncleanness among the Heathen, and their human sacrifices, (most abhorrent to the God of holiness and mercy), and the filthy obscenity of their very *sacra*; besides the great defect of their morals, which knew no such thing as humility, forgiveness of injuries, loving their enemies, and returning good for evil. Some of their philosophers spoke against revenging of injuries, as bringing greater injury to ourselves, or not worth the while; but not upon the account of humanity, and love to our brethren, and doing them good though they did evil to us.

—You may see pride and self-conceit run through all their philosophy; besides their principle of increasing their empire, by conquering other countries who did them no harm, whom they called *barbarians*.

Into this class comes likewise the sensual paradise proposed by Mahomet, and his principle



ple of propagating his religion by the sword.

The Jewish religion has all the certainty of fact, and its morals are good; but because of the hardness of their hearts, they came not up to the primitive purity; as in the case of *polygamy* and *divorce*; wherein our blessed Saviour reduces them to the original, *that from the beginning it was not so*: and in several other cases mentioned in his sermon upon the mount.

Therefore the perfection of morals, and of the true knowledge of God, was reserved for the Christian religion; which has, in more abundant manner than even the Jewish, the infallible marks of the truth of the facts, in the multitude and notoriety of the miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour, beyond those of Moses. Which fully answers the objection of the Jews, That Christ wrought his miracles by Beelzebub: for then, as he said to them, *By whom do your children cast out devils?* Was it by the spirit of God, or Beelzebub, that Moses and the prophets wrought their miracles?

Then, from the purity and heavenliness of his doctrine, all levelled to destroy the kingdom of Satan, those wicked principles, and idolatrous worship, which he had set up in the world; the other answer of our blessed Saviour concludes demonstratively, of a kingdom divided against itself, That if Satan cast out Satan, to promote that doctrine which Christ taught, we must alter our notion of the devil, and suppose him to be good, and his  
kingdom

kingdom must then be at an end: which we see not yet done; for wickedness still reigns in the world.

*IV. Of the objection as to the mysteries of religion, especially of the Holy Trinity, &c.*

AGAINST the things above mentioned reason has nothing to object: but then prejudices are raised up against what is revealed, as being of things that are above our reason, and out of its reach; as chiefly the doctrine of the blessed Trinity.

In answer to which, we may consider, that if such things were not above our reason, there needed no revelation of them, but only a bare proposal of them to our reason, made by any body, without any authority, and their own evidence would carry them through.

In the next place, we must acknowledge, that there are many things in the divine nature far out of the reach of our reason: That it must be so: for how can finite comprehend infinite? who can think what eternity is? a duration without beginning, or succession, of parts or time! who can so much as imagine, or frame any idea of a being neither made by itself, nor by any other? of omnipresence? of a boundless immensity? &c.

Yet all this reason obliges us to allow, as the necessary consequences of a first cause.

And where any thing is established upon the full proof of reason, there ten thousand objections or difficulties, though we cannot answer them, are of no force at all to overthrow

throw it. Nothing can do that, but to refute those reasons upon which it is established; till when, the truth and certainty of the thing remains unshaken, though we cannot explain it, nor solve the difficulties that arise from it.

And if it is so upon the point of reason, much more upon that of revelation; where the subject-matter is above our reason, and could never have been found out by it.

All to be done in that case, is, to satisfy ourselves of the truth of the fact, that such things were revealed of God, and are no imposture. This is done, as to the holy scriptures, by the four marks before mentioned.

And as to the contradiction alledged in three being one, it is no contradiction, unless it be said, that three are one in the self-same respect: for in divers respects, there is no sort of difficulty — It is not said, that the three persons in the divine nature are one person; that would be a contradiction: but it is said, that the three persons are one nature. They are not three and one in the same respect; they are three as to persons, and one as to nature: here is no contradiction.

—Again, we cannot charge that as a contradiction in one nature, which is so in another, unless we understand both natures perfectly well: and therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction in the incomprehensible nature, of being three and one, though we found it to be so in our nature; which we  
do.

do not; because, as before said, they are not three and one in the same respect.

Nay, let us consider further, that though there is no comparison betwixt finite and infinite; yet we have nearer resemblances of the three and one in God, than there is of sight to a man born blind: for there is nothing in any of the other four senses, that has any resemblance at all to that of seeing; or that can give such a man any notion whatever of it, so as that he can judge of colours, or of the motions of light or sight.—And if we had not the experience of the different faculties of our mind \*, the contradiction would appear irreconcilable to all our philosophy; how three could be one, each distinct from the other; yet but one soul: one proceeding from, or being begot by the other; yet all co-eval, and none before or after the other. And as to the difference betwixt *faculties* and *persons*, *substance* and *subsistence*, it is a puzzling piece of philosophy. And though we give not a distinct subsistence to a faculty, it has an existence; and one faculty can no more be another, than one person can be another: so that the case seems to be alike in both, as to what concerns our present difficulty, of three and one: besides that by the word *person*, when applied to God, (for want of a proper word whereby to express it), we must mean something infinitely different from personality among men. And therefore, from a contradiction in the one, (suppose it grant-

\* As the understanding, memory, and will,

ed), we cannot charge a contradiction in the other, unless we understand it as well as the other; for how else can we draw the parallel?

What a vain thing is our philosophy, when we would measure the incomprehensible nature by it! when we find it nonplussed in our own nature; and that in many instances? —How is the same individual soul present at one and the same time, to actuate the distant members of the body, without either multiplication or division of the soul? And what shall we say of the motion of thought, to which no distance of place is any interruption; which can arrive at Japan as soon as at a yard's distance; and can reach a star, as soon as the top of a tree?

Is there any thing in body can bear any resemblance to this, without a manifest contradiction? Nay, even as to bodies, is any thing more a self-evident principle, than that the cause must be before the effect? Yet the light and heat of the sun are as old as the sun; and supposing the sun to be eternal, they would be as eternal.

And as light and heat are of the nature of the sun; and as the three faculties before mentioned are of the nature of the soul, so that the soul could not be a soul if it wanted any of them; so may we, from small things to great, apprehend, without any contradiction, that the three persons are of the very nature and essence of the Deity; and so of the same substance with it: and though one proceeding from the other, (as the faculties  
of

of the soul do); yet that all three are consubstantial, co-eternal, and of necessary existence, as God is; for that these three are God, and God is these three: as understanding, memory, and will, are a soul; and a soul is understanding, memory, and will. Indeed what we call *faculties* in the soul, we call *persons* in the Godhead; because there are personal actions attributed to each of them: as that of sending, and being sent; to take flesh, and be born, &c. I have said thus much here, (intending, God willing, to treat of this subject more largely by itself\*), to clear the way from that objection of rejecting revelation, (though we are infallibly sure of the fact), because of the supposed contradiction to our reason, in comparing it with our earthly things.

V. *Of the differences among Christians.*

BUT now that, from all the proofs of the certainty of the revelation, we are come to fix in Christianity, our labour is not yet at an end. For here you see the multiplicity of sects and division, which our blessed Saviour foretold should come, for the probation of the elect. As some Canaanites were left in the land, to teach the Israelites the use of war, lest, by too profound a peace, they might grow lazy and stupid, and become an easy prey to their enemies; so might Christianity be lost among us, if we had nothing to do:

\* Which the author afterwards published, in his *Socinian controversy discussed*.

it would dwindle, and decay, and corrupt, by degrees, as water stagnates by standing still. But when we are put to contend earnestly for the faith, it quickens our zeal, keeps us upon our guard, trims our lamp, and furnishes the sword of the Spirit, which might otherwise rust in the scabbard: and it gives great opportunity to shew us the wonderful providence and protection of God over his church, in preserving her against a visibly unequal force. And in this contest, to some this high privilege is granted, *in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 29. These go to make up the noble army of martyrs and confessors, for ever triumphant in heaven. Others conquer even here on earth, that God's wonderful doings may be known to the children of men. But as he who builds a tower, ought first to compute the expence, and he who goes to war, to consider his strength; so our blessed Saviour has instructed us, that he who will be his disciple, must resolve beforehand to take up his cross daily, to forsake father and mother, wife and children, and lands, and life itself, when he cannot keep them with the truth and sincerity of the gospel. Therefore we must *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand in the evil day; and having overcome all, to stand. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.*

And

And what is it we wrestle for? For the great mystery of godliness, *God manifest in the flesh, &c.*

VI. *The doctrine of Satisfaction.*

HERE is the foundation of the Christian religion, That when man had sinned, and was utterly unable to make any satisfaction for his sin, God sent his own Son, to take upon him our flesh, and, in the same nature that offended, to make full satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, by his perfect obedience, and the sacrifice of himself upon the cross.

Some say, What need any satisfaction? might not God forgive without it? it would shew greater mercy. But these men consider not, that God is not only just, but he is justice itself; justice in the abstract; he is essential justice: and justice, by its nature, must exact to the utmost farthing, else it were not justice. To remit, is mercy; it is not justice: and the attributes of God must not fight and oppose each other; they must all stand infinite and compleat. You may say then, How can God forgive at all? how can infinite mercy and justice stand together?

This question could never have been answered, if God himself had not shewed it to us in the wonderful œconomy of our redemption. For here is his justice satisfied to the least iota, by the perfect obedience and passion of Christ, (who is God), in the same human nature that offended: here is infinite wisdom expressed in this means found out for



our salvation; and infinite mercy in affording it to us.

Thus all his attributes are satisfied, and filled up to the brim. They contradict not, but exalt each other. His mercy exalts and magnifies his justice; his justice exalts his mercy; and both his infinite wisdom.

Here is a view of God, beyond what all the *oracles of reason* could ever have found out, from his works of creation, or common providence! These shew his works; but this his nature, it is himself! the very face of God! before which the angels veil their faces, and desire to look into this abyss of goodness, and power, and wisdom, which they will never be able to fathom, but still feed upon, and search further and further into it, with adoration, to eternity! and they worship our manhood thus taken into God! and rejoice to be ministering spirits to us, while upon earth.

This you and I have talked over at large; and this I gave you as the sum and substance, the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the Christian religion.

And now I repeat it as the surest criterion to guide a man, in the difficulty before us; that is, in the choice of a church, in the midst of all that variety there is among Christians. Whoever hold not this doctrine, join not with them.

#### VII. *Of the Socinians.*

This will save you from the Socinians, or the Unitarians, as they now call themselves, who expressly deny this doctrine. For they deny

ny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and the divinity of Christ, upon which it is founded. They consider Christ no otherwise than a mere man; and propose him only as a teacher and good example to us. But then they are confounded, with all their pretence to wit and reason, to give any account for his death; which was not necessary to teaching, or being an example. That an angel or a prophet might have been. Then they say, That he died to confirm the truth of his doctrine. But set this doctrine of satisfaction aside, and he taught nothing new, except the improvement of some morals. Besides, dying does not confirm the truth of any doctrine; it only shews, that he who dies for it, does himself believe it. Some have died for errors. And the Socinian doctrine affords no comfort, no assurance to us: for if we consider Christ only as a teacher, or example, we have not followed his precepts, nor example: here is nothing but matter of condemnation to us. But if we look upon him as our surety, who has paid our debt; as our sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our sins, and that we are saved by his blood, (which is the language of the holy scriptures, of which the Socinians know no meaning); this is a rock, and infallible assurance.

VIII. *Of the Popish errors in this matter.*

As the Socinians have totally rejected this doctrine; so the church of Rome has greatly vitiated and depressed it, by their doctrine of

merit, and their own satisfaction, which they make part of their sacrament of penance. On this is founded their purgatory, wherein souls who had not made full satisfaction upon earth, must complete it there. They deny not the satisfaction of Christ, but join their own with it, as if it were not sufficient.

IX. *Of the dissenters error herein.*

ON the other hand, our dissenters run to the contrary extreme: and because our good works must have no share in the satisfaction for sin; which they cannot, as being unworthy, and mixed with our infirmities, and our sin; therefore they make them not necessary, nor of any effect towards our salvation. They say, that Christ did not die for any, but the elect, in whom he sees no sin.—They damn the far greatest part of the world, by irreversible decrees of reprobation; and say, that their good works are hateful to God, and that it is not possibly in their power to be saved, let them believe as they will, and live never so religiously: they take away free will in man, and make him a perfect machine: they in effect make God the author of sin; —and his promises and threatenings to be of no effect; nay, to be an insulting those whom he has made miserable; which is an hideous blasphemy!

For a solution in this matter, both as to faith and works, I refer to the homilies of *faith and salvation*, and of *good works*, where  
you

you will find the true Christian doctrine set forth clearly and solidly.

I will not enter into other disputes that are among Christians; only this will be exceeding necessary, to settle well the notion of the church of Christ, to which all do pretend in various manners.

**X. *The true notion of the church, and of Episcopacy.***

First, therefore, the church must be considered, not only as a sect, that is, a company of people believing such and such tenets, like the several sects of the Heathen philosophers; but as a society under government, with governors appointed by Christ, invested with such powers and authority, to admit into, and exclude out of the society, and govern the affairs of the body.

This power was delegated by Christ to his apostles, the first governors of his church; and with them and their successors he has promised to be, to the end of the world. Accordingly the apostles did ordain bishops, in all the churches which they planted throughout the whole world. And these bishops were esteemed the successors of the apostles, as the supreme governors, and center of unity, each in his own church, from the beginning to this day. These were obliged to keep unity and communion with one another; which is therefore called *catholic communion*. And all these churches considered together, is the catholic church: as the several nations of the earth

earth are called the world.—This was the current notion and language of antiquity; that all bishops were the successors of the apostles; *omnes apostolorum successores sunt*, as St Jerom speaks, *epist. ad Evagr.* And St Ignatius, who was constituted by the apostles bishop of Antioch, salutes the church of the Trallians, “In the plenitude of the apostolical character, *Ἐν τῷ πληρώματι ἐν ἀποστολικῷ χαρακτῆρι.* Thus it continued from the days of the apostles, to those of John Calvin. In all the which time there was not any one church in the whole Christian world, that was not Episcopal. But now it is said by our dissenters, That there is no need of succession from the apostles, or those bishops instituted by them; that they can make governors over themselves whom they list: and what signifies the government of the church, so the doctrine be pure? But this totally dissolves the church as a society; the government of which consists in the right and title of the governor. And as the Apostle says, *Heb. v. 4. No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* And the dispute betwixt him and Korah was not as to any point either of doctrine or worship, but merely upon that of church-government. And St Jude, *ῥ 11.* brings down the same case to that of the Christian church. And reason carries it as to all societies. They who will not obey the lawful governor, but set up another in opposition to him, are no longer of the society,

ty, but enemies to it, and justly forfeit all the rights and privileges of it.

Now, considering that all the promises in the gospel are made to the church, what a dreadful thing must it be to be excluded from all these !

Besides, the church is called *the pillar and ground of the truth*, as being a society instituted by Christ for the support and preservation of the faith. This no particular church can attribute to itself, otherwise than as being a part of the whole: and therefore, as St Cyprian says, "Christ made the college of bishops numerous, that if one proved heretical, or sought to devour the flock, the rest might interpose for the saving of it." This is equally against letting the whole depend upon one universal bishop, and against throwing off the whole episcopate; that is, all the bishops in the world; which would be a total dissolution of the church as a society, by leaving no governors in it; or, which is the same, setting up governors of our own head, without any authority or succession from the apostles; which is rendering the whole precarious, and without any foundation: and it is a supposing, that providence is more obliged to stand by a church set up in direct opposition to his institution, than by that church which Christ himself has founded, and promised to be with to the end of the world. And though he has permitted errors and heresies to overspread several parts of it, at several times, for the probation of the elect, like the waneing of the moon;

moon; yet has he not left himself without witness, and has restored light to her, pursuant to his promise, that *the gates of hell should not prevail against her*; and this by the means of his servants and substitutes, the bishops of his church, whom he has not deserted. All of whom, through the whole world, always did, and still do maintain and own the apostolic creed. And wherein some, as the Arians, have perverted the sense of some articles; that lasted but a short time: and the truth has been more confirmed by it, in the unanimous consent and testimony of the whole Episcopal college to the primitive doctrine which they had received from the beginning. God healed these heresies in his own way, by the bishops and governors of his church, whom he had appointed, and without any infraction upon his own institution.

And it is observable, that these heresies began by infraction, which men made upon his institution of bishops; as Arius, an ambitious presbyter, first rose up against his bishop, before he was given up to that vile heresy, which he vented afterwards by degrees, to gain a party after him. thereby to maintain the opposition which he had made against his bishop; and, by a just judgment, he fell from one error to another, till he at last completed that detestable heresy which bears his name.

And in all the annals of the church, whether under the law or the gospel, there is not  
one

one instance of a schism against the priesthood which God had appointed, but greater errors in doctrine and worship did follow it. Thus the priesthood which Micah set up of his own head, and that which Jeroboam set up in opposition to that of Aaron, both ended in idolatry. Thus the Novatians and Donatists, who made schisms against their bishops, fell into grievous errors, though they did not renounce the faith.

And into what gross errors, both as to doctrine and worship, has the church of Rome fallen, since her bishop set up for universality, and thereby commenced that grand schism against all the bishops of the earth, whom he sought to depress under him! But while he would thrust other churches from him, he thrust himself from the catholic church.

For Christ appointed no universal bishop over his church, more than an universal monarch over the world. No such thing was known in the primitive church, till it was set up at first by John bishop of Constantinople, then by the bishop of Rome, in the seventh century. And as the whole world is one kingdom to God, as it is written, *His kingdom ruleth over all*; so the several churches of the world are one church to Christ. And the church of Rome saying, That she is that one church, or shew us another which can dispute it with us, in universality, antiquity, &c. is the same, as if France (for example) should say, Who can compare with me? therefore I am the universality, or monarch,



narch, shew me another. The thing appears ridiculous at the first proposal; for it must be said to Rome, or to France, That if you were ten times greater than you are, you are yet but a part of the whole. And to say, Who else pretends to it? Why, none. And it would be nonsense in any who did pretend to it. One part may be bigger than another; but one part can never be the whole. And all results in this, Whether Christ did appoint an universal bishop over all the churches in the world? And we are willing to leave the issue to that, if it can appear either from scripture or antiquity. Besides, the reason of the thing is against it: for, as Gregory the Great urged against John of Constantinople, if there was an universal bishop, the universal church must fall if that one universal bishop fell; and so all must come to center in one poor, fallible, mortal man.

This obliged the Pope to run into another monstrous extreme, and set up for infallibility in his own person, as the only successor of St Peter, and heir of those promises made to him: *Super hanc petram, &c.* This was the current doctrine of the divines in the church of Rome in former ages; as you may see in *Bellarmino de Rom. pontif. lib. 4. c. 5* — and in his preface, he calls this absolute supremacy of the Pope, the *summa rei Christianæ*, the sum and foundation of the Christian religion; and that to deny it, was not only a simple error, but a pernicious heresy.

This was old Popery: but now it is generally

rally decried by the Papists themselves ; yet no Pope has been brought to renounce it, they will not quit claim.

When they departed from the infallibility of the Pope, they sought to place it in their general councils. But these are not always in being ; and so their infallibility must drop for several ages together ; which will not consist with their argument, That God is obliged by his goodness, to afford always an outward and living judge and guide to his church.

Others of them place the infallibility in the church diffusive. But this, upon their scheme, is indefinite ; and the judge of controversy must be sought among numberless individuals, of whom no one is the judge or guide.

But there is an infallibility in the church, not personal in any one, or all of Christians put together ; for millions of fallacies can never make an infallible. But the infallibility consists in the nature of the evidence, which, having all the four marks mentioned in *the short Method with the Deists*, cannot possibly be false : As you and I believe there is such a town as Constantinople, that there was such a man as Henry VIII. as much as if we had seen them with our eyes : not from the credit of any historian or traveller, all of whom are fallible ; but from the nature of the evidence, wherein it is impossible for men to have conspired and carried it on, without contradiction, if it were false.

Thus whatever doctrine has been taught in the church, (according to the rule of *Vincentius Lirinensis*),

*Lirinenfis*), *semper, ubique, et ab omnibus*; "always, every where, and by all," is the Christian doctrine: for in this case such doctrine is a fact; and having the foresaid marks, must be a true fact, *viz.* that such doctrine was so taught and received. This was the method taken in the council called at Alexandria against Arius; it was asked by Alexander the Archbishop, who presided, *Quis unquam talia audivit*\*? "Who ever heard of this doctrine before?" And it being answered by all the bishops there assembled in the negative, it was concluded a novel doctrine, and contrary to what had been universally received by the Christian church. Thus every doctrine may be reduced to fact; for it is purely fact, whether such doctrine was received or not?

And a council assembled upon such an occasion, stands as evidence of the fact, not as judges of the faith; which they cannot alter by their votes or authority.

A council has authority in matters of discipline in the church; but in matters of faith, what is called their authority, is their attestation to the truth of fact; which, if it has the marks before mentioned, must be infallibly true: not from the infallibility of any, or all of the persons, but from the nature of the evidence, as before is said.

And this is the surest rule whereby to judge of doctrines, and to know what the catholic church had believed and taught, as received from the apostles.

\* *Socrat. hist. lib. 1. c. 5. Gr.*

And they who refuse to be tried by this rule, who say, We care not what was believed by the catholic church, either in former ages, or now; we think our own interpretations, or criticisms, upon such a text, of as great authority as theirs: these are justly to be suspected; nay, it is evident, that they are broaching some novel doctrines, which cannot stand this test. Besides the monstrous arrogance in such a pretence, these overthrow the foundation of that sure and infallible evidence upon which Christianity itself does stand, and reduce all to a blind enthusiasm.

Also what hydra heresies, and monstrous sects (fifty or sixty at one time, of which we have the names) flowed like a torrent into England, in the times of forty one, after Episcopacy was thrown down!

So evident is that saying, that the church is *the pillar and ground of the truth*, that we can hardly find any error which has come into the church, but upon an infraction made upon the Episcopal authority.

And as an infallible demonstration of Episcopacy, this is to be said, that it has all the four marks before mentioned, to ascertain any fact, in the concurrent testimony of all churches at all times; and therefore must infallibly be the government which the apostles left upon the earth. To which we must adhere, till a greater authority than theirs shall alter it.

I doubt not but all this will determine you  
to

to the church of England; and keep you firm to Episcopacy, as a matter not indifferent.

And I pray God, that *he who hath begun a good work in you, may perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.* Amen.

**F I N I S.**





