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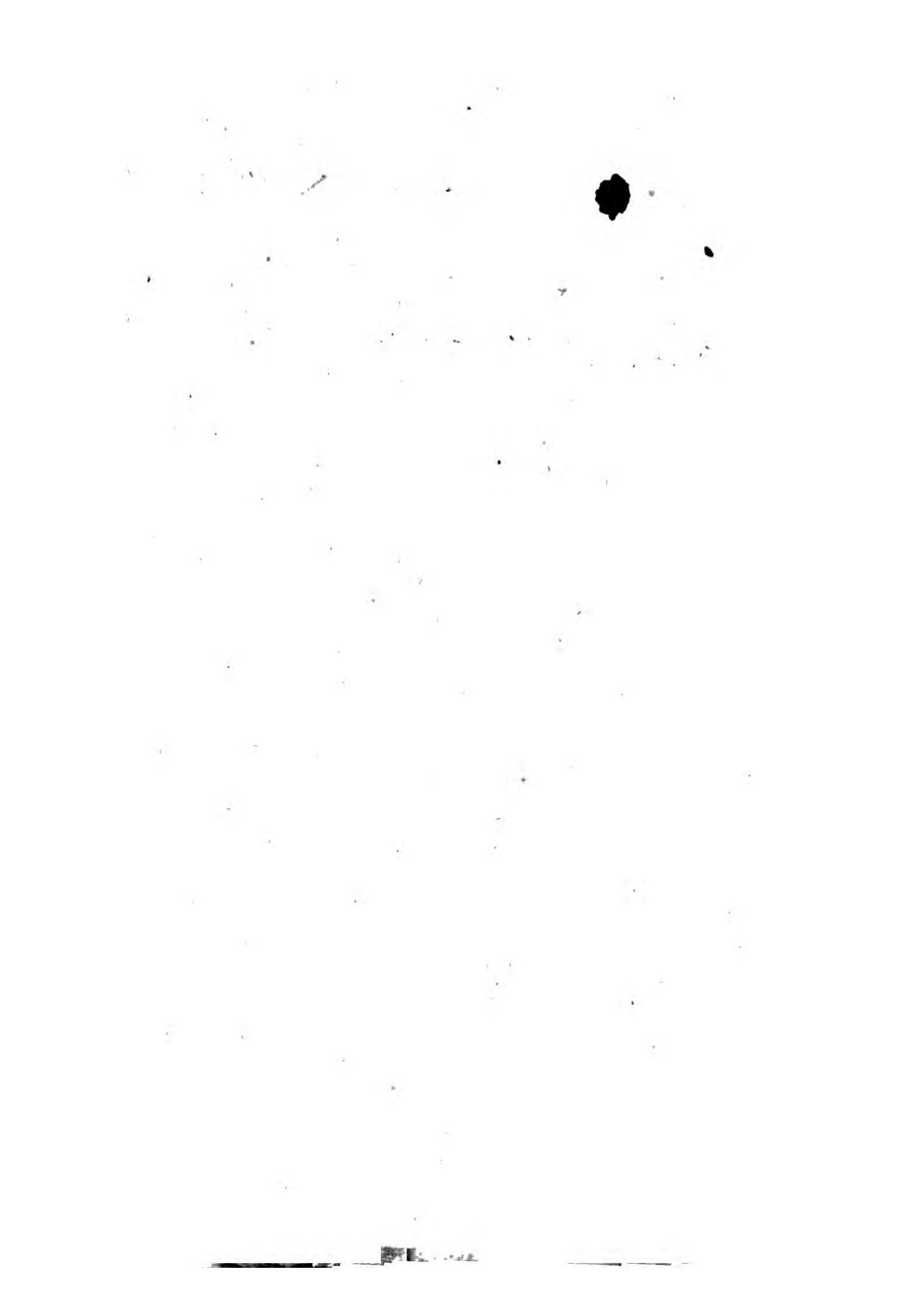
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T H E
Perspicuity *and* Solidity

O F T H O S E
E V I D E N C E S
O F
CHRISTIANITY,

TO WHICH THE
Generality of its Professors among us
may attain,

ILLUSTRATED and VINDICATED ;

In a LETTER to the AUTHOR of a late
Pamphlet, intituled, *Christianity not founded
on Argument, &c.*

By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

WE also believe, and therefore speak. 2 Cor. iv. 13.

An High-way shall be there ;—it shall be called THE WAY OF
HOLINESS ;—the way-faring Men, tho' Fools, shall not err
therein. Isa. xxxv. 8.

Quis non contemplatione—concutitur ad requirendum quid intus
in re sit? Quis non, ubi requisivit, accedit? ubi accessit, pati
exoptat? *Tertull. Apolog. cap. ult.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for M. FENNER, at the *Turk's Head* in *Grace-
church-street*; and J. HODGES, at the *Looking-Glass*
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MDCCXLII.





T O T H E
 AUTHOR of a late Pamphlet,
 INTITLED,
 CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*
Argument, &c.

S I R,

WHEN I consider the Strain and Purport of your late Discourse, I am heartily sorry that I was so long a Stranger to it. A Month has hardly passed, since it first fell into my Hands. They who know my Circumstances in Life, and the Variety of Business in which I am continually engaged, will not wonder that I missed it so long. Nor should I have read it now, had it not been mentioned to me by some Friends, for whose Judgment I have a very high Regard, as a Performance which had a very ill Aspect on *Christianity*, and which was executed with much more Spirit and Address, than is to be found in most of the Attacks which have been lately made upon it.

I have now Sir, perused it with Attention; and various as my Cares and Labours are, I think it of such Importance, that I ought to lay before you, and the World, the Result of my Reflections upon it.

4 *Christianity represented as unreasonable,*

The Character you have assumed of most zealous *Advocate for Christianity*, seems so ill to agree with the Purport of your Reasonings, that I apprehend most of our Readers will esteem it a bad Compliment paid to your Understanding, if I were to think of that Character otherwise than as a *Mask* worn for Pleasantry, rather than Disguise. Yet after all, Sir, it is the Tendency, rather than the Design, of your Pamphlet, with which I am concerned. Were you indeed the warm *Christian* you personate, I could not behold *the Wounds* of Religion with Indifference, merely because they were *received in the House of a Friend*: Nor would I consent to demolish the Walls of a Fortrefs, on the Strength of which my Life, and even the Safety of my Country, depended, tho' the worthiest Man upon Earth should, in a Fit of Lunacy, undertake to persuade me, that it was the most effectual Method to engage the Miraculous Protection of an Almighty Arm. That those Efforts, which, *in the Name of the Lord*, you have thought fit to make, with such solemn Preparation, and such glowing Ardor of Spirit, do indeed tend to subvert the *Faith of Christians*, and to expose the *Gospel* to the last Degree of Contempt, is so exceeding plain, that I verily believe, it would appear to every intelligent Reader a solemn Kind of Trifling, to labour the Proof of it: And the Passages, which I am to take under Examination, may be more than sufficient to demonstrate it to a Stranger.

You have evidently represented *Christianity*, if not *Religion* in general, as an *unreasonable Thing*; for you expressly tell us, not only "that it is not founded "on Argument," and that it is incapable of being generally proved by it; but go so far as roundly to say, (*pag. 86.*) "that there is an irreconcilable "Repugnance between Reason and Faith." You speak of *Scripture*, as if all your Eloquence was at
a Loss

Scripture useless, and Miracles uncertain. 5

a Loss for Words strong enough to express your Contempt for it. “ *Manuscript Authorities and Pa-* “ *per-Revelations,*” as they are insultingly called, are, it seems, “ an empty Notion :” (*Pag. 60.*)—“ The “ suspicious Repositories of Human Testimony, “ in which nothing remains that can deserve our “ least Notice, or be thought of Consequence “ enough to engage a Moment’s Attention.” (*Pag. 59.*) It was not, it seems, enough to represent them as superfluous, “ We have no longer Need of distant “ Records:” (*ibid.*) But you briskly maintain, that Omnipotence itself is not able to supply their Defects and Insufficiency; “ tho’ a constant Miracle “ were to interpose on the Occasion, and the same “ Almighty Power that first indited it,” what ever you mean by that singular Expression, “ were “ to continue hovering perpetually with a guardi- “ an Hand over the sacred Depositum.” (*Pag. 61.*)

As for all the *Scripture-Miracles*, on which we have laid so great a Stress, you declare without Reserve, “ that they are to us no more than an un- “ certain Hearsay,” and “ that the Voice of God, “ bearing Witness to his beloved Son, has long “ since dwindled to Human Tradition.” (*Pag. 52, 53.*) Nay, you strongly insinuate, that these *Miracles* were never meant as Arguments of the Divine Authority of the *Gospel*; (*pag. 46.*) and, with very little Complaisance to *St. Paul*, are pleased to tell us, by a Burlesque on his Words, when speaking of the *Resurrection of Christ*, (*pag. 68.*) “ that *the Thing was done in a Corner,*” without taking the least Notice of the publick Proofs which were given of it, in the very Place where it had happened but a few Days before.

It is obvious, Sir, that I might transcribe many Pages of your Work in Illustration of these Hints; and I must needs say, that the Language appears so unnatural, and so monstrous, in a professed *Disciple*

6 *The Agency of the Spirit misrepresented.*

ciple of Christ, that I am sometimes ready to wonder, you were not a little more careful to save Appearances. But then I recollect, that the Character you assume is such, as leaves little Room to expect Consistency, and seems best supported by such Kind of Paradoxes and Self Contradictions. By this means also you have artfully enough disarmed your Adversary of the Weapon called *Argumentum ad Hominem*, a whole Magazine of which might otherwise have presented. Were you to be attacked that Way, you would no doubt laugh very heartily, to see an Adversary so fairly bit, in a grave Expectation that you should be solicitous *cum Ratione insanire*, to appear a cool-headed, consistent Enthusiast.

You have chosen, Sir, in these Transports, whether real or fictitious, to fight with a two-edged Weapon; and the Blow which you give by a Kind of back Stroke, while avowedly defending *Christianity*, seems to me as threatening as any of the rest. I mean, those Passages of your Book, in which you so grossly misrepresent that glorious and important Doctrine of the *New Testament*, concerning *the Agency of the Divine Spirit*, in promoting the Reception and Efficacy of the *Gospel*. This, according to you, is nothing less than such an immediate and instantaneous Communication of the whole Sum and System of the *Gospel*, as renders every particular Believer more *Infallible*, than the *Church of Rome* has generally asserted the *Pope* to be, and secures the most illiterate Person, even from a Possibility of Error. (Pag. 89, 90.) This plenary *Inspiration* communicated to every *private Christian*, you represent as the main and only Support of Religion; tho' I think, Sir, you must needs know, that every Difference of Opinion in the *Christian Church* is a Demonstration, that no such universal Influences do in Fact take Place. So that upon the whole, you
have

Christianity left without any Evidence. 7

have left *Christianity* no Evidence but what every one sees it has not, that is indeed you have left it *no Evidence at all*. In one word, if your Reader were to suppose you serious in what you write, and to fall in with your Reasoning, I think the plain Consequence must be, that all Men of sober Sense would immediately reject the *Gospel*, while among the Remainder, *every one* that was *mad* would *make himself a Prophet*, and vent every wild Chimera of his distempered Brain as an immediate Dictate of GOD himself; in the Plenitude of Inspiration and Distraction, equally scorning to condescend, to assign any Reasons for his Doctrines, or to hear any Arguments against them.

That your late Performance, sprightly and ingenious as it is, has a Tendency to produce these terrible Effects, (for to me they appear *terrible* beyond Expression,) is too evident; and I may afterwards give you a more particular Account of the Reasons, on which I apprehend, that it must in its Consequences affect the Foundations of *Natural Religion*, as well as of *Revealed*. How far any of these Consequences might be intended by you, it is not my Business to determine. You, Sir, are ere long to answer that to the great Judge of Hearts, whose Tribunal I should dread to usurp. Yet I cannot forbear observing, that the *ludicrous Turn* you so often give to *Scripture*, and the Air of *Burlesque* and *Irony* which runs thro' your whole Piece, neither suits the Character of a rapturous *Devotee* so often affected, nor discovers a becoming Sense of the infinite Moment of the Question in Debate. Pardon me, Sir, the Plainness with which I speak my real Apprehensions on this Head, and believe me when I seriously declare, it is with no Design to libel and expose you, but with a sincere Desire to serve you and others, into whose Hand this Letter may come, that I now set my self to examine

8 *Manner of treating the Subject.*

mine what you have advanced, and, if possible, to lead you into juster and safer Sentiments.

Agreeably to these Views, and that Regard to the general Good which has engaged me to enter on this Controversy, I shall decline the invidious and unnecessary Task of pursuing you, with severe Criticism, thro' every Paragraph. I am not solicitous to expose every unguarded Expression, to canvass every minute Mistake, nor even to rescue every Clause of the Sacred Writings which I apprehend you have misrepresented or misapplied. I have not Leisure for such a Task as this, and there is hardly any Thing against which my Temper more strongly recoils. I shall examine what I apprehend most material, and most dangerous in your Work, with Calmness and Seriousness; representing, in as few Words as I can, what I take to be the Strength of your Cause, and telling you with the Simplicity and Moderation that becomes a *Christian*, how I answer it to my own Conscience. This I shall do with all possible Plainness, not affecting to be witty in a Case in which Eternity is concerned; nor so consulting your Taste and Character, as to forget that I am addressing the Publick, and aiming not to divert, but if possible, to edify. And if any cannot relish such a Design, and such a Manner, I give them fair Warning to throw this Letter aside, and to waste, (or shall I rather say, *to kill*,) no more of their *precious Moments* about it.

It sufficiently appears, Sir, from your Manner of writing, that you are well aware, the Main Strength of your Cause lies in the *First Head* of your Discourse, to which therefore, after some gay Flourishes on the *Two last*, you return again toward the Conclusion of your Pamphlet. It is *this* therefore, which I shall here examine at large; and

and the rather, because I think what you urge on this Topick, tho' it be far from any New Discovery, may admit some farther Illustration, than I have commonly met with; and is the Point, which in Proportion to its Difficulty and Importance, has been least discussed by the worthy *Apologists for Christianity*, in which our Country is so happy. The Foundations of the Solution have indeed often been laid down; but I have long wished to see the Matter placed in that particular Point of View, in which the Difficulties you propose, and which naturally arise, may be most happily obviated.

It is your professed Design under your *First General* to shew, "That *Reason*, or the Intellectual Faculty, could not possibly, both from its own Nature, and that of Religion, be the Principle intended by God to lead us into a true Faith." (*Pag. 7.*) An ambiguous Proposition, the Sense of which must be ascertained in a few Words, before its pretended Demonstration can be discussed.

You well know, Sir, that the whole Body of *Christians* as such, are, and must ever be agreed, that *Reason* is not our only Guide, but that *Divine Revelation* is most wisely and graciously intended to supply its many Deficiencies; and you know too, that they generally acknowledge the Reality and Importance of *Divine Influences* on the Mind, to confirm our Faith, and to quicken our Obedience. So that if you would not encounter a Puppet of your own forming, with whom we have no Manner of Concern, you must mean by this grand Proposition, "That *Reason* is not to be consulted, in judging either of the *Evidences* or the *Sense* of any supposed *Revelation*, nor in forming any of our Religious Sentiments." An Assertion so apparently extravagant, that one would imagine,
that

10 *Inconsistency with which he sets out.*

that merely to propound it were a sufficient Confutation.

Can any one indeed seriously think, that the Noblest of our Powers was intended only to the lowest and meanest Purposes; to serve the little Offices of mortal Life, and not to be consulted in the greatest of Concerns, those of Immortality? Strange! that the only Power which renders us capable of saying, *Where is GOD my Maker?* and of forming any Sentiments of Religion at all, should be discharged from that Province, for which it seems chiefly to have been given! But it will at least have Strength and Spirit enough to say, Why must I be thus discharged? And you condescend to answer at large, without seeming to be aware, that your first Step towards Demonstrating your Point supposes it to be false; appealing to *Reason* itself to judge, that it is not capable of judging at all. Nor is this Position only inconsistent with the Pertinency of any *Reasoning* whatsoever, but particularly inconsistent with that Footing on which you profess to place *Christianity*, when its *rational Proofs* are given up. Since, if GOD were, according to your strange Hypothesis, to reveal to me in a Moment the whole *System of Christianity*, and were I assured, by some inward inexplicable Sensation, that it was indeed a *Revelation from Him*, I could not receive it without some *Reasoning*. I must at least have this one short *Syllogism* in my Mind, "What comes from GOD is to be admitted as true; but this comes from GOD, therefore it is to be so admitted." And the Foundation of this supposes some previous *Reasoning*, concerning the Existence, and Veracity of that Being, whose Testimony is so readily to be admitted.

A very small Part of your Sagacity, Sir, might serve to discover this, which, obvious as it is, surpasses all you have writ. I will therefore take it
for

Christianity capable of Rational Proof. 11

for granted, that what you really intend by this general, and very unguarded Proposition, is chiefly this; “ That *Christianity* is not capable of such a “ *rational Proof*, as can be made intelligible to the “ *Generality of Mankind*, so as to oblige them to receive and obey it.” This is what you seem to have at Heart throughout your whole Book, and I shall not farther press the Advantage you have given an Opponent, by asserting so much more than was necessary to your main Design.

You do indeed sometimes acknowledge, I think in direct Opposition to your main Argument, that *Christianity* is capable of being *rationally proved* to the Conviction of a *studious Person*; (however unnecessary, and however hazardous it may be, even for such a one to meddle with that Kind of Proof :) But you always contend, that the *Generality of Mankind* cannot enter into any *rational Proofs* of it, (tho’ it is well known that it was intended for them;) and that they who can, will not find them sufficient, to bear the Stress which must in Fact be laid upon them, if we desire to be *Christians* to any valuable Purpose. I shall therefore set myself on the contrary to prove, “ That the *rational Evidence of* “ *Christianity* is so adjusted, that the *Generality of its* “ *Professors* may, if they be not wanting to themselves, attain to some competent Satisfaction “ with regard to it.” And when I have offered that Proof, I shall consider your Objections.

I am far from asserting, that every one in common Life can have a full View of all the *Controversies* which relate to *Christianity*; a Curiosity of Literature, which to Multitudes would be of very small Importance: Nor do I maintain, that every sincere Believer is capable of rendering a sufficient *Reason for his Faith*; an Ability on many Accounts highly desirable, yet not, so far as I can find, at

12 *The Rational Evidence of Christianity*

all essential to Salvation. A Man may have Reasons in his own Mind, which he cannot readily put into Words. Nay, I apprehend it possible, that a Man may feel and comply with the practical Tendency of *Christianity*, who does not himself rightly apprehend the Force of its *rational Proofs*, and perhaps lays a very great Stress on *Arguments* which are far from being conclusive. And I hope, Sir, you will allow, that when a Man's Temper and Character is such as the *Gospel* requires, such a *speculative Mistake* as to the Strength of an *Argument* does not affect his *Salvation*. Else I fear, we must condemn all those excellent Persons, who have believed the great Fundamental of all Religion, *the Existence of a GOD*, chiefly on the Force of those *Cartesian Arguments*, now generally, and I think rationally, exploded.

The Question is not, what Knowledge is universally necessary, nor what is in Fact attained; but what Satisfaction might generally be had, if there were a competent Care, on the one Hand, to teach, and on the other, to learn. This is all, which is absolutely essential to my Argument. Nevertheless, for the farther Illustration of the Subject, I shall freely tell you, how I apprehend the Case to stand, with regard to the *Generality* of the *common People*, who are in good earnest in the Profession of Religion; readily acknowledging, tho' with great Grief, that there are thousands and ten thousands, who wear the *Name of Christians* as by meer Accident, without at all considering its Meaning, Reason, or Obligation; a Case very consistent with the Possibility of their being better informed, and rationally convinced.

Now here, Sir, the leading Thought will be, that God has so adjusted the Nature and Circumstances of *Christianity*, as represented and exhibited
in

lies open to the Generality of People. 13

in the *New Testament*, that it is attended with a strong Degree of *Internal Evidence*, of which, by an unaccountable Omission, you take not the least Notice; and that what is most essential to the *External Proof*, lies within much less Compass than you seem to imagine, and is capable, if previous Precautions be taken in a proper Manner, of being opened to Persons of an *ordinary Capacity*, and understood by them, tho' they have neither Ability nor Leisure for the Curiosities of learned Disquisition.

For the Illustration of this, you must give me Leave to remind you, that both the *Mosaick* and *Christian* Dispensations have been much *misrepresented*, in Consequence of Mens taking their Notions of them, rather from the Conduct of their Professors, than from the Institutes of their respective Founders. To apply this to the present Occasion, let us consider what the Case of *Christians* would be, with regard to the *rational Evidence* of their Religion, if Things were to flow on in the Channel, into which it was the apparent Design of our Divine Master to direct them.

You will, no doubt, Sir, readily allow, that a *pious Education*, and a *standing Ministry*, are Appointments of our blessed Redeemer, and will spare me the Trouble of proving either of them in Form. And as you take it for granted in the whole of your Letter, that *Infant Baptism* is a *Christian Ordinance*, you will also allow me to mention it as a common Principle, tho' little of my Argument will depend upon its being so.

A Parent therefore, acting upon the Laws of *Christianity*, (which is what I here all along suppose in stating the Case,) having in a solemn Manner devoted his Child to God in its early Infancy,
and

14 *Children will gain an early Sense of Piety,*

and having ever since been affectionately recommending it to the Divine Blessing, watches the first Dawning of *Reason*, to instill into its tender Mind, Sentiments of Piety to God, Gratitude to the Redeemer, Benevolence to Men, and every other Grace and Virtue which the *Gospel* recommends, and which the Life of its great Founder exemplified. Quickened by the Obligation, which the Birth and Baptism of every younger Child in the Family renews, the Father and Mother concur in a wise and conscientious Care, to keep their dear Offspring, as far as possible, out of the Sight and Hearing of every Thing profane, cruel, and indecent; and *whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are venerable, whatsoever Things are righteous, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise*, the Child will be taught, by the Force of Precept and daily Example, to *think on these Things*, and to pursue them. The Consequence of this, under those Influences of Divine Grace which may be cheerfully expected in the Way of Duty, will probably be an early Sense of Decency, Virtue, and Piety. The Growth of those Seeds of *corrupt Nature*, which will in some Instances discover themselves in the most amiable Children, will in a great Measure be suppressed; *Religion* will grow familiar and pleasant, under the smiling Aspect it will appear to wear; and the *Bible*, which our little Disciple will early have been taught to read, will soon become a most delightful Book. The entertaining Stories, the fine Examples, the beautiful Poems, the wise Precepts so gravely and yet so kindly given, which it will every where meet with, must give it Abundance of Pleasure; and it will be eager to read those Things, the general Contents of which it has learnt, long before it could read, from the
daily

and a Love to Scripture, by good Education. I

daily Discourse of its Parents, who while they are recounting these glorious Things, will be teaching themselves as well as their Children, and by more familiar and attentive Views of them, confirming their own Faith, and animating their own Piety. And as for the leading Facts which the Child meets with in *Scripture*, strange as some of them may appear, it will readily believe them, on this general Foundation; that its good Parents, who know much better than himself, and never deceive him, assure him that every Thing, which this excellent Book contains, is true. And this, Sir, is all the Satisfaction, which a Child of the most extraordinary Genius can have in the first Stages of Life; and if it die before it arrive to greater Maturity, it will be happy in the practical Influence, which the *Gospel*, thus *implicitly believed*, had upon its Temper and Conduct; as it could be under no Necessity of entering into its *rational Evidence*, before those Faculties opened by which that Evidence was to be received, any more than a Blind Man can be obliged to read, or the Dumb to sing GOD's Praises.

At length, as the Minds of Children open, they will gradually be led into some farther Reflections on the *Certainty of those Things in which they have been instructed*. And here they will soon perceive some Degree of Difference in the Evidence of them, immediately appearing. As for the *Existence of a Supreme Being*, I really think, that the noblest and most satisfactory Arguments, of which the Mind of Man is capable, are those which are obvious even to the Understanding of a Child; I mean, those taken from the Works of Creation and Providence. Common Sense will surely tell these little Creatures, as soon as they can understand the Words, that *if every House, even the poorest Cottage, must have some Builder, there must be one who built all Things;*
who

16 *They will soon know somewhat of GOD,*

who made Heaven and Earth, with all their bright, noble Furniture. And as they see, clearly as they see the Sun, that he who made, and upholds all these Things, is *powerful* and *wise*; which every Flower, and every Fly, when considered as his Work, may shew them: So they may naturally conclude, such a great and wise Being is *good*; and it will be easy to shew them, that every agreeable Object about them is a sensible Proof of his Goodness; every pleasant Fruit, for Instance, a Gift of GOD, which all the Men in the World could not have made, or provided for them, without him.

By such familiar Views of Things they may be brought, not only to *believe*, but to *know*, that there is a great, *powerful*, *wise*, and *kind Father of the World* always near them. Nor will it be difficult to give them some rational View and Conviction of his *Moral Attributes*, as inferred from his *Natural*. I suppose they have in those early Lessons of *Sacred History*, which have been their Entertainment from their Infancy, been led to reflect on the *Characters* of Persons mentioned; to see the Amiability of some Affections and Actions, and the Deformity of others, which in many Instances are as obvious, as that one Face, or Dress, makes a pleasanter Appearance to the Eye than another. Discerning this visible Difference in *moral Characters*, long before they know what the Words *Morality* or *Character* signify, they will naturally, and I think very reasonably, conclude, that it is just to ascribe every Excellence and Glory to him, in whom they see so many: And by consequence, that he must be pleased with what is *good*, and displeased with what is *evil*. They see it in their wise and pious Parents, (for *wise* and *pious* we here suppose them to be;) and they will much more conclude, it must be in him, whom they have learnt to address as *our Father who is in Heaven*. I take the
Liberty,

and be ready to believe a Future State. 17

Liberty, Sir, to tell you, that I have examined many Scores of Children on these Heads, not as to what they have learnt, but what they themselves think of the Matter; and have put the Questions in various Forms, to suggest an Affirmative or Negative Answer; and I always find, if they understand the Terms of it, they answer right upon a very short Pause.

Agreeably to these obvious Principles, they naturally apprehend, that the *Regard* of GOD to his *Creatures* follows them *beyond Death*; and that he rewards, or punishes them, suitably to their Temper and Behaviour. They cannot think, that GOD would have suffered such Persons, as *Abel*, or the *Seven Sons* of that good Woman in the *Maccabees*, to have been slain in that cruel Manner, if he had not intended to take them to himself, and make them happier than they were: That, Sir, is a learned Prejudice, the laboured Error of a *Man*, of a *Minute Philosopher*; the Simplicity of a virtuous *Child* is not able to attain it.

A prudent Parent will easily foresee, that the Child will find greater Difficulties in coming at the Evidence of the Truth of those Things, which depend merely upon the *Authority of Scripture*. He will therefore early be laying in Materials for its seeing the Force of that *noble Part of it*, which you so strangely leave untouched; I mean, that which is *Internal*, and arises from the Contents and Design of the Book itself. A Child trained up as we here suppose, will probably of itself make a great many Reflections, what an *excellent Book* it is; especially as to some Parts of it, with which I have known little Children so struck, that they have of their own Accord read the same Passage, tho' neither History nor Parable, over and over, till they have almost learnt it by Heart: The religious

C

18 *Parents should shew them the Internal,*

gious Parent or Friend will watch, encourage, and illustrate these Remarks. And at length, when he finds the young Mind strong enough to receive it, he will lead it to reflect, what *excellent Men* they must be who wrote such Things. And when that Reflection is familiar, and has been daily renewed, perhaps for Weeks and Months, another easily follows, that the *Bible* is undoubtedly *true and divine*; for *good Men* would never have invented Lies, and have presumed to teach them in the Name of God himself; and *wicked Men* would not, and could not, have written what is so excellently Good, and tends to make others so. This, Sir, my pious Friends taught me when I was a Child; and I think it, to this very Day, an Argument of unanswerable Weight: And I cannot but apprehend, that the more a Man advances in real Goodness, and the more intimately he converses with *Scripture*, the more he will be impressed with it. Here is an Argument depending on no other Fact than this, that there is such a Book as the *Bible* in the World, of which our Children are as sure, as that there is a Sun: And Providence has wisely ordered it so, that they may understand the Force of it, before they can enter into Objections against it; and so far as I can judge, those Objections must be stronger than any I have ever met with, which can be sufficient to balance the Force of it. Yet this is far from being the only Foundation of our Faith, or the only Argument in its Favour, which a *young Christian* may be able, with proper Assistance, to understand.

The *External Evidence* does not indeed lie within so little Room, nor can it perhaps be made equally obvious by every pious Parent; yet with the Assistance which able *Ministers*, and proper *Books* may give, I apprehend a Child of fourteen or fifteen

teen Years old may have some competent View of it. It will be a most easy Thing to shew him, by uncontroverted antient Testimonies, collected by a Variety of Writers,—that *Christianity* was an antient Religion,—for the Sake of which its Professors, in its earliest Ages, endured great Extremities;—that there was, about 1700 Years ago, such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, the great Founder of it;—that the first Preachers of his Religion wrote *Books*, which were called by the Name of those that make up the most important Part of the *New Testament*;—that these *Books* are in the Main transmitted to us *uncorrupted*;—and that our *Translation* of them may in the general be depended upon as *right*. These are the grand Preliminaries; and as the Foundation may be laid without much Difficulty, so the Superstructure may be raised upon it, with yet much more Ease. From the *New Testament* thus proved to be *genuine*, a Person of very moderate Capacity and Learning will presently be able to shew, that the *Writers of it* certainly *knew*, whether the Facts they recorded were true or false;—that their *Character*, so far as we can judge by their Manner of Writing, was so excellently *good*, that there is no Reason to suspect them of Falseness;—nay, that the Probability of *their Fidelity* is so great, that it would be astonishing, if the strongest Temptation could prevail upon them to violate it;—at least in so criminal a Manner, as they must have done, if they were *Impostors*:—The *Temptations* must have been *exceeding strong*, to justify the least Degree of Suspicion:—But they had *no Temptation* at all to forge such a Story, and to attempt to impose upon the World by it:—However, that if they had made the Attempt, they *could not have succeeded* in gaining Credit;—nevertheless it is plain, they *did gain Credit* among vast Multitudes, who were strongly prejudiced against

20 *They will hence see Christianity is true,*

the Religion they taught:—From all which Things compared, it appears, that their Story, and the Religion founded upon it, i. e. *Christianity*, is true: A Conclusion, which may be greatly illustrated by shewing them farther,—what wonderful Things have since happened for the *Confirmation of it*; considering on the one Hand, what GOD has done to establish it, and on the other, what Methods its Enemies have taken to destroy it.

It is not my Business, Sir, to state and vindicate these Arguments at large. I have done it already in my *Three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity*, which were published several Years ago; and I shall be very ready to canvass the Strength of them, as there represented, with any who shall think fit to bring them into Dispute. I rather mention *those Sermons* here, because they are calculated for popular Use, and may assist those who are not so well versed in the Arguments, to propose them to their *Children*, or *Catechumens*, in what I apprehend the easiest and plainest Light. By talking over these Heads in a free and familiar Manner, and then giving the young Person the Book to read two or three Times alone, till he has fixed the leading Thoughts in his Understanding and Memory, I doubt not but such a Foundation might be laid in a few Days, as all the succeeding Years of Life would not be able to shake. Nor must it ever be forgotten, how much it would be cemented and established, by that true Taste of *moral Beauty and Excellence*, which we suppose already formed in the Mind of our young Student. He would find so much to charm him in the Sentiments, Character, and Conduct of the *Apostles*, as would engage him to lay a very great Stress on that important Branch of the Argument, which turns on that Point. It would appear to him, *in Theory*, utterly *improbable*, that Men of their heroick *Goodness* should engage
in

in so impious, and mischievous a *Fraud*, as they must have engaged in, if their Testimony was false; * as on the other Hand, the *Good Sense* which may easily be discovered in their Writings and Behaviour, will make it appear equally *absurd* to imagine, they should so madly run on *Sufferings* and *Ruin*, as they must have done, if they had not been conscious of a Divine Support, of miraculous Powers, and of immense future Rewards.

A Religious Youth, grown up to Years of Maturity, with a Mind thus furnished, and thus disposed, will not easily be perverted to *Infidelity*. So precious a Freight would be too weighty, to be overset by every *Wind of Doctrine*, or every Breath of *Ridicule*. Yet it might conduce farther to his Security, if a prudent *Parent* or *Minister* should give him, before the Scene of Temptation opens, some short *Hints* of the chief Topicks from whence *Objections* against *Christianity* are drawn, and of the *plainest* and most obvious *Answers* to them, which so far as I can judge are generally the most solid. If a Person be not intended for some learned Profession, or distinguished Circumstance in Life, it is by no Means necessary to be large in this Part of the Scheme; but something of this Kind may easily and profitably be done, and there will be no Reason to be in any Panick, lest every Hint of an Objection should *overturn his Faith*. Answers will be suggested, with those Objections; and he will soon be weary of hearing such poor unsatisfactory Things, as most of the Cavils of *Infidelity* are. And here again, the *good Habits*, and *Dispositions*

* How impious and mischievous the Fraud must have been, if it were a *Fraud*, is illustrated more fully than I have else where seen it, in the *Sermons* I mentioned above; (See *pag.* 259, & *seq.* 2d. Edit.) and the Thought appears to me of vast Importance.

22 *Such will be able to answer Objections,*

sions formed in his Mind, will be of great Service. He will perceive, that *Christianity* wears so favourable an Aspect, and opens upon him so fine a Prospect, that he will not *bunt after Objections* against it; as a Man is not studious to find a Flaw in Writings, by which he stands intitled to the Reversion of some noble Estate: And when they accidentally start up in his Way, he will soon see, that *many of them* are grounded on notorious Falseness, and are in themselves despicably mean; especially when set against the great Arguments for it, of which he is already possessed: And with Regard to *others*, the Assistance of *Ministers* and other religious Friends, which when pressed with real Difficulties he will honestly seek, will no doubt furnish him with proper Answers; and indeed his *Converse with the Scriptures* will enable him, without foreign Assistance, to obviate most of them, and they will vanish like Birds of Night before the rising Sun: Not now to mention those Auxiliaries, which his Faith will often call in, from observing and comparing the *different Characters* of those, who are most solicitous, on the one Hand to destroy it, and on the other to support it, of which I may hereafter speak.

If this, Sir, were merely an imaginary Scheme, on which no Parent acted, and no Children were educated, yet if it were (as I think, every one must own it is,) agreeable to the original *Christian Plan*, it would not be foreign to our Purpose; as it will prove, that if proper Precautions were taken, and Men were to act in Character, competent *Rational Evidence* might be attained, as young People grew up to a Capacity of exercising Reason; which is all that could be supposed Requisite. But bad as the World is, I bless God, I can confidently say, I have in the main Traces copied from the Life.
This

This, to my certain Knowledge, is the Care of *many Parents and Ministers*, and this the Felicity of *many Children*. The Success is generally answerable; and I hope, the Instances in which it is so in the *Protestant World*, are not to be numbered by Scores, but by Hundreds and Thousands, who are to be regarded as the precious *Seed of the Church* in the next Age, and who I doubt not will, in Spight of all the Efforts of *Infidelity*, exert themselves so effectually in its Service, that the *Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*.

Nevertheless while I bless GOD, that this is the Case of so many, I very readily acknowledge, that, thro' a *Negligence*, for which I fear a Multitude of *Parents and Ministers* have a terrible Account to render before GOD, it is *generally much otherwise*. By far the greater Part of *professing Christians* have probably *no better Reason* to give for their Religion, than that they were early baptized into it, and have been trained up in some of its External Forms. Far from being instructed in its *Evidences*, they are hardly taught its *Doctrines*, or its *Precepts*; or superficially learn them from those, who do not themselves seem to be in good Earnest concerned about the one or the other. The fatal Consequence is too plain. The Corruptions of Nature, abetted by the Force of evil Examples, prevail against them; and they are early plunged into such licentious Practices, that if they ever reflect on the most evident and express Declarations of the Word of GOD, they must immediately see, that they are condemned by it.

Now there is no Reason to wonder, if many of *this Sort of Christians* are easy *Profelytes to Infidelity*. It is no surprizing Thing, if a bold Jest thrown upon *Scripture*, or a confident senseless Assertion of its Falsehood, (perhaps from a Person, on whose
Word

24 *Danger of such as are not instructed.*

Word hardly any Thing else would be believed,) have with them all the Weight of a Demonstration. They will be little concerned to ask Information, or consider how Objections may be answered. Those magical Words, *Priest-craft*, and the *Prejudice of Education*, stun and terrify them. They submit, as you gravely expresses it, (*pag. 75.*) “ in the Im-
“ potence and Impuberty of a dutiful Under-
“ standing, in the tractable Simplicity of unprac-
“ tised Reason: With the obsequious and humble
“ Acquiescence of a Babe, they sit down to learn
“ *their Lesson* ” too; and their *Unbelief*, after they have attained the Stature of *Men*, is just as *blind* and *implicit*, as the *Faith* of their *Childhood* was.

This, Sir, is undoubtedly the Case with many; and you cannot but have observed, what large Companies in the Free-Thinking Army are raised and enlisted from among these Vagabonds. But the Generality of Men among us, as in every Nation, go on thoughtlessly in the Religion in which they were educated: Hearing the Truth of it often asserted, and perhaps never hearing it contradicted, they entertain no Doubts on the Subject, but grow old in a mere speculative and ineffectual Assent to *Christianity*. And if their Heart at any Time smite them, with the Contrariety of their Temper and Conduct to the Rules which they acknowledge to be Divine, they seek their Shelter in the Hope of *making their Peace with GOD*, (as they commonly expresses it,) before they go out of World; and perhaps abuse some of the noblest Discoveries which the *Gospel* makes, as an Encouragement to continue in those Sins and Follies, from which it was expressly designed to reclaim them.

Nevertheless it frequently happens among such as these, that some are awakened to think deeply and seriously of Religion: The plain lively *Preach-*
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ing of the *Gospel*, or perhaps some *afflictive Providence*, rouses them from their Lethargy. And I must reckon it among the chief Felicities of my Life, that I have had many Opportunities of observing, what are in Fact the Workings of Men's Spirits in such a Circumstance.

And here I have always found, that the Moral Perfections of the great Governour of the World appear to them in a very lively View: The Records of their own Consciences are thrown open before their Eyes, and they feel a Load of Guilt pressing on their Minds, of which they were before utterly insensible. Under this Anxiety, they hear of the *Remedy* which the *Gospel* has provided; and they hear of it with another Kind of Regard than formerly. It is what they now perceive, that they want; (strange, that they should have perceived it no sooner!) and it appears far more important to them, than Animal Life and all its Enjoyments. Hearing of the Love and Grace of a *Redeemer*, concerning the Reality of whose Undertaking they never had any considerable Doubt, their Hearts are transported with a Flow of most ardent and various Affections; they find another Kind of Energy in these Things, than they were ever aware, or could have imagined to be possible. *He has saved their Lives* at the Expence of his own; and under the *Constraints of his Love* they consecrate themselves to a forgiving God, with an Ardor of Soul which nothing but *Gratitude* can inspire. They do now, as it were, *receive the Gospel* anew from his Hand, not as a Revelation now made, but now first endeared to them, by a Sense of their own Concern in it; they exemplify the Beauty of its *Precepts*, and they feel the Force of its *Consolations*. A blessed Effect, in which I humbly acknowledge the Finger of God, and the Agency of his Spirit; tho' I see

26 *The Efficacy of the Gospel proves its Truth.*

no Reason to pretend to an *immediate Inspiration*, in the Sense which you maintain.

When the first Tumult of Affections, raised by so interesting and important a Scene, subsides, and the happy Converts come more coolly to reflect on what has passed, they draw a new Argument of the *Truth* of this glorious *Gospel* from its experienced *Efficacy*; and, tho' they cannot make a Stranger sensible of the Force of it, will say like *the Blind Man*, as yet little instructed in many other Proofs of our Lord's Divine Mission, *If he were not of GOD, he could not have opened my Eyes*; and under the lively Impression of it, the Sophistry of *modern Infidels* is as little to them, as that of the *Sanhedrim* was to him. At length, growing in Wisdom and Piety by their Acquaintance with the *Gospel*, and in Proportion to their Regard for it, they likewise, who had formerly no Taste and Sensibility for such Things, become qualified to take a more extensive Survey of its *Internal Evidence*, and to judge of it; and accordingly they see it much in the same Light with those, who had been formed to an earlier Subjection to it, and had grown up with it in their Hands and their Hearts.

Of these recovered Votaries to it, some who have a Head turned for *Reasoning*, perhaps from a Desire to serve others, and honour GOD, by defending *Christianity*, rather than from any Doubt which they themselves have of its Truth, set themselves to study the *Evidences of the Gospel*, as stated in some judicious Treatise on the Subject; which they carefully examine, and often ground so thoroughly in their Understanding and Memories, as to be able to *silence*, if not to *convince Gainsayers*. And others, who have not Leisure or Inclination to search so particularly into the whole Compass of the Argument, are perhaps greatly *confirmed in their Faith*,

The Force of some Impressions on the Mind. 27

Faith, by some *Circumstances* which powerfully impress them, tho' they may not be able to communicate the Force of the Argument to others; or tho' where it is communicated, it cannot publickly be stated, without Inconveniences which might overbalance the Advantages arising from the Discovery of such Occurrences.

I am sensible, Sir, I am touching on a Subject, which it is difficult to handle, without the Imputation of *Enthusiasm*, and perhaps without the Danger of it; and therefore I shall dismiss it in a few Words. I take upon me now to assert no Facts, either as my own Experience, or as on the Testimony of others, whom I may have Reason to credit; but I would suggest the Thought in Hypothesis. Is it in the Nature of Things *impossible*, or is it utterly *incredible*, that the Great Author and Governour of all should, in some rare Instances, even in these later Ages, deviate from the Laws by which he stately rules the Natural World, for the Deliverance and Support of some of his faithful Servants in Circumstances of great Extremity; especially, when thereby the Interest of the Moral World may remarkably be promoted? Or supposing this to be ever so rare, I would further ask, Is it impossible, that he may, on a perfect View of every minutest Circumstance, have constituted the Course of Things in such a Manner, that there shall be a remarkable Correspondence between a Train of Thoughts in a *Christian's* Mind, and an Event arising from other Natural, but perhaps unobserved Causes, on which that Train of Thoughts could have no Influence? Do you, Sir, thoroughly understand the Law, by which Thoughts arise in our Mind? or can you say, by what Connection, one springs up rather than another? Can you account for it, why the Mind is sometimes so

28 *The Temper and Conduct of Believers*

much more forcibly struck, than at other Times, with the same Object; or why it sometimes feels itself directed strongly into a certain Channel, and Track of Thinking, in which it is not conscious to itself of a Self-determining Agency? Or are you sure, that there may not be a special gracious Appointment (whether Natural or Miraculous, I do not now contend,) in certain Events, the Causes of which are so unobserved, that we commonly, but perhaps rashly, say, they happen by Chance? That the Minds of many eminently wise and good Men have been greatly comforted and established by such Events, I am well assured; and it seems probable to me, that to well disposed Persons of weaker Abilities, they may more frequently happen: Nevertheless, as I know they are liable to a great Deal of Cavil, and that it is the Fashion of the Age to deride every Thing of this Nature, I will not urge this Argument in the present Debate, but content myself with having insinuated it. I think, I ought not entirely to have omitted it; and this seems its most proper Place.

It is, I hope, at least possible, that the *Faith* of an *illiterate Christian* may be not only really, but *rationally confirmed* by such Events; or, if you will admit the commonly received Phrase, by such *special Providences* as these. However I am sure, there is another Topick of Argument, which is frequently of great and important Service in this View, and which falls under the daily Observation of the *common People* as well as others, and of which they are as *competent Judges* as the most polite and learned of Mankind. I mean *that* which arises from comparing the *Temper and Conduct* of those who profess to *reject the Gospel*, with that of those who seem most cordially to *esteem and embrace it*.

If it were evident and notorious, that *Infidelity* did

did generally in Fact *make Men better*; if it increased their Reverence for the Divine Being, and made them more diligent, constant, and devout in paying their daily Homage before him; if it rendered them more sober and temperate, more mild and gentle, more upright and benevolent in their Behaviour; tho' this would be a most unaccountable Phenomenon to any one who examines the *Constitution of the Gospel*, (since that diminishes no Natural Motive to Virtue, and adds many peculiar to itself,) I do not say, that this Remark ought to *balance all the Evidence* on the other Side; yet I will venture, Sir, to say, that I think it would shock an honest and candid Mind, more than *all the Objections* I have ever seen or heard of, as advanced by our *modern Free-Thinkers*. But I firmly believe, that what Weight this Thought has, will be found in Favour of *Christianity*, and not in Opposition to it.

You well know, Sir, one can judge of these Things only by one's own Observation, and the Report of others. I will not now insist on the latter; and that what I have to say as to the former, may not be imputed to the Eagerness of Disputation, I think it not unbecoming my Character to use the Solemnity of saying in the Words of *St. Paul*, *I protest to you by our Rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus*, (and a stronger Affelevation I cannot use,) that I write on this Topick, as I would do if my Life were to conclude with this Letter, and I were directly to pass to account before the Judge of Hearts, for the Truth of what I say.

I condescend not to speak of a meer Freedom from gross and infamous Vices; but sure I am, that if I have ever seen amiable and sublime *Virtue* in the World, I have seen it among the humble *Disciples of Jesus*. Where Education and Circumstances in Life have been low, *Christian Principles* have, to my certain Knowledge, so far as Principles could

30 *The highest Virtue found among Christians,*

could be known from Behaviour, raised, animated, and ennobled the Mind. I have beheld, even in Cottages, that filial Devotion toward the Blessed God, that cordial Submission to his Will under the most painful Dispensations, that calm steady Fortitude, in the Midst of Evils which might have made a Philosopher tremble, that Chearfulness in the immediate Views of Death; and, in the Tenour of Lives which I have intimately known, that strict Integrity, that Diligence, that Contentment, that Readiness to do Good in full Proportion to their small Abilities, that generous Self-Denial to avoid what might grieve and offend others, and, to crown all, that tender Solitude for the Eternal Happiness of Friends, of Strangers, and sometimes of Enemies; which has often filled me with Wonder as well as Delight. I speak freely, as conscious both of the Truth and Importance of what I say; nor am I at all ashamed thus openly to acknowledge, that *my Faith in Christianity* has been not a little *established* by such Observations as these; which I bless God, have not been made in a few Instances; and I esteem the Evidence, not the less, but the more, because *Day-Labourers* might enter into it, as well as myself.

I doubt not, Sir, but Thousands more have also made Observations of this Kind; and that it will generally be found, that when the *Principles of Christianity* enter a Mind before unaffected with them, they produce this Effect, which indeed it is most natural they should. On the other Hand, as to *professed Infidels*, and it is on them only that the Observation can pertinently be made, I appeal to the World in general, whether they do not commonly *make Shipwreck of a good Conscience*, as well as of *Faith*, and plainly shew, that the *Precepts of the Gospel* are as disagreeable to them as *its Doctrines*. It would be strange indeed, if Good-Nature, a Sense

of Honour, and, especially in advanced Life, a Caution not to disgrace distinguishing Principles, did not restrain some from scandalous Enormities, and produce something agreeable in their Behaviour; but I believe, most who know the World will allow, that it is a peculiar Glory for any of this Sect, to maintain so much as an uniform external Appearance, of what the best *Heathen Moralists* have esteemed *Virtue*.

People of Attention and Reflection in the lower Ranks of Life, are not so stupid, as not to observe these Things, or to neglect drawing the obvious Inference from them: An Inference, in which they will be both directed, and supported, by that Maxim of our Divine Master, *By their Fruits ye shall know them*. What the *Morals of Infidel Writers* in private Life have been, it may seem difficult certainly to judge, because their Pieces have been mostly *anonymous*. Yet I cannot forbear observing, that some of those ingenious Authors have found out a Way of letting the World into *their Characters*, without publishing *their Names*; and that in some such palpable Instances, as one would almost ascribe to a *judicial Infatuation*, or think they had been *hired* to expose their own Cause to Contempt.

And this leads me farther to touch upon that *Confirmation*, which the *Faith of plain Christians* sometimes receives, from observing, not only the *Character* of those who would *subvert Christianity*, but also the *Manner* in which they often *manage their Opposition* to it.

Every one who can read his *Bible* may observe, (and it may be profitable for *Young Persons* especially, to be shewn it,) how *unjustly* the *Enemies of Revelation* often represent the *Doctrines* and *Facts* delivered in *Scripture*. He may see the *Calummies*, which these Men often throw upon the *Inspired Writers*,

32 *Their Manner of opposing Christianity.*

ters, or those whom they celebrate, rolling off, like foul Water from the Down of a Swan, without leaving any Trace or Soil behind it. It is obvious also to remark, that instead of *examining*, or so much as *attempting to confute*, the *Arguments for Christianity*, which these Gentlemen cannot but know; they only advance their *Surmises*, and their *Possibilities*, or make vain Efforts to prove, that those Things *cannot in Reason be*, which *in Faët appear*.

It is not to be wondered, if honest Persons of plain Sense have soon *enough* of such Teachers, and do not often come to seek for *Grapes from Thorns*, or *Figs from Thistles*; or that if the boisterous Attacks, which are made on their Faith by such Methods, seem at first a little to loosen the Roots of it, the Storm afterwards serves only to fix it the faster, and to make Way for its farther Spread. Especially when they see, that *Arguments produced in Opposition to Christianity* often have as malignant an Aspect on *Natural Religion* too, and apparently tend to destroy all mutual Commerce among Mankind, which can never be carried on without some Confidence in the Testimony of each other. It is thus that *Meat* often *comes out of the Eater*, and *Sweetness out of the Fierce*; and the *Subtile* are taken in their own *Craftiness*. The Grossness of such visible and palpable Snares engages prudent People to avoid the Path in which they lie, and so secures them from others of a finer Contexture, and a more dangerous Form.

And thus, Sir, I have fulfilled my Promise, and given you a more distinct Account, than I remember to have met with elsewhere, of the *Rational Satisfaction* which many *Christians in common Life* have, and others under due Cultivation might without any Accuracy of Learning obtain, with Regard to the *Truth* of the *Religion* they profess.
And

A Summary of the Author's Objections. 33

And I do sincerely apprehend, that this Representation of the Matter, far different from that which you have given, if it appear just, will contain a compendious Answer to what you have suggested on the contrary Side of the Question; and be such a Reply to your Treatise, as *Walking* is to the celebrated Arguments which have been brought to demonstrate the *Impossibility of Motion*.

But here, Sir, as you tell your Friend, “ I am
“ very sensible, I have been holding you for some
“ Time past in the highest Impatience of Zeal, to
“ interpose and remind me,” that even *this Evidence* cannot be obtained by all;—that while it is pursued, it keeps the Mind in a State of dangerous Hesitation;—and where it is had, it is founded in the Prepossessions of Education,—in partial and imperfect Views of the Question;—that much of it depends upon precarious Human Testimony;—and consequently, that it cannot have Efficacy enough to satisfy the Mind, to controul irregular Affections, or to animate against those Extremities, which the *Gospel* may sometimes require us to endure in its Defence. Each of these Particulars you object in your Pamphlet; and I do not remember any Thing material suggested in it, and proper to be considered in this Place, which does not fall under one or another of these Heads.

Now as to the first of these, it is indeed true, that *all the Evidence* which I have here described, *cannot probably be attained by all*; tho’ I am confident a great deal more might be done for this Purpose, in an enlightened and *Protestant* Country like ours, than we generally see. Care might be taken, especially if the richer Kind of People had a becoming Compassion on their poor Neighbours, to teach *all Children to read*, and to furnish *all Families with Bibles*; as also to put such

34 *Means may be used to lead to this Evidence.*

Catechisms into their Hands, as contain some Hints of the *Reasons of Christianity*. And if that which *Dr. Thomas Burnet* has drawn up in so plain and concise a Manner, were to be used, I will venture to say, that *Children* will be furnished with *Reasons for being Christians*, which so far as I can learn, the most sagacious *Deists* have been too wise to attempt directly to answer; and till they both attempt, and effect it, the Understanding of a Child may see, that whatever else they do is of very little Importance. There are also several other *plain* and *popular Pieces*,* which may, with a very small Expence of Money and Time, be purchased and perused by *young People*: And if they were to be read two or three Times over in *Families* on the Evening of a Lord's Day, *Children*, and *Servants* might by an attentive Hearing be enabled to give some *Reason of the Hope that is in them*. And till they come to be capable of understanding such plain Things as these, if they have no Reason to believe their *Bible* to be true, but that they find it excellently good, and see it believed and revered by the wisest and best of those around them, it is, I suppose, at least as good a Ground for their *Faith*, as such Infant Understandings can have for *Infidelity*. Nor will it be easy to invent any Scheme, by which a *Child* shall attain any Knowledge at all, without some Confidence in the Veracity and Skill of its Parents, or other Teachers.

Indeed Sir, according to the injurious Representation you have made of Human Nature, this is the Case, not of *little Children* alone, but of *most* who are grown up to *Years of Maturity*. “The
“Generality of Apprehensions” say you, (pag. 17.)
“extend not beyond a simple Proposition, and
“are

* Either the *Three Sermons* mentioned above, pag. 20. or the *Bishop of London's Pastoral Letters*; or a Pamphlet intitled *Plain Reasons for being a Christian*; or the First Part of the *Gentleman's Religion*.

“ are thrown out at once at the very Mention of
“ introducing a Medium ; ” that is, in plain
Terms, they are not *Rational Creatures*. I shall
not now urge, how inconsistent this is with the
Arguments, by which those that call themselves
(by a strong Catachresis) *Freetinkers*, attempt to
reason People out of a Regard to *Revelation* ; and
that, even by maintaining the Natural Abilities of
the Human Mind to discover, without any Super-
natural Assistance, every Thing in Religion
which we are concerned to know. You, Sir,
are too zealous a *Christian* to be pressed with such a
Consequence ; or to be told, that if your subsequent
Discourse (*pag. 18, 19.*) be right, when taken in
Connection with this Principle, it will lead to a
Conclusion, that Men may live at Random, not
having *Sense enough* to be capable of rendering an
Account to God for their Actions. It would, I
doubt not, be well for some, if this were indeed the
Case ; but I hope, none that pretend to *reason against
Religion*, will imagine they have any Pretence to
take Shelter in such a Thought. If this Admoni-
tion be a Digression, you will I hope pardon it,
in Favour of those, who I dare say are the greatest
Admirers of your Performance ; and I will now
return to remind you, in direct Answer to what
you advance, that daily Experience shews the Capa-
cities of Mankind in general not to be *so weak*, as
(just to serve a present Purpose,) you are pleased
to suppose them. Do not People in low Life
reason on the common Occurrences of it ? Do they
not learn the *Art of Numbers*, and often know how
to apply it in Cases, where the Reason of that Ap-
plication requires much more than *one Medium* to
find it out ? I suppose, the *Natural Understanding* of
Men in different Stations of Life is on an Average
pretty Equal, and that *Education* generally makes
the *chief Difference* ; and I have had an Opportunity

36 *Examination does not require so much Time.*

of observing, that among those who enter on *Academical Studies*, (and *Reasoning* is not much cultivated in *Grammar Schools*,) there is not one in some Scores, who, with proper Instructions, does not in a few Days grow capable of entering into the Force of *Euclid's Demonstrations*. And I hope, none will have so little Modesty as not readily to acknowledge, that the *Reasonings* by which *Christianity* is proved in the *plain Pieces* I referred to above, are much easier and less abstruse, than those relating to the Properties of *Mathematical Figures* to Persons to whom they are entirely new. *Objections* therefore taken from the supposed *Impossibility* of entering into the Proofs offered, can only take Place with regard to Persons, who when grown up are so unhappy as to *want common Sense*; of whom it cannot be supposed, that either of us intended to speak, in what we have said on either Side of the Question in Debate between us.

But you will not fail to remonstrate, as you have already done at large, (*pag. 13, 14.*) that supposing the *Rational Evidence* of *Christianity* ever so intelligible, it will at least *require Time* for the most candid Enquirer to make himself Master of it; and while he is pursuing it, he continues in a State of *extream Danger*; because he is *hesitating* about that, on an immediate Compliance with which his Salvation depends. But to this, which really appears to me the most considerable Difficulty you have suggested, I beg leave to answer, that the *Examination* requires not near so much *Time* as you would represent; and that while the Mind is pursuing it, there is no Need at all that it should be in a State of *Infidelity*, and consequently of *Danger* as to its final Happiness, if Life should end before the Examination is finished.

You,

No Need to read every Controversial Piece. 37

You, Sir, I think by one of the most palpable Sophisms that I have any where met with, every where affect to represent the Case in Question, as if a Man could have no *Rational Evidence* of *Christianity*, till he had enquired, on the one Hand, into every Thing that could be said, either to confirm, or even to illustrate it; and, on the other, into every *Objection* that has been brought against it. And if this be not granted, all your Flourishes (pag. 61,—63.) will be meer Ornaments of Wit and Eloquence, entirely wide of the Matter in Debate. On the contrary, it seems self-evident, that this is so far from being necessary to make a rational and intelligent *Christian*, that it is not necessary to constitute an able and an accomplished *Divine*. View it in any other Instance, and you cannot but allow what I say. Would you maintain, that a Man cannot be fit to practise as a *Lawyer*, or a *Physician*, till he has read every Thing that has been writ in any Controversy relating to those Professions? It would be much more apparently absurd, to insist upon this *Polemical Omniscience*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) in the Case before us: Since at that Rate a competent *Number of Infidels* might, without urging one material Argument, *overtrow Christianity*, supposing it in itself ever so *Rational*, merely by writing a greater *Number of Books* about it, than any one Man could be able to read.

On the whole, *Controversies* relating to *Christianity* are endless; but what is *essential* to the Proof of it lies within a very little Room, and may be set in so plain and easy a Light, that a Man may in a few Hours with attentive Thought be competently Master of the Argument. If indeed he desires copiously and curiously to examine the particular Branches of it, he must allow proportionable Time and Labour; but it is by no means necessary, tho' you,

38 *Every Topick of Argument not fundamental.*

you, Sir, seem constantly to take it for granted, that he should be all this while *in Suspense*, as to the *Truth of the Gospel* in general. Every Topick of Argument is not so *fundamental*, as that the whole *Evidence of Christianity* should depend on that Topick; much less is every particular Proof belonging to each Topick so; and least of all, the Circumstance of every particular Proof. I might, for Instance, see great Reason to believe *Christianity* to be *true*, even tho' I knew nothing of its extraordinary Success and speedy Propagation in the first Ages of the Church: Or I might be sure, that it was early propagated thro' vast Tracts of Land, with Circumstances which afford a strong Conviction of its Truth, tho' I were yet to learn, whether it reached *India* or *Britain* during those early Days; and if it did, whether the *Christians* of *St. Thomas* received it from the *Apostle* of that Name, or our happy Island from *St. Paul*. I may be sure, that *Jesus* was prophesied of in the *Old Testament*, while I am entirely dubious how *Daniel's Weeks* are to be calculated; nay, I may be uncertain as to some Niceties in the Calculation, and yet be in general sure, that the Period they mark out is elapsed, and that it ended much about the Time of *Christ*.

And as a Consequence of all this it is evident, that *Books* on various Topicks relating to *Christianity* may be highly valuable, and yet by no means necessary to lay a *Rational Foundation* for our *Faith*. They may suggest new Thoughts; they may place Arguments urged many Ages ago, in a clearer and more beautiful Light; they may obviate Difficulties, which ingenious Men have started, and artfully aggravated; and thus they may demand the Esteem and Gratitude of the *Christian World*, to which the learned and worthy *Authors* of the *Analogy between Reason and Revelation*, and of the *Trial of the Witnesses*, are undoubtedly intitled; and yet
“ the

“ the Evidence of the *Gospel*, like its great Author,
“ might be *the Same Yesterday, to Day, and for*
“ *Ever,*” notwithstanding all you are pleased to
shrewdly to insinuate on this Head. (*Pag.* 20,—22.)

But waving this, which, tho’ I thought it necessary to touch upon it here, relates not immediately to the Case of *common Christians*, you will, I doubt not, be ready to remind me, that let the *Evidence* to be offered to their Consideration be ever so *short*, and ever so *plain*, yet *some Time* must be taken up in *examining* it, even that Part of it which is *most essential*; and while that *Examination* continues, they must be in a State of *dangerous Hesitation*; since *to doubt* concerning the *Truth of Christianity* is (according to your Representation of the Matter,) a *Damnable Apostacy* from it.

In answer to *this Part* of the *Objection* I am compelled to say, that I apprehend there is in it a *Complication of Errors*. I cannot, in the first place, see how the *Faith* of a *Christian* is utterly cancelled by every *Doubt* and *Suspicion* which arises in his Mind. Our Thoughts are not entirely under our own Command, and Natural Temper may sometimes suggest Fears, which *Reason* can neither authorise, nor exclude. The humble *Christian*, conscious on the one Hand, of the Imperfection of his Character, and on the other, of the Greatness of his Hopes, may be ready sometimes to suspect, that the *Gospel* is *too good News to be true*. Now where will you find your Proofs, either from *Scripture*, or from *Reason*, that every such *Suspicion* is an *Apostacy from the Faith*, and that it is *dammable* thus to be tempted?

But to cut the grand Sinew of your *Objection*, I will presume to say, how widely soever it may differ from the Schemes you have formed on this Subject, that I apprehend, a Man may be *rationaly established*
in

40 *Strong Presumptions in Favour of the Gospel.*

in the Faith of the *Gospel*, and may have candidly *examined* the Evidences of it, without *ceasing to believe it* while he pursues *that Examination*; which I think may easily appear from what I have represented above, and I the rather repeat it, as you, Sir, seem so studious to keep your Reader from one Thought of it.

Having once learnt what the *Gospel Scheme* is, I can never doubt of its being admirably calculated to elevate, to purify, and to strengthen the Soul, to fix it on God, and to open it in Sentiments of the most sincere and generous Benevolence to Men. Of this I am as sure, as that there is a *Gospel Scheme* at all, or such a Book as the *New Testament* existing in the World. Nor can I ever question for a Moment, after having read that admirable Book with Attention, that there seem to be in it all imaginable Signs of Integrity, Piety, and Goodness in the Heart of its Writers. Both these will appear *strong Presumptions* of its Truth and Authority, and such as would require cogent Arguments on the other Side to balance them: Arguments, which till I hear, I see no Reason to set myself to surmise. And as it is likely in *Theory*, that a *Religion* attended with strong *Internal Evidence*, will not be left destitute of *External*, I shall set myself to examine into that, under the Apprehension of a *strong Probability*, that it will turn out *in Favour of the Gospel*.

I remember indeed, that you somewhere speak with sovereign Contempt of “*that Enquiry*, which “*is intended with a shrewd Foreboding* how the “*Matter will end.*” But I must intreat you to ask yourself again, whether it is not possible for the most impartial Mind, in some Cases, to have such *Forebodings*; nay, whether it be always possible to avoid them, even when entering on the most resolutely *impartial Examination*? Consider the Matter in Subjects where the severest *Reasoning* takes
Place,

Place, and where there can be no Interest to bribe the Assent, I mean, where *Mathematical Theorems* are concerned.

I question not, Sir, but you have observed, if you ever turned your Thoughts this Way at all, that there is often an observable Proportion in the *Figure of a Diagram*, which leads a Man to think the Proposition *true*, as soon as he reads it. Besides, that having found *Demonstration* attending all the former Propositions, suppose of *Euclid*, he naturally concludes, he shall find it in the Proposition in Question. He would not perhaps accept a Bett of a thousand Guineas to one, against the Force of a *Demonstration*, which he has not yet studied; and which, notwithstanding this grand *Foreboding*, he shall be able as freely and fairly to canvass, as he ever did any of the former. So little does there seem in *this Part* of the Argument, which you have pushed with so much Eagerness and Triumph.

But to return to the Case of *young Persons*, to be instructed in the *Evidences of Christianity*, the Matter we were considering, and from whence my Regard to this favourite Topick of yours led me to digress a little too far:—I freely own, and leave you, Sir, to make the best of the *Concession*, I would not have Youth led into any *Doubts* about these Matters, till their Understandings arrive at a Strength and Solidity capable of encountering with them. I would not represent *Christianity* to my *Catechumens*, or my *Children*, nor indeed to the most intelligent and judicious of my Hearers, as a *dubious uncertain Thing*, where the Probabilities were so equal, that it was quite *precarious* which Way an honest Enquirer would see Reason to determine. It appears to my Reason, and Conscience, quite in another Point of Light, as an *evident and certain Truth*, which I assuredly know; in which I re-

42 *Enquirer need not be wholly indifferent.*

joyce as the *Anchor of my own Soul*, and which I verily believe must be the *Salvation of theirs*, if they are saved at all. With these Views it would be a horrible *Iniquity* in me, to speak *slightly* and *dubiously* about it: Yet I may, in a perfect Consistence with this Perswasion, and with the Declaration of it, recommend it to others, not as on my own Authority, but on the Force of *Reasons*, concerning the Strength of which they are to *judge for themselves*; tho' I am ever so earnestly solicitous, that they may *judge aright*, as knowing how strictly they are to answer for the Integrity of their Conduct in this Affair.

But here I am well aware, you will glory over me as convicted by my own Confession. You will tell me, that all this Scheme of *educating Children* in *Christian Principles*, and recommending them with so much Confidence and Delight, is an avowed Method of *prejudicing* their Minds strongly on one Side of the Question, and utterly inconsistent with any Pretence of bringing them to a *fair and honest Enquiry*; in order to which it is absolutely necessary, that a Man come to *search after Truth* without any pre-conceived Opinion at all, and perfectly *indifferent* on which Side he may happen to find it.

This I confess, Sir, has a plausible Sound, and is a charming Subject for a *young Academick*, or a *very young Preacher*, if he has a Mind to display his Talent at Declamation: But after all, it is perfect *Knight Errantry*, and lays down a Law to Mankind, which it is in many Instances *impossible* they should follow, and which of Consequence can be neither *necessary*, nor *reasonable*. The Affections of the Human Mind may indeed be controlled, but they cannot be extirpated; nor is it needful Men should be *insensible*, in order to their being impartial. Had

Junius

Absurd to leave Children untaught in Religion. 43

Junius Brutus, when he saw *bis Sons* arraigned before him for Treason against their Country, been thus philosophically *indifferent* whether they were innocent or guilty, he had been *the Idiot* he formerly counterfeited, or something worse than that; and yet he *did Justice*: And in other Circumstances, with all the Bowels of a Father melting over them, he might have been *equally just* in acquitting them. A Man may have *strict Reason* for assenting, to what he has been *taught* from his very Infancy, and where the *Truth* is greatly for *bis Interest*; or otherwise who could have *Reason* to believe himself *Heir* to a Kingdom, or an Estate? A Man may, I hope, have *Reason* to believe the *Being of a GOD*, yet who among us was not *taught it from a Child*? or what virtuous Mind does not see, that *all its Happiness* is concerned in the Question? Who would not esteem it far worse than Death, to be brought to an Apprehension that he lives in a *fatherless World*, and that all the Resource which he thought he had found in the Guardianship of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, was but the Amusement of a pleasing Dream?

And while I am on this Topick, give me Leave to touch on that Notion, which some have entertained, of *leaving Children untaught in Religion*, that they may come *unprejudiced* to enquire into it: An *Absurdity* surely to be numbered among the greatest, which the adventurous *Infidelity* of the present Age has started, or its *implicite Disciples* have imbibed, in open, and perhaps boasted *Defiance* of the *common Sense* of Mankind throughout all Ages, Nations, and Religions. And yet I am told, some who have continued to call themselves *Christians*, have been wild enough to admit it. With them indeed I might justly cut short farther Debate, by urging, what on their *professed Principles* must be unanswerable, the most express *Authority* both of the *Jewish*

44 *The Propriety and Use of early Instruction.*

and *Christian Revelations*, strongly requiring that *Children* should be *brought up* in an early and familiar Acquaintance with them. But for the Sake of others I would observe, and would intreat every professed *Disciple of Reason* to consider, that the Notion of omitting an *Education in Religion*, to avoid *Prejudice*, is utterly inconsistent with itself. For it is certain, as the World now goes, and every *Infidel* must surely in his Conscience know it, that if the *Children of Christians* are not *taught Religion*, and trained up in the Exercises of it, they will soon learn *Vice and Immorality*, and then they will come to enquire into the *Evidences of Christianity* in Time, (if they ever make the Enquiry at all,) with this terrible *Prejudice* on the Negative Side of the Question, “ If *Christianity* be *true*, I am in a
“ State of Condemnation, and an Heir of everlasting
“ ing Ruin : And I must relinquish all the dearest
“ of my Pleasures, in Pursuit of a pretended Fe-
“ licity, which I had rather be annihilated, than
“ confined to.”

And indeed, Sir, we would gladly know, if *Children* are not to be *taught Religion*, on what Principles they are to be *taught Virtue*. The Philosophical Questions relating to the first Principles, and ultimate Obligations of *Morality*, they can as little understand as those of *Religion* : And if they are to be *taught it*, as in itself an *amiable Thing*, and a Thing which their Parents know to be *reasonable* and conducive to their *Happiness*, they may on the like Foundation be *taught*, to receive the *Gospel* as the *Word of GOD*, and, according to their little Abilities, to worship, and live like *Christians*.

I think I may conclude this Head with an Appeal to every Man's Conscience, Whether it would not be *best for Society* in general, that our *Children* should be *taught Christianity* in their early Years ? Whether the History of a Life and Character like that

Hints to be given of the chief Objections. 45

that of the blessed *Jesus*, be not one of the finest Lessons they can learn? And whether an Apprehension of our Obligations to him as our great *Redeemer*, who, as the Messenger and Gift of his Father's Love, taught such excellent Truths, and did and suffered so much for our *Salvation*, be not admirably calculated to touch their tender Hearts, and form them to Humility, Gratitude, and Love? I hope, Men of such lordly and towering Understandings, as our *Deists* generally are, will at least condescend to *own this* of the *Gospel*, which wise Men will reckon no small Circumstance in its Favour: And these Gentlemen must pardon me when I add, that had their own Minds been more deeply touched with it, *their Understandings* might have been more solid, in Proportion to the Degree in which their own Opinion of them had been less exalted.

But should you allow this, you may still insist, that according to the Scheme I have proposed, our young *Christian*, in his most advanced Stage, must have very *partial* and *imperfect Views* of the Question; since I have supposed him chiefly to have heard the Advocates on one Side, and have not made the Perusal of *Infidel Writers*, or an Attendance upon *such Catechists*, if such there be, any Part of our Method.

It is here obvious to reply, that I have advised, as young Persons grow up towards Manhood, to give them some *Hints* of the *main Objections* which are generally made to *Christianity*; or at least some View of the *chief Topicks*, from whence those *Objections* are taken. A *Christian Parent*, or *Minister*, will of Course do this in such a Manner, as to shew that there seems to him to be *very little Weight* in them, when compared with the *Evidence* in Favour of our *Religion*; and this he may do in perfect Consistence with giving a plain and honest View of
of

46 *The Evidence on both Sides must be weighed*

of the *Strength of the Objection*, which to be sure he ought to give, if he mentions it at all.

This may commonly suffice; yet I readily acknowledge, there are Circumstances, in which it may be very expedient to enter into a more *particular Detail of Objections and Answers*. This I take to be especially the Case of those, who are *educated for the Ministry*; and perhaps I might add, of *Gentlemen* intended for the Practice of *the Law*, and indeed of all whose Incomes can afford what is commonly called *a liberal Education*. The strong Temptations, to which such Persons are generally exposed, might, I think, require proportionable Antidotes. At least I am persuaded, every considerate Person will acknowledge, that it is incumbent on those who are to be the *Teachers and Guardians of Religion*, to be well acquainted with its *Proofs*; in order to which, let *such*, by all means, before they appear in a public Character, examine the *Evidence on both Sides*. And whatever Use they may make of a *Tutor* on this Occasion, as to the Method and Order of their Studies, and whatever Confidence they may place in his Integrity and Capacities, let them not acquiesce in whatever *Abstracts* he may give them of the *Objections* which our *Adversaries* advance; but let them attentively peruse the most celebrated *Pieces*, which have been written by them; and what they are, no Man of tolerable Acquaintance with the World can be long to seek. Thus let them hear *Infidels* pleading their own Cause; at the same Time weighing, which Justice and Common Sense will require, those *Answers* which have been returned by the learned *Advocates for Christianity*, in which our Country, above all others, has been so eminently happy.

Sad indeed is the Drudgery *our younger Brethren* must go through, in reading such *Authors*, as many of those who have attacked *Religion*; as I well
know

by publick Persons, and especially Ministers. 47

know by my own painful and laborious Experience. But the *Confirmation* which their *Faith* may receive, by the very Efforts made to overthrow it, will, I hope, in many Instances, be a sufficient Reward. And as *these Pieces*, especially in the Hand of *Second Rate Writers*, contain little more than a confident and unwearied *Repetition* of the *same Objections*, which have been *answered* perhaps many Scores and Hundreds of Times, without taking any Notice of those *Replies*; (which, whether it be owing to the *Learning*, or *Modesty* of the Authors, I will not undertake to say;) one who is acquainted with these Controversies will be able to dispatch large Volumes in a little Time, and will see that many of them need no *New Answers*. All which will be Circumstances of some Consolation under so tedious a Task.

This, Sir, is a Method in the *Education of young Ministers*, which is practised, even among the *Protestant Dissenters*, in the midst of those many Disadvantages under which *their Tutors and Students* labour; in several of whose little *Seminaries*, to my certain Knowledge, the *rational Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, with such a View of the *Objections* against both, are as regularly, and as methodically taught, as *Logick or Geometry*, or any of the other Sciences: And with what superior Advantages this important Branch of Learning is cultivated in our *Two celebrated Universities*, it is not for me to say; or perhaps to imagine. But as for the *common People*, I hope, none will be so unreasonable as to insist upon it, that they should *spend their Money for that which is not Bread, or their Labour for that which will yield them so little Satisfaction*, as a *Course of Polemicks* would in their Circumstances do. For them, the plain and practical Method I have offered above, seems abundantly sufficient. And if *Objections* come in their Way, which in this *free Age*

48 *Others may determine without reading all,*

Age may very probably happen, let them apply to those who may be most like to answer them, and weigh the *Answers* seriously and impartially; at the same time humbly addressing the great *Father of Lights*, to lead them into *all necessary Truth*, and to preserve them from *every dangerous Mistake*, in a Matter of such apparent Moment: And, with these Precautions, *Reason* and *Experience* concur to teach me, that their *Christian Friends* need be in no Pain for the Event. Their Enquiries, as I before observed, may be *impartial*, and their Determinations *rational*, without *knowing every Thing* that has been said, on one Side, and the other. And for them to remain still *undetermined*, from an impertinent *Suspicion*, that some Body might have something to say which they never heard, but which, if they knew it, might be an invincible *Objection to Christianity*, is a Conduct into which no one will be like to fall, who is not pretty heartily resolved to be an *Infidel* at all Adventures. For if there be any good Sense in such a Turn of Mind, it must be a Foundation of *universal Scepticism* in all the *Affairs of Life*, as well as in *Religion*; and would be full as *absurd*, as if a *Jury* should refuse to give a *Verdict* upon the *Evidence* they have already received, because it is possible there may be some absent Persons in the World, who, if they were present, might give such Information as would turn the Scale the contrary Way.

On the whole, it seems to me strictly *reasonable*, that as every Man should seriously *reflect* on the Nature, Genius, Tendency, and Evidence, of those *Religious Principles* in which he has been brought up; so he should continue to *adhere to them*, till he sees an *Evidence against it*, at least *equal to that* which he has *for it*. And I farther apprehend, that there are certain *Degrees of Evidence* attending many *Truths*, of one Kind and another,
Moral

and acquiesce in Evidence already received. 49

Moral and Religious, as well as *Mathematical*, in which a candid and upright Man may see Reason to *acquiesce*, without giving himself perpetual Trouble in renewing his Enquiries, as long as he lives ; and concerning which he may have a *rational Apprehension*, that he shall never meet with any Thing to be urged against them, which is worthy of his Notice, unless it should be for the Sake of others, rather than for his own. Whether this be not the Case with Regard to *Christianity*, every one must judge for himself, as in the Sight of GOD, and on a Review of the Information he has gained with Respect to it. Yet it is possible, that when his Judgment is thus determined in its Favour, *Objections* against it may afterwards occur to him, which tho' he does not seek, he may not be able to avoid hearing. Of these, some may be such, as he has already *weighed in the Balance*, and found *wanting* : Others may immediately appear to affect only what is *circumstantial*, in the *Evidence* on which he has already yielded his Assent, and not what is *essential* to it ; or at most, but a small *Part* of the *Evidence*, which if it were to be given up, the main Strength of that various and complex Argument in which he before acquiesced, might remain secure ; as for Instance, the Meaning of some particular *Prophecy* which he thought to refer to *Christ*, or the like. Now I apprehend, that by far the greater Part of what is commonly advanced against *Christianity*, perhaps *Nineteen Objections* in *Twenty*, will, to one well instructed and experienced in *Religion*, be reducible to one or other of these Heads. As for those which fall under neither of them, I doubt not, but they will soon appear to be built on some *Ignorance* or *Misrepresentation* of the Plan of *Revelation*, which will I hope never want pious and learned *Votaries*, capable of defending it, and of turning the Difficulties urged

G

against

50 *Faith is not built on mere Human Testimony.*

against it, or the Manner in which they are treated, into Occasions of adding increasing Lustre to its Proofs, and perhaps, into Arguments in its Favour; as the World has already seen in frequent Instances.

The chief remaining *Objection* is, that according to the Plan laid down above, we shall have our *Faith* built upon mere *Human Testimony*, which you, Sir, represent as a most *fallacious* and *uncertain Thing*, utterly unfit to be the Foundation of so important a Superstructure. It is by no means necessary here to repeat all the diminutive Things, which you are pleased to say of *Human Testimony*, without any Distinction, and with as much Severity, as if you judged of it in general, by what you may have found in some *Deistical Writings*. It all centers in depreciating its Validity; and the Reader will soon see, how far it is to be regarded, as just in itself, or as applicable to the present Occasion.

And here I must, in the first Place, remind you, that the Article now in Question does not at all concern, or affect, the *Internal Evidence* of *Christianity*, which of itself alone is a very considerable Thing; especially when it is considered, how *probable* it is, that God might *favour the World* with a *Revelation*, which in its present Condition it so evidently *needs*. It is not on *Testimony* that I believe, there is such a Book as the *Bible* in the World. I see it, and read it: And that it is in the main *rightly translated*, even an *illiterate Christian* among us may be sure; because if there had been any gross Prevarication in this Respect, considering the *Variety of Sects* among us, Clamours must have arisen, which he sees in Fact do not arise, between the contending Parties; as I have elsewhere argued more at large *. And therefore *all the Proofs* of the

* See *Sermons on the Power and Grace of Christ*, &c. Ser. 8.

Yet Facts are properly supported by it. 51

the *Divine Authority* of this Book, that arise from its Contexture, Design, Harmony, and Efficacy, which I mentioned above, are quite *independent*, even on that *Human Testimony*, on which its Genuineness depends, and are built on Sense, Observation, and Experience.

There are indeed other, and those I confess *very material*, *Proofs of Christianity*, in which some considerable Regard to *Human Testimony* is absolutely necessary: But before we farther discuss these, give me Leave to ask you, Sir, Will you, or any Man of Candour and Common Sense, venture to assert, that we are in no Circumstances obliged to admit the *Truth* of any Fact on the *Testimony* of other Men? You cannot but know, how often the contrary has been demonstrated, by all our best Writers on this Subject: Nay, I think, you cannot but see, at the first Glance, the glaring *Absurdity* of such a Principle. Does not the Course of Human Life every Day declare, what is, and must be, the Sense of Mankind with Regard to this? Are not Things of the utmost Importance, in which not only the Estates and Lives of particular Persons, but the Interests of whole Nations are concerned, undertaken and determined on the Credit of *Testimony*? and is it not absolutely necessary, they should turn upon it? How *dishonest* then, and how *shameful*, would it be to assert, that it is to be regarded in other Things of the greatest Moment, but not in those which relate to the Support of the *Gospel*.

If there be any Thing particular in *that Evidence* to which we appeal on this Occasion, which renders it *unworthy of Regard*, let our Adversaries shew it plainly. You will not, Sir, I am persuaded, think fit to assert, that *every Fact* must of Course be *given up*, which is said to have happened *almost Two thousand Years ago*; or that we can never be sure, that *Books* are *genuine*, which pretend to *such Antiquity*

52 *Antiquity does not destroy its Credit.*

as that. Are all the *Classicks* of *Greece* and *Rome* spurious? Or is it to be numbered among the Uncertainties of Antiquity, whether *Cyrus* conquered *Babylon*, and whether *Julius Cæsar* was assassinated in the Senate? *These Faëts* are of *more antient Date*, than any which are asserted in the *New Testament*: Yet, are you a *Sceptick* with Regard to them? Were you as sure, that you should be possessed of all imaginable Happiness for a Million of Years, as you are of the one or other of these Things, would you entertain any afflictive *Doubt* with Regard to it? or would you risk what you were to hold by such a *Tenure*, for the certain Enjoyment of any Thing in mortal Life? A Man's own Heart easily answers him such Questions as these: And yet the *Testimony* in Support of *Christianity* is slighted, tho' it is most easy to shew, that it is far superior to *that* by which we are informed of *Cyrus's Conquests*, or of *Cæsar's Death*.

The only remaining Question therefore on this Head, is not concerning the Learned, but *common Christians*, and the *rational Satisfaction* which they are capable of receiving, with Regard to *those Faëts*, on which the *External Evidence of Christianity* depend. And here I doubt not, but they may receive *competent Satisfaction*; that is, they may see much greater *Reason to believe them*, than they can possibly have to *reject them*; which is all the Matter requires.

To evince this, let us consider, what *those Faëts* are, on which their *Reasonings* with Respect to the *External Evidence* depend; for that is properly the precise Question. And they are chiefly these: — That there was such a Person as *Jesus Christ*, — who founded a *Religion*, — which was received by *Multitudes of People* quickly after his Death, (*i. e.* about 1700 Years ago;) — many of which **Con-
verts**

The principal Facts that we prove by it. 53

verts testified their firm Persuasion of its Truth by enduring great Extremities in its Defence:—That among these *antient Christians*, there were such Persons as the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*,—who wrote the chief *Books* of the *New Testament*;—which *Books* are in the main transmitted safely and faithfully down to us:—As also, that when *Christ* and his *Apostles* lived, the *Jews* did subsist as a People,—and had in their Hands *Books* which they accounted *Sacred*,—in the main *the same* with those, which we now call the *Old Testament*.

These, Sir, are the *grand Facts*, which we prove by *Testimony*, and with which we connect our *Reasoning* in Favour of the *Gospel*. What the *Testimony* is by which we confirm these *Facts*, and what the *Connection* by which we infer *Christianity* from them, I (among many others,) have elsewhere shewn at large; and I have too much other Business, and too much with you in particular before me, to swell this Letter by so unnecessary a Repetition.

Now with Regard to *common Christians*, of whose *attainable Satisfaction* we are treating, I readily own, they cannot be fully Masters of *that Evidence*, which Learned Men may receive of these *Facts*, by consulting the *Original Writers*: Yet they are certainly capable of *knowing something* of considerable Importance even *on this Head*, where their Disadvantages must be acknowledged the greatest of all. Every plain Reader sees many *antient Authors* quoted, as testifying such and such Things, and perhaps sees at the Bottom of the Page, *Characters* or *Words* which he cannot understand; but he reads the supposed Sense of them in *English*, and is told, if the Book be properly written, about *what Time* the Author produced is said to have lived. Now it can never enter into his Heart to imagine, that in an enlightened Age, *Christian Divines*, publishing their Names with their Works, or if they do

54 *Easy to see there is no Room for Fraud here.*

do not, seeming *zealous for Christianity*, would have so little *Regard* to themselves, or their *Cause*, as to pretend to quote such *Passages*, unless the *Books* from whence they were taken were certainly *extant*; and the *Passages* to be found there, containing the *Sense* which they give them. The *Matter* does not by any means rest upon our *personal Integrity*; (tho' I hope, in reporting a *Fact*, some *Regard* might be paid to *that*;) Were the *Defenders of Christianity* ever so *dishonest*, it cannot be imagined they would obtrude such *palpable Falsehoods* on the *World*, while so liable to be *contradicted*, and *shamed*, by those who *disbelieve the Gospel*, and make it the great, tho' wretched *Business* of their *Lives*, to oppose it to the utmost of their *Power*, and to revile its *Preachers* and *Defenders*. But are these *Assertions of ours* as to the *Passages in Question contradicted*? Where is the *Deist* who will dare to say, that *Christianity* is not an *antient Religion*; that it did not *arise* and *spread* about the *Time* I have mentioned; or that its *Professors* did not early *suffer* in its *Defence*? Where is the *Man* who will venture to assert, that the most material *Books* of the *New Testament* were not *early received* by *Christians*; or that the *Authors* in which we assert, that we find *Quotations* from them, and *References* to them, did not really *live* in the *Ages* and *Places* we assert? Our *Books* are open; and the *Facts* and *Testimonies*, on which we build our *Reasonings*, are liable to be *examined* with all possible *Freedom*, by our *Enemies*, as well as our *Friends*. If we have *Recourse* to any *Pious Frauds*, (as they are scandalously called,) let those *Frauds* be detected; and, in the *Name* of the *GOD of Truth*, let them be hissed out of the *World*, with a just *Abhorrence*. But the contrary is so plain, that there is not an *Infidel* in our *Land*, that will presume to *oppose the Evidence* of these *Things*, and to *set his Name* to such an Attempt:

Opposition to the Gospel serves to confirm it. 55

Attempt: Nay, either some Remains of Modesty, or a Consciouſness of the Hurt which their Cause would receive from ſo ſhameleſs a Defence, prevents even *anonymous Authors* from attacking us here. The Controverſy is concerning the *Conſequences* drawn from theſe *acknowledged Faëts*; (that *Chriſtianity* was an *antient Religion*, and the *New Teſtament* early received, &c.) Now of theſe *Conſequences* the *common People* are themſelves *Judges*, on Principles laid down above; and they do not admit them, becauſe we, or any others, aſſert them to follow.

And here, Sir, I cannot forbear admiring the Wiſdom of *Divine Providence*, in permitting ſuch perverſe *Oppoſition to the Gospel* to ariſe, and continue; ſince even its avowed *Enemies*, by the Nature and Manner of their Attack, ſerve but more aſſuredly to *confirm the Faith* of impartial and intelligent Enquirers, and give an *Authority* and *Evidence* to what the *Teachers of Chriſtianity* aſſert, in ſome Meaſure beyond what it could otherwiſe have had. Juſt as another Kind of *Infidels*, I mean *the Jews*, are alſo *Vouchers* for the Antiquity and Authority of the *Old Teſtament*, on which ſo many of our Arguments depend; and thoſe Arguments of ſuch Validity, that as *Mr. Addiſon* well concluded, many who now diſpute againſt the Application of its *Prophecies* to *Chriſt*, would no Doubt have concluded them a *Chriſtian Forgery*, and have argued that Conclusion from the Perſpicuity of thoſe *Prophecies*, had not *Providence* laid in ſo incontestable a Proof to the contrary. *The Wrath of Man, Oh Lord, ſhall praise thee; and the Remainder of that Wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.* I muſt on the ſame Principle congratulate the Happineſs of our own Country, in which ſuch *Liberty* is allowed, of propoſing whatever can be ſaid againſt *Chriſtianity*; in Conſequence of which our *modern Infidels* are deprived of that ſhrewd Pre-
tence,

56 *The Rational Arguments for Christianity*

tence, which perhaps might be more serviceable to them than all the rest of their Weapons, that they could say something convincing against it, if *penal Laws* did not deter them.

I hope, Sir, these Things will evince, that the *common People* may have some considerable Degrees of *Evidence* for *those Facts*, on which the *External Proofs of Christianity* are built, tho' they are not capable of consulting the *Original Records* from whence they are taken. But I must not dismiss the Subject, till I have considered an *Objection*, which equally concerns the most *learned Christian*: I mean, that none of the most *rational Arguments*, in their clearest and strongest View, can give the *Mind Satisfaction*;—or at least can produce such a *Degree of Persuasion*, as should animate us to *subdue our Passions*,—or to *endure those Extremities* in Defence of our *Religion*, which we may possibly meet with, and which it indispensably requires us to bear.

You make these *Three distinct Topicks*; but the *former* is so evidently included in the *Two latter*, that all I shall say to it at present is, that every *Man* who will reflect on his own *Mind*, must find, that there are *Degrees of rational Proof* in which he acquiesces with *entire Satisfaction*. Many *Christians* testify this to be the Case, with Regard to the *Arguments in Favour of Christianity*, of which great Number I must declare myself one; and any one who finds himself *dissatisfied*, will do well to give *his Reasons* for that Dissatisfaction, without making his own Case a Standard, by which to pronounce on that of every one else. You argue, as if there were *no Medium* between an *implicite Faith*, and perpetual *Scepticism*; but the Conclusion is very hastily drawn. You, Sir, may perhaps have *known some*, who have gradually *quitted all religious Principles*, when they had begun to *examine any*; I, on the
the

the contrary, have known many, who have professed themselves to have been greatly confirmed in Christianity by such Examination: They have found its Evidences, like Gold, approved by the severest Trials; and it is to me utterly unimaginable, how a rational Believer should be incapable of finding Complacency and Satisfaction of Mind, in having used his rational Faculties on so important an Occasion.

Waving therefore all farther Debate upon this, I shall proceed to what you add under the Two remaining Parts of this Argument; (pag. 30, — 35.) in which you undertake to shew, that “no Conviction drawn from Reasoning can ever have Force enough to command our Passions, so as on common Emergencies” (they are your own extraordinary Words) “to make a good Christian, — much less will it serve to produce a faithful Martyr, if ever so severe an Exercise be demanded at our Hands.” You employ a great Deal of Rhetorick on this Subject, in the Pages referred to above: But I am sorry to say, that, so far as I can judge, it amounts only to this, “That you apprehend something so extremely desirable in the Indulgencies which Christianity prohibits, and something so terrible in Death, in whatever View and Cause it is to be encountered, that no rational Argument imaginable can induce a Man to give up the one, and expose himself to the other.”

And is it possible, Sir, that Sensual Pleasure, and Mortal Life purchased at the Expence of Honour, Gratitude, and Conscience, can indeed appear so exceeding valuable? I would not wrong your moral Character so much, as to suppose, that you seriously meant this, and will abide by it; and yet it is difficult to imagine, how it could be written otherwise than seriously, without bearing hard on another Part of moral Character too. But I will leave

58. *They are adapted to subdue the Passions,*

it among the other *Mysteries* of your Book, and content myself with hinting at *those Reasons*, for which the Matter appears to me in a quite contrary View; as I am persuaded, it would have done to *Socrates, Seneca, or Epictetus*, had they considered it only in *Theory*.

No Paradox in Human Nature appears to me so strange, as that a Man, who in his Conscience *believes*, that the *Arguments in Favour of Christianity* are unanswerably strong, should deliberately allow himself in the *Violation of its Precepts*; or should, by any Temporal Considerations whatsoever, be induced to *renounce it*. All the Pleas of Duty, Gratitude, and Interest, are so weighty, in Favour of a constant and resolute Subjection to it, that one could hardly imagine, did not Fact demonstrate the contrary, that *any Temptation* of Allurement, or of Terror, should, with a *rational Creature*, who believed the *Gospel*, triumph over them.

Nor is a Life of *Christian Obedience* that *violent and constrained Thing*, which you seem to suppose. Were I to judge by these *Pages* alone, I should imagine you had never read the *New Testament*, and did not know how the *Views of a Christian* are animated and raised. Oh Sir, the *rational Believer* is in his Heart and Conscience *persuaded*, that, to all the Bounties of his *Common Providence*, God has added the Riches of *Redeeming Love*. He is fully persuaded, that the *Son of GOD* descended from Heaven, to deliver him from everlasting Ruin; that he has generously *purchased him* with the Price of *his own Blood*; and that (if he be conscious of a true Faith in him,) *Christ* has taken him *as his peculiar Property* under his guardian Care, with a gracious Purpose of conducting him safely thro' Life and Death, of receiving his nobler Part in a very little Time into the Abode of holy and happy Spirits, and at length of raising his Body
from

from the Dust, and fixing his compleat Person in a State of immortal Glory and Felicity. Now when this is *really believed*, and the Conviction is firm and lively, (which I hope, *a rational Conviction* may very possibly be,) what can be a more *natural Effect*, than that an ardent *Love* to GOD our Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, should be excited by it? And it is easy to imagine, that *this Love* must make *Obedience* easy: And when the Mind is taken up with such *sublime* and *delightful Views*, and those *devotional Exercises* which it is so natural to ingraft upon them, it will not be so hard a Matter as many seem to imagine, to conquer the irregular Propensities of animal Nature, or the *Exorbitancies of Passion*, where only the little Enjoyments and Interests of this transitory Life are concerned. Or rather, many of *those Exorbitancies* will be *superfeded*, or, as the *Apostle* justly and finely expresses it, *crucified by the Cross of Christ*; and the Affections without any painful Struggle will generally flow on in an orderly and pleasant Channel.

And where this is the Temper and Character, *Martyrdom* may not appear *so dreadful a Thing*, as you, Sir, have taken Pains to represent it. It may rather be the habitual Judgment of such a *Christian*, that it is to be esteemed an *Honour* and *Favour*, which our great Lord bestows on some of his most beloved Servants. To be excused from the melancholy Circumstances attending *Death* in its Natural Form; to have an Opportunity of turning the common Lot of Mortality into an Occasion of manifesting Heroick Gratitude and Fidelity to the best of Masters and of Friends; *to die* with those warm Sentiments and elevated Views which such a Condition so naturally tends to excite and suggest, would not surely be, as you seem to insinuate, *the Death of a Fool*; (which I cannot think even that

60 *Facts of this Kind shew the Gospel is true.*

of *Socrates* to have been :) Surely, Sir, on Second Thoughts you must rather judge it a Consummation of the Labours, Cares, and Sorrows inseparable from Human Life, to be devoutly *wished for*, rather than *dreaded*. I will on the other Hand grant, that hellish Acts of *Cruelty* may be invented and practised, under which the *Resolution* of an Upright Mind may faint, and even *Reason* itself be overborne, unless God were pleased to interpose by *extraordinary Supports*, which there is great Encouragement to hope he would in such a Case do: But while *Reason* remains undisturbed, I should imagine, that *Death* in its most horrible Form, when met in the Cause of such a *Saviour* who had so graciously borne it for us, should appear *more desirable* than *Life* in its most agreeable Circumstances; and surely then, infinitely more desirable than *Life* purchased by base Ingratitude to him, and worn out under the Sense of his just Displeasure, and the sad Prospect of being finally disowned by him, as an *Apostate* and a *Traitor*.

This, I think, to be solid *Reason*; and I bless God, there are numberless *Facts* which confirm it, and shew, that Persons not pretending to any such *immediate Revelation* as you assert to be necessary, have conquered the greatest Difficulties on these Principles, and, after having *adorned the Gospel* by a most exemplary and holy *Life*, have steadily and chearfully *sealed it* with their *Blood*. And every Fact of this Kind is so unanswerable an Argument against all that you alledge here, that I do not judge it necessary to pursue this Part of my Reply any farther.

With this therefore I conclude what I had to offer in Vindication of the *Perspicuity* and *Solidity* of those *Arguments in Proof of Christianity*, to which the *Generality of its Professors* among us *may attain*:
And

Other Things waved for the present. 61

And I hope it will be allowed, that I have fairly and candidly, as well as seriously, considered what you *object against it*, and so have answered the *First Part* of your Pamphlet, which I take to be by far the most plausible and dangerous.

Your Endeavour to prove, that *Christianity* itself avows, that it *is not built upon Argument*, but on a *Revelation* to be *immediately made* from the *Spirit of GOD* to every *Christian*, by which *all Argument* is superseded, and *all Possibility of Doubt and Error* excluded, is such a direct *Contradiction* to the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*, that I hardly think you would be understood *seriously to mean it*. It is sufficient, that you have shewn, you have Wit enough to give a Varnish to so wild a Notion. Yet lest any should be so weak, as to imagine there is any *Solidity* in what you have so adventurously advanced on that Head, I am willing plainly to discuss it with you; and at the same Time to enquire into what you say, with Regard to the *Awful Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on those who *reject it*: A Circumstance, which you every where represent as *utterly irreconcilable* with a *Religion* to be *rationally proved* and *defended*; but which on the contrary appears to me *most wisely adapted* to the rest of the *Scheme*, and, when compared with it, an *Addition* rather than *Abatement* of its *Internal Evidence*. This, and several other Particulars in yours, I should be glad to examine; but I wave it at present, because this Letter is already swelled to a pretty large Size. I therefore reserve what I have farther to say to another Opportunity, and I hope a few Weeks more may afford it. But I chuse to send you what I have already written, without any farther Delay; because I am conscious of the many Hindrances, which, in a Life like mine, oblige me often to postpone, much longer than I intended,
the

the Execution of Attempts to do what little I can towards serving the World, by promoting the *Interest of Christianity* in it; and because I really think your Piece has been already too long unanswered. If you please to offer any Thing in Reply to what I have here proposed, I shall give it a serious Consideration; and hope that I shall, in the whole Course of this Controversy, endeavour to write like *a Christian*, and then I shall not forget any other Character which I could wish to maintain. At present, Sir, I conclude with assuring you, that it is with sensible Regret I have found myself obliged, for the *Honour of the Gospel*, and the *Preservation of Mens Souls*, to animadvert on what you have writ, in the Manner I have already done. Should you prove, which may possibly be the Case, some *old Acquaintance* and *Friend*, I hope I have writ nothing which should make me blush at any Interview with you; and should you, as I rather apprehend, be an *entire Stranger*, I am, on the common Principles of *that Faith*, which it is the great Glory of my Life to profess and defend, with sincere good Wishes for your Temporal and Eternal Happiness, in any Thing which may conduce to either,

S I R,

Your obedient humble Servant,

Northampton,
Nov. 5, 1742.

P. DODDRIDGE.



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A S E C O N D
L E T T E R

T O T H E
A U T H O R of a Pamphlet,

I N T I T L E D,
C H R I S T I A N I T Y *not founded on*
Argument, &c.

In which that A U T H O R's Reasonings
from the *New Testament* are examined,

A N D T H E
Damnatory Sentence which the *Gospel* passes on
Unbelievers is largely vindicated, on Princi-
ples opposite to those which he has laid
down.

By P. D O D D R I D G E, D. D.

*Let GOD be true, but every Man a Lyar; as it is written,
That thou mightest be justified in thy Sayings, and mightest over-
come when thou art judged. Rom. iii. 4.*

Aut undique Religionem tolle, aut usquequaque conserva. Cic.

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over-against *St. Magnus Church, London-Bridge.*

M D C C X L I I I.



A S E C O N D
L E T T E R
T O T H E

A U T H O R of a Pamphlet,

I N T I T L E D,

Christianity not founded on Argument, &c.

S I R,

THOUGH my former *Letter* considered what I thought *most essential* in your late Treatise, yet there are several other Things in it, which, however designed, have so plain a Tendency to *expose Christianity to Suspicion*, and even to *Contempt*, that on the Principles which led me to animadvert upon it before, I find myself obliged to give you this second Trouble.

I proceed therefore, without any farther Ceremony, to consider the Pains you have taken, under the *Second General Head* of your Tract, to represent the *Gospel* as pleading guilty to the Charge of *not being founded on Argument*; or in other Words, *not being generally capable of such rational Proof*, as its Disciples may be able to receive.

You would seem indeed, if one may judge by your Manner of introducing this Topick, to think this is doing great Kindness to the *New Testament*,

4 *A general View of the Subject.*

as it delivers it from the *Absurdity* of saying, “ Judge, “ whether you have *Time*, or not:— Judge, whether you are *Judges*, or not:— Judge all for yourselves, and yet judge all alike.” (Pag. 35.) But I hope, Sir, before I have finished my Letter, to shew, that *all*, whom we can suppose to be concerned in any Demand of *judging*, i. e. all Persons of common Understanding, to whom the *Gospel* is, or has been, faithfully and intelligently preached, can have no just Plea from the *Want of Time*, or *Capacity*, and must, on the Supposition of an honest and diligent Enquiry, *all judge alike*, i. e. all agree in receiving it as a *Divine Revelation*.

To illustrate and confirm the View you have given of the Matter, you undertake to shew,—that *Christ* did not propose his Doctrines to *Examination*; (pag. 36, — 38.)—that *his Apostles* had neither *Leisure*, nor *Qualifications*, for such a Method, i. e. for the Use of *Reasoning* and *Argument* in the Propagation of the *Gospel*; (pag. 38, — 40.)—and that the very *Supposition* of such a Proceeding is evidently *preposterous* from the Nature of the Thing. (Pag. 41, — 46.) In Opposition to all which, it is one of the easiest Tasks one can imagine, to shew,—that *Christ* did propose the great Doctrines he taught to *Examination*;—that the *Apostles* did the same, urging (as their Blessed Master had done,) most cogent *Arguments* in the Proof of them;—and that any other Method of Proceeding had been *preposterous*, and must necessarily have exposed the *Gospel* to the Contempt of all reasonable People. It seems hard indeed, to be put upon proving Things so conspicuous as these; and it cannot but be some *Trial of Temper* to one who honours and loves the *Gospel*, to see it, and its glorious Founders, placed in so *ridiculous a View*, as *that* in which your Assertions and Arguments represent them; that is, described

Previous Remark on stating the Question. 5

scribed as *wild Enthusiasts*, running all over the World, at the Expence of their own Lives, to urge Men *on Pain of Damnation* to receive a Religion, for which they did not pretend to give them any Reason. But out of Respect both to you, and the Cause in which I am engaged, I will keep myself as calm as I can. And if some following Pages seem to my Reader *unnecessary*, I must beg him to *distinguish* between what was needful to *inform him*, and what was requisite to *confute you*.

But before I proceed to hint at the *Evident Proof* of the *Three Propositions*, which in Opposition to yours I have laid down above, I beg Leave to *premise*, that all you say on this Subject seems to me *founded* on an Artful and Sophistical *Shifting the Question*. The grand Matter in Debate is, whether *Christianity* is *founded on rational Argument*; or whether the *only Cause*, which a Professor of the *Gospel* can generally have to give for his Belief of it, must be, that God has immediately *revealed it* to him *by his Spirit*, and testified the Truth of it to him in a Manner, which as, on the one Hand, he cannot suspect, so on the other, he cannot communicate or explain? Instead of discussing *this Question*, you put off the Reader with *another* very different, (*pag. 36.*) Whether *Christ* and his *Apostles* submitted *their Doctrine* to *Examination*? which is a very *ambiguous* Manner of speaking: And when you assert *that they did not*, I must beg Leave to ask, what you mean by *their Doctrine*? Do you mean this *general Doctrine*, that they were *Teachers sent from GOD*? Or do you mean those *particular Doctrines*, which in Consequence of that general Assertion they *proceeded to teach*? If you mean the *former*, it is indeed to your Purpose; but, as I shall presently shew, is a Proposition entirely and notoriously *false*. But if you mean the *latter*, which the

6 *Christ brought rational Proofs of his Mission,*
the Course of your Arguments seems to imply, then it is quite *foreign* to your Purpose: For *Christianity* may be founded on *rational Argument*, tho' the *first Teachers* of it, when they had proved their *Mission*, should have put the *Credit of particular Doctrines* on their own *authorized Testimony* alone, without discussing the several *Branches* of their System, in such a Manner as it would have been necessary they should have done, had they proposed it only as a *Theory*, destitute of *External Proofs*.

Now that our *Lord Jesus Christ* did not expect, that it should be believed *merely on his own Testimony*, that he was a *Teacher sent from GOD*, and one *whose Doctrine* was consequently *true and divine*, but set himself to *prove it*, is so evident from the *History of the Evangelists*, that I believe few Readers need so much as to be reminded of particular Passages on this Head. No Words can be more express than those, in which he has disclaimed this. *If (says he,) I bear Testimony of my self alone, my Testimony is not true or valid; but my Father who hath sent me, he beareth Testimony to me.*^a And you well know, that he illustrated and argued this *Testimony of the Father*, partly from the *Predictions* of those *Sacred Writings* which they acknowledged to be the *Word of GOD*, in which *Jesus* declared he was described and foretold; and partly from the *Attestation of John*, whom they generally acknowledged to be a divinely inspired *Prophet*; but principally, from a yet more sensible Argument than either, *the Works which the Father had given him to perform*, and which (said he,) *bear Witness of me.*^b And all these he represents as illustrated by the excellent *Design and Tendency of his Preaching*, to which he plainly refers, when he says, *The Word which I have spoken, shall judge the Unbeliever another Day.*^c

These

^a John v. 31, 37. ^b John v. 36. ^c John xii. 48.

These were various and cogent *Arguments*; some of them so very *plain*, that one single Day, or Hour, might make a Man Master of them; I mean, *that* arising from his *miraculous Powers*, and the *Tendency of his Doctrine* to promote real Goodness. The Argument from *John's Testimony* was, even by the Confession of his Enemies, known to all the Nation; and as for *that from Prophecy*, he submitted it to their candid and deliberate *Examination*, urging them to *search the Scriptures*, and assuring them that if they did so, they would there find a convincing *Testimony concerning him*,^d which was to shine with growing Evidence. And on the whole, he expostulates with them, in Language utterly irreconcilable with your Scheme; *And why even of yourselves*, from plain Appearances, and without farther Explications and Remonstrances from me, *judge you not that which is right?* pleading that *the Signs of the Times*, marking them out to be those of the *Messiah*, were as discernable as any of those *Prognostications of the Weather*, which all the World had observed, and formed into common *Proverbs*.^e So that, in Consequence of all, *their continued Unbelief*, in the Midst of so many united *Testimonies* and palpable *Proofs*, was not only an *irrational* and *criminal*, but a most *inexcusable* Thing. *If I had not* (says he,) *come and spoken unto them, and done among them the Works which no other Man did*, tho' their Disobedience to the Law of God had been justly punishable, yet, in Comparison of their present Case, *they had not had Sin; but now, they have no Cloak for their Sin*.^f Could they have pleaded, as you, Sir, it seems would have taught them to do, "We never had any *Reason* offered to bring us to believe;" I suppose, it would have been no despicable *Cloak* for their *Infidelity*. I cannot forbear

^d John v. 39.

^e Luke xii. 56, 57. and Matt. xvi. 2, 3.

^f John xv. 22, 24.

bear saying, that it is a grievous Outrage upon the *Character* of our blessed Redeemer, to suppose him capable of talking in so wild, so false, and so inconsistent a Manner, as this wretched *Hypothesis* would imply. I should have too great a Respect for the Memory of *Socrates*, to advance, or admit, any Thing so injurious to it.

That the *Apostles* also *reasoned* in the Defence of their *Mission*, is just as certain, as that they preached and wrote; and indeed the *Fifth Book* of the *New Testament* is almost as much the *History* of their *Reasonings*, as of their *Acts*. The *Second Chapter* contains an Account of their *Reasoning* at *Jerusalem*, from the *Fact* of the miraculous *Descent of the Holy Ghost* upon them, in Comparison with the *Predictions* of the *Old Testament*, both with Respect to *that*, and to the *Resurrection of Jesus*; from whence they strongly infer, that *all the House of Israel* might know assuredly, that *GOD had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ.*^s The *Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters* relate their *Reasonings* before the *People* and the *Sanbedrim*, from the *Cure of the Lame Man in the Temple*, as wrought in the Name of *Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified.*^h And it would be tedious, rather than necessary, to continue the Enumeration of particular Passages, in which we read of *Paul's Reasoning* in Confirmation of these great Points; as we are told he did at *Damascus,*ⁱ at *Jerusalem,*^k at *Antioch in Pisidia,*^l and particularly at *Thessalonica*, where when his *Reasoning with the Jews out of the Scriptures* for *three successive Sabbaths* is spoken of, it is said to have been *as his Manner was.*^m You cannot but know, that as he continued this Practice at *Berea*, the *Inhabitants* of that Place are greatly commended, for

^s Acts ii. 36. ^h iii. 12,—16. iv. 10. ⁱ ix. 22. ^k ix. 28, 29. ^l xiii. 16,—41. ^m xvii. 2, 3.

as appears from their Manner of Preaching. 9

for examining the Force of his Arguments, and searching the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so.ⁿ His Reasoning with the Philosophers at Athens,^o from Natural Principles, to demonstrate the Absurdity of Image Worship, is so conclusive and so noble, that I cannot suppose it to have escaped your Notice or Memory. I am sorry to be under a Necessity of reminding you, that at Corinth, where he continued for a Year and a half, he reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath,^p at least for a considerable Part of that Time; that at Ephesus, he preached in the Synagogue, for the Space of three Months, disputing and persuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of GOD;^q and after this, having separated the Disciples, he disputed daily in the School of one Tyrannus, continuing this Practice for the Space of two Years;^r that he made his Defence with great Presence of Mind, before the Jews at Jerusalem;^s that he reasoned with Felix of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, in such a Manner that he made him tremble,^t and pleaded with such Strength of Argument before Agrippa, that he almost persuaded him to be a Christian.^u And the History closes with an Account of his appointing a Day to the Jews at Rome, in which they attended him at his Lodging, and he expounded and testified the Kingdom of GOD, persuading them concerning Jesus; both out of the Law, and out of the Prophets, from Morning till Evening.^w What the Force and Validity of these Reasonings was, is not at all the Question between us: It is sufficient, that the Passages referred to demonstrate, that Reasonings were used, and Objections heard, directly contrary to what you, Sir, have been pleased to assert, (pag. 39.) with as much Confidence, as if you had never read these Passages, or never expected that

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what

ⁿ Acts xvii. 11. ^o xvii. 22,—31. ^p xviii. 4, 11. ^q xix. 8. ^r xix. 9, 10. ^s xxii. 1,—21. ^t xxiv. 25. ^u xxvi. 2,—28. ^w xxviii. 23.

10 *They wanted not Time or Qualifications,*

what you have written should be compared with the *Records* to which you appeal.

It is equally easy to shew, that the *Apostles* reason in their *Epistles*; and with what Force, many valuable *Commentators* have shewn at large. But as it would be out of my Way to consider those *Reasonings* now, I content myself with mentioning one Passage, as a *Specimen* of many more: *I speak as unto Wise Men, judge ye what I say*^x. A Text, in which there seems to be a *Spring*, that will not easily bend to your Interpretation. But the whole *New Testament* is so full of *Reasonings*, that it is quite superfluous to enumerate Particulars.

Now when these Things are thus evident in Fact, it signifies little to say, that the *Apostles* had not *Time*, or *Qualifications*, to maintain an Argument; and that *in the Nature of Things* it would have been *preposterous* for them to have attempted it. If what you say on *these Topicks* (pag. 38, — 45.) were conclusive, when compared with what I have produced above, the *Conclusion* would be something very *different* from what you professedly labour to establish:— It would shew, that the *Apostles* acted in an *irrational and preposterous Manner*. But I am in no Pain for *their Reputation* on this Head, in Consequence of any Thing which you have asserted; for all *your Reasonings* are built on a Forgetfulness, or Misrepresentation, of those *Topicks of Argument*, on which the *Apostles* laid the great Strefs of their Cause.

It is very true, that many curious and subtil Questions in *Pneumatology*, *Metaphysicks*, and *Ethicks*, might have been connected with some Articles which the *Apostles* taught; and a whole Life might have been spent in canvassing all that a disputatious *Caviller* might have objected. It was indeed beneath

^x 1 Cor. x. 15.

considering what their Arguments were. 11

neath the Dignity of an *Apostle's Character*, and inconsistent with his important *Work*, to *unravel* all these *Cobwebs*, Thread by Thread. Yet GOD was pleased to furnish them with the *proper* and *rational Means* of *sweeping them away*, as it were, at once. *Inspiration* could, no doubt, have furnished them for a minute Discussion of every artful *Sophism*, and have taught them to range *Metaphysical Arguments* with an Accuracy far exceeding that of *Aristotle*: But the Generality of Mankind was not capable of entering into such *Curiosities*; and therefore it was an Instance of great Wisdom and Goodness in the great Author of our Religion, to furnish them with a much *nobler Kind of Arguments*, equally convincing to all candid and upright Minds, which might soon be set in a very strong and easy Light. And accordingly they insisted upon *these*. — They asserted, that *GOD*, having sent *Christ* into the World to be a Divine Teacher, *raised him from the Dead*, after he had been cruelly slain by wicked and incorrigible Men; that, quickly after this, he *received him into Heaven*, from whence he had sent down upon them an extraordinary *Divine Influence*, to instruct them in the Truth, and to enable them to preach it to the World in a very convincing Manner: In Consequence of which, Men were no longer under a Necessity of investigating *Divine Truths* by the slow Progress of *Philosophical Argumentation*; but were to come, with humble Simplicity of Soul, to hear and receive what *GOD* by them *taught* concerning *himself*, and *his Son*, and the *Way* of obtaining final and eternal *Happiness*. — They never expected, that so important and comprehensive an Assertion should be taken *on the Credit of their own Word*: But to shew, that *GOD* was indeed *with them*, and that he himself taught Mankind by them, they *wrought such Miracles* as sensibly demonstrated his extraordinary Presence and

12 *Their Testimony was sufficiently confirmed,*

Agency. — And that this might appear a Scheme, long since formed in the Divine Mind, and intimated to Men long before it opened upon them, they produced Passages in the *Antient and Sacred Books* of the *Jews*, in which their *Prophets* had plainly described *this Jesus* as the *Messiah*, and marked out various Particulars, which had an evident Accomplishment in him; waving *many other Predictions*, which could not so easily be ascertained and illustrated at that Time, tho' future Ages and Occurrences have made them very considerable to us. — The *Apostles* also urged, or frequently referred to, the excellent *Tendency of their Doctrine* to promote real Virtue and Goodness in the World, and the happy *Influence* it had on those who sincerely entertained it, which made the *Acceptance or Rejection* of it a *Test of Characters*; as they often intimate, and sometimes expressly assert, that it was.^y And from all these Things, which were plain and evident, they most rationally inferred the *Obligation*, which their Hearers were under, to *submit themselves* to those *Doctrines, Laws, and Institutions of Christ*, which they as his authorized Messengers brought them, and to *adhere to his Cause* whatever it might cost them. And all this they confirmed by *communicating* to great Numbers of their *new Converts* different *Gifts and Operations of the Holy Ghost*, that produced sensible Effects; which might also tend to *convince others*, that the *Doctrine* they had received was *Supernatural and Divine*.

These

^y Compare Rom. i. 16,—18. vi. 17,—22. viii. 2, 4. xii. 2. 1 Cor. vi. 9,—11. 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. Gal. v. 18,—24. Eph. ii. 1,—3, 10,—12. iv. 17,—24. v. 6,—14. Phil. ii. 15, 16. Col. i. 4,—6, 9,—13, 21. 22. iii. 4,—10. 1 Theff. ii. 1,—10. v. 5,—8. 2 Theff. i. 3,—10. 1 Tim. i. 5. Tit. ii. 9,—14. 1 Pet. i. 14,—22. iv. 2,—6. 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. 1 John i. 5,—7. ii. 4, 5, 29. iii. 6,—10. iv. 5, 6, 12. v. 1,—5, 19. 2 John 1, 2, 6.

and competent Time allowed to examine it. 13

These Particulars constituted, what one may call the *Apostolick Demonstration*; and they allowed their Hearers *a competent Time to examine it*. It is true indeed, the *Time* and *Labour* of these holy Men were of too great Importance, to permit them to make a *long Stay* in Places, where the Inhabitants would not so much as receive them, nor give them an Hearing: Nor would the *mild* and *peaceful* Genius of their *Religion* allow them to endeavour, even by *Miracle*, to *force their Continuance* in any Place, from which the *Magistrates* and *People* joined to *expel them*. In Cases of this Nature alone, they were directed to quit them, with that striking Circumstance, which you so much misrepresent, *of shaking off the Dust of their Feet*, in Token of their looking on such *Despisers* as devoted to certain Destruction. But yet in other Places, where any of their *Hearers* desired *their Stay*, and the *Rulers* permitted it, they *abode a while* with them; and if we may judge of the Conduct of others by that of the *Apostle Paul*, who seems one of the most active and itinerant of them all, *that Stay* sometimes extended to *Months*, and sometimes to *Years*. During this Time they were, so far as we can learn by the *New Testament*, willing to *dispute publickly* with all Opposers, and to *answer any Objections* which could be urged against the Truth of their Doctrine, and the Authority of their Mission, whether by *Jews* or *Gentiles*. And if, which we have no Reason to imagine a common Case, they sometimes *cut short the Debate*, by inflicting on perverse Opponents *miraculous Judgments*, those Punishments carried a *rational Conviction* of the Authority of the *Apostles*: But I recollect no Instance of a *Miracle of this Kind* on such an Occasion, but that of *Elymas the Jewish Sorcerer*,² who probably *opposed the Gospel*, either by *lying Wonders*, or by *Misrepresentations* of the Old
Testa-

² Acts xiii. 6,—11.

14 *These Things account for their Success.*

Testament, of which a *Roman Governor* could not easily judge: On either of which Suppositions, there would be a remarkable Propriety in this extraordinary Step; in which Instance, by the Way, great Gentleness was intermixed with the apparent Severity, as it was only *for a Season* he was *deprived of his Sight*.

If in Cases, and with Proofs like these, *Thousands* were converted *at a single Lecture*, as you express it, it is certainly to be ascribed to the *Validity of their Arguments*, in Concurrence with the *Operation of GOD's Spirit*, to subdue their Prejudices, and make them willing cordially to embrace, and courageously to confess the *Truth*; of which, many who did not profess it, were no doubt in their Consciences inwardly convinced. Yet I cannot think after all, that its Success on the *Day of Pentecost*, where so many peculiar Circumstances occurred, is to be looked upon as a Specimen of the *Rapidity* with which it *commonly* prevailed.

This, Sir, appears to me a *just Representation* of the Case: *That* which you have been pleased to make, in the *Pages* last referred to, is very different; and I apprehend, it will be easy to shew, there are *two material Errors* which attend it. It supposes the *Case* to be determined *much more difficult* than it really was, and the *Assent* universally required *much more immediate*. And as these *two palpable Fallacies* run thro' several other Passages of your Book, I must take the Liberty to examine them a little more particularly.

You represent the *Question* concerning the *Truth of Christianity*, as taught by the *Apostles*, to have been *much more difficult* than it really was. “ *Eter-*
“ *nal Relations, moral Differences of Things*, and a
“ *precise Delineation of the Religion of Nature and*
“ *its*

The Case not so difficult, as to the Jews. 15

“ *its Obligations*, were all ” not only material, but, (as you say in *pag.* 42.) “ *indispensable Articles* to “ be treated of in the Way, and inculcated as “ the Foundation of such a Superstructure.” Now here I would *first* observe, that so far as the *Jews* were concerned in this Matter, a great Part of these *preliminary Controversies* was quite superseded. They already believed, that there was *One GOD*, the supreme Lord of all, whose *Law* required *universal Virtue*, and had denounced an awful *Curse* against every Instance of wilful and presumptuous *Disobedience*: They likewise believed, that in various preceding Ages *this GOD* had raised up *Prophets*, with *miraculous Powers*, first to introduce, and afterwards to confirm, the *Religion* which they professed: And they were also fully persuaded, that the *Messiah* was to appear, about that Time, to establish the Cause of *GOD* and of *Righteousness* in the World. To such the *Apostles* presented themselves, as *Messengers* from the *GOD* of their *Fathers*; turned them to Passages of their own *Sacred Books*, in which the *Sufferings* as well as the *Triumphs* of the *Messiah* were evidently *foretold*; and shewed them, by the Account they gave of *Christ*, confirmed by the *Miracles* which they wrought in his *Name*, that they must *submit to his Authority*, on the very same Principles on which *that of Moses* was acknowledged by them; and that they must *hearken to him*, or, according to the Testimony of *Moses* himself, must expect *to be cut off from among the People*.^a

Where *Idolatrous Gentiles* were to be addressed to, there was indeed a *greater Difficulty*; yet it was by no Means equal to what you, Sir, would represent. Bad as they were, they had not lost *all Distinction* between *Virtue* and *Vice*, nor *all Notion* of a *Supreme Governor* of the World. The *Popular Religion* received

^a Acts iii. 22, 23

16 *The Gentiles had enough to convince them*
 ceived among them was so flagrantly *absurd*, as to admit of being easily exposed. And when they heard that *those Vices*, which contrary to the Light of their own Consciences they indulged themselves in, exposed them to the *Divine Displeasure*; and saw such sensible *Proofs* of his Presence and Power, as the *Miracles of the Apostles* afforded, *Proofs* so unparalleled and so striking; *that Principle of Conscience* which God had implanted in their Natures, and to which their *own Writers* bear an abundant Testimony, would probably be *alarmed*; and there could be no need of a long Deduction of *Philosophical Arguments* to convince those of them, who had not imbibed *Philosophical Prejudices*, or were not incorrigibly *hardened in their Immoralities*, that such Kind of *Teachers* deserved to be attentively heard. They would evidently see, that *GOD was with them*, a God far superior to, and quite different from, those *indolent inactive Deities* which they had been taught to adore. And it needs no great Labour to convince a Man's Understanding, that when the *Lord of Nature speaks*, he should *bear and obey*.*
 In Consequence of this, as soon as the *Gentiles* heard

* *Dr. Stebbing* in his late *Sermon* before the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, has especially considered the *Miracles of the Apostles* "as an Application to the *Fears* of Men, as "under the special Notice of GOD, and liable to his Correction." And it is certain, they did prove that Men are so; yet I cannot think it the *Primary Intention* of these *Miracles* to impress *Terror*, for this plain Reason, that they were generally of the *beneficent Kind*. It seems therefore, they were *immediate Proofs* of the *Presence* and *Agency* of an almighty and most gracious GOD, who pitying the sad State of his degenerate Offspring, the Children of Men, had sent them a *Sovereign Medicine* for their *Souls*, proved chiefly, and with great Propriety, by *miraculous Cures* wrought upon their *Bodies*. Yet as these *Messages of Mercy* were attended with awful *Threatnings* of severe *Punishments*, in Case of continued Impenitence and Disobedience, the *Display of his Power* in these Works of abated Mercy would in a very solemn and affecting Manner *inforce those Threatnings*.

heard *one Discourse* of the *Apostles*, as soon as they saw a *single Miracle*, or heard the probable Report of it, they had Reason to pause, and to set themselves seriously to enquire into this *new Doctrine*: And if they did so, then *supposin*g, as we must here suppose, that *Facts* were as the *New Testament* represents, it is impossible but they must have *stronger Reasons* to receive the *Gospel*, than they could have to reject it. Ignorant as they were of the *true Principles* of *Natural Religion*, they could not be able at first to discern the Force of *that Argument* for the *Truth of Christianity*, which arises from its *Agreement* with *those Principles*: But that it was *proposed* and *attested* by *him*, who evidently appeared to be the great *Sovereign of the World*, they might immediately see, by those *Instances*, in which the stable *Laws of Nature* were controlled in *Subserviency* to it. And they must also see, as soon as they heard the *Plan*, that it was admirably calculated, by *strong Motives* before entirely unknown, to make Men *bonest, benevolent, and temperate*; *Virtues*, which have always been *esteemed* among *Heathens*, how little forever they have been *practised*. And having embraced it, they would come to have juster and more extensive *Notions* of the *Beauty and Glory* of its *Internal Evidences*, as their *Experimental Acquaintance* with it increased, and their *Understandings* improved with their *Graces*.

This, I hope, may make it evident, that it was not *so difficult* a Thing, as you suppose, for those to whom the *Apostles* addressed, to enter into some *Rational Proofs of Christianity*. I must now add, that the *Assent* which these *Divine Teachers* demanded, was not *so immediate* as you represent it to have been. You say indeed, "There were no *Concessions of Time* for *Doubt or Deliberation*;" *one Declaration* of the *Terms of the Covenant* was
C " often

18 *The Case was different, as to the Scornful,*

“ often thought sufficient; the least *Standing-off* gave up the Unbeliever to *Reprobation*;—they “ must comply without the least *Hesitation* ;” and the like. (Pag. 38, 39.) Now I own, that if frequent *positive Assertions* could pass for *Proofs*, the Point would be clearly demonstrated on your Side of the Question. But I think, the whole History of the *Acts*, and many Things in the *Epistles* too, lead us to consider the Matter in a very different Light.

The Man indeed, who, on viewing *such Credentials* as I have mentioned, and hearing so much of the *Gospel* as in *one Hour* he might learn, should on the Force of preconceived *Prejudices*, whether *Speculative* or *Practical*, refuse to give it any *farther Consideration*, and, as some of the Wits of *Athens* did, answer merely with *Scorn* and *Ridicule*, might justly be left to perish in his *Delusions*. And if *this* were the Case *universally* in any *City* or *Town* into which the *Apostles* came, (which one would hope it seldom was,) the *Apostles* must of Course *leave them*, and not *force themselves* on those who *rejected* their *Pretensions with Disdain*. But if *others received them*, they generally (as I observed before,) made *some Stay* at a Place; and as they continued to *teach* and *dispute publickly*, those who *at first derided*, might if they pleased hear them again and again: And I can see no Argument to prove, that any Degree of *Contempt* or *Opposition*, with which any of them had *at first rejected the Gospel*, would seal them up under *Reprobation*, if they afterwards came to a better Temper.

If these very Men, as well as any *others*, expressed a *Desire* of being *farther instructed*; if they urged their remaining Doubts, not as with a *proud Disposition* to cavil and insult, but as Persons that desired farther *rational Satisfaction*, that they might act as in the Sight of God, and as answerable to him in
a Point

a Point of so great Importance; and if they attended these Enquiries with *Prayers* for farther *Divine Illumination*, which both the Principles of the *Jewish Revelation*, and of *Natural Religion*, might easily have taught them; *Light* would gradually break in upon their Minds, and they would know, if they followed on to know the Lord. I challenge you, Sir, to produce any one Line in the *New Testament*, that intimates the *Apostles* would discourage such Persons as these; on the contrary, that *Humanity* and *Gentleness*, that *Meekness* and *Humility*, which every where appear in their Conduct and Writings, and for which they so justly celebrate their great *Master*, would no doubt teach them to treat such *Enquirers* tenderly and kindly, and to cherish them as *hopeful Persons*, who were not far from the Kingdom of GOD. A little Time would probably lead a candid upright Mind thro' its Difficulties, amidst so many shining Evidences, which must impress and convince, in Proportion to the Attention with which they were viewed. And if the publick Concerns of the *Churches* did require the *Apostles*, as they possibly might, to quit such modest and humble *Enquirers* as these, before they arrived at full Satisfaction; they would, in every Place where they had planted a *Christian Church*, leave Persons behind them, furnished with *miraculous Gifts*, who might build on the Foundation they had laid, and compleat the Work which they had begun, in such honest and teachable Souls.

There might indeed be a *third Sort* of Persons, whose State was a *Medium* between that of these, and of the *Scorners* we mentioned before: I mean, such as were *indolent* about the Matter; neither positively perswaded that *Christianity* was *false*, nor quite convinced that it was *true*, nor solicitous to bring their Doubts to an Issue; but concluding, that whether it were *true* or *false*, they might find

20 *Consideration of the Proof from Miracles.*

out a Path to Happiness without it. This was probably the Case of *many then*, as it undoubtedly is the Case of *many in our Days*. Now such as *these* were *not* to be looked upon as *fair Enquirers*, but as *Triflers* in the most serious of all Affairs; and as acting the most absurd and inconsistent Part: For as *Christianity* pretended to be a Matter of the *utmost Importance*, in neglecting it they acted as if it were assuredly *false*, while yet they confessed that they knew not but it might be *true*. A Conduct, which was rendered especially *inexcusable* by that *grand Apparatus*, with which Providence interposed to introduce it, which if it proved any Thing at all concerning it, must prove it to be of *infinite Moment*. Persons of the *Sceptical Turn*, which you know, Sir, to have been very common among the *Antients*, might perhaps sometimes *amuse themselves* with proposing their Doubts to *Christian Teachers*, as they came in their Way; but it is not to be wondered, if they lived and died in this *wavering State*, which was indeed a State of Folly and of Vice, and no doubt ended accordingly. But I cannot find a Line in the *New Testament*, which should lead one to suspect, that they would ever have it to plead before the Tribunal of God, that they were *condemned*, for *rejecting the Gospel*, before they had *Time* to look into its Proofs, tho' honestly and seriously disposed to have done it.

I have in the whole Course of this Argument mentioned *Miracles*, as awakening and convincing *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, without any particular Regard to what you have insinuated to the contrary. (*Pag. 46;—50.*) But now, Sir, I shall give it such a Notice as I think it requires; which will be the less, as you seem to lay but very little Stress on it yourself, and write, so far as I can judge by what follows, in a Consciousness of the Weakness of
your

They were intended and alledged as Proofs. 21

your own *Objections*. You say, "they were not meant as *Arguments*, but were *natural Effects* of *Gospel-Benevolence*;—and plead their being used by *Impostors*;—that *Care* was often taken to keep them *private*;—and that the *Seeking them* was discouraged." All which you would seem to think inconsistent with their being *Proofs*, especially *important Proofs* of the *Truth* of the *Revelation*. The *New Testament*, that grand Magazine of Weapons for the Defence of *Christianity*, furnishes me with such easy *Answers* to all these Suggestions, that my only Fear is, lest the Reader should be wearied with the Illustration of Things in themselves so plain, as what I have to advance in direct Contradiction to all these *Insinuations* of yours.

That the *Miracles* which *Christ* and his *Apostles* performed, were really *intended* by him and them, as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*, is so plain from the *Appeals* made to them, and the *Stress* laid upon them, that it would be quite superfluous to dilate upon it here, especially after what *Bp. Fleetwood*, *Dr. Chapman*, and *Mr. Chandler* have so judiciously urged on this Head. Nor need any Reader who has not had the Pleasure of an Acquaintance with those learned and accurate Writers, go any farther than the *Texts* I have thrown into the *Margin* to prove it beyond Debate.^b So that the Tendency of your remaining *Objection* must be only to shew the *Argument*, which *Christ* and his *Apostles* most largely insisted upon, to be *inconclusive*, and the *Stress* laid on it *unreasonable*. How far the Prosecution of this Design is consistent with the warm Zeal you profess for the *Gospel*, it is not worth while particularly

^b John v. 36. x. 24, 25, 37, 38. xiv. 11. xv. 24. Mark ii. 10. xvi. 20. Mat. xi. 4, 5, 20, — 24. Acts ii. 22. x. 38. xiv. 3. Heb. ii. 4.

22 *Not natural Effects of Gospel-Benevolence.*

larly to urge. I cannot see what its greatest Enemy could say, more directly tending to subvert it.

You assert, in a Manner which I confess surprizes me, “ that *Miracles* were but the *Natural Effect* of their *Doctrine*, instead of any *Supernatural Proof* of its *Veracity*.” (Pag. 47.) I acknowledge myself quite at a Loss, to find out the Sense of this extraordinary Passage. By a *Miracle* we generally mean a *Supernatural Event*: Now I cannot conceive, how this should be in any Case, the *natural Effect* of any *Doctrine*, be it ever so Divine, or ever so important. But if there were a *Doctrine*, whose *natural Effect* it was, to endow its Professors or Teachers with a Power of performing *such Operations* as *Christ* and his *Apostles* did, it would surely be a *Proof of its Veracity* convincing beyond all Dispute or Comparison. However, we know not of any *such Doctrine*; nor can we conceive of any necessary *Connection* between the Knowledge of *Truth*, and a Power of *such Performances*. I suppose therefore your Meaning must be, that when a Person was endowed with these *miraculous Powers*, the *Exertion* of them would be what so benevolent a Religion as *Christianity* would naturally prompt him to, even tho’ he should not intend by it to demonstrate the *Truth* of that *Doctrine*. But when the Passage above is thus explained, which after all I can but guess to be your Meaning in it; I would intreat you, Sir, to shew us, what *Inconsistency* there is between these *two Views*, which you have so strangely opposed to each other. Would it not be a glorious *Proof* of a *Divine Mission*, that God gave to *Christ* and his *Apostles* a Power of exercising their *Benevolence* in so extraordinary a Manner? Would not *Miracles* of a *benevolent Kind* appear the most congruous *Proofs* of so *benevolent a Scheme*? And would not *Miracles* intended as *Proofs* of a *Divine Mission*

Concealing them is grossly misrepresented. 23

Mission be equally an Exercise of *Benevolence*; nay indeed, would they not be much more eminently so, than if no Reference to that *Mission* had been intended? Surely an unprejudiced Mind must see the View you are guarding against, to be the *Crown* and *Glory* of the whole. By *curing* a painful and dangerous *Disease*, by *opening the Eyes of the Blind*, and the like, to lead the afflicted Creature into the Way of *Truth* and *Duty*, and so into the Way of *Salvation*; and by his Means to instruct every Spectator, every one who heard the credible Attestation of the Fact; must enhance the Benefit beyond all Expression; extending it to a far greater Variety of Subjects, and, if it were duly improved, producing in each a far superior Degree of Happiness, than the *Cure alone* could afford to the Person who was the Subject of it.

That *Christ* took Care to *conceal* some of his *Miracles*, is indeed apparent; which, to be sure, was to avoid Ostentation, and to prevent the People from rising tumultuously in his Favour: And that he *silenced the Devils* who bore Witness to him, was an evident Instance of his Wisdom, to cut off every Colour for the malicious and blasphemous Charge advanced against him as a *Confederate* with them. But you well know, that many of *our Lord's Miracles* were wrought in a most publick Manner; some in the Streets of *Jerusalem*, and many more *before vast Multitudes* who were crouding around him, in the Fields, and the Mountains. This is notorious. And give me Leave, Sir, seriously to express my *Astonishment*, how you could venture to say, in the Face of such obvious Evidence to the contrary, “that *our Lord* was always remarkably *on the Reserve* “in this Respect, whenever he happened among “unbelieving Company.” (Pag. 48.) A known Falsehood, liable to Conviction in the Eyes of the whole
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24 *Christ often wrought his Miracles in publick.*

whole World, is what I am very unwilling to charge upon a Gentleman and a Scholar, tho' ever so unacquainted with his Person, and Character. I will therefore impute *this*, and some other Passages of this Kind, to mere Inattention and Forgetfulness. But permit me, Sir, to say, that you ought to have read the *New Testament* with more Accuracy, and to have fixed the Contents of it more deeply in your Mind, before you had thrown out so many publick Reflections upon it. How must it surprize and pain you, to be told from thence, and to see how plainly it is there asserted, that *our Lord* not only *cast out Devils* before the *Pbarisees*, who charged him as a Confederate of *Belzeebub*^c with that very *Miracle* before their Eyes; but likewise, that the *Paralytick* was healed in *Capernaum*, while *there were Pbarisees and Doctōrs of the Law sitting by*, who were come out of every Town of *Galilee*, and *Judea*, and *Jerusalem*;^d when the *Power of the Lord* was also present to heal several more, and the *Croud* was so great, that the Friends of the *Paralytick* were obliged to take a very peculiar Method to get him laid before *Jesus*! How you could fail to know this, or knowing could forget it, is strange: As also, how it should have escaped your Notice or Memory, that *Lazarus* was raised before a great *Multitude* of People, some of which were the Friends of the *chief Priests*, and *Pbarisees*:^e Or that a few Days before *our Lord's* Death, when it was no longer necessary to use such Precautions as he had formerly done, *the Blind and the Lame* came to him in the *Temple*, and he healed them; and the *chief Priests and Scribes* saw the wonderful Things that he did.^f

But to dismiss a Head, on which I could not have wished that you should have given me such Advan-

^c Mat. ix. 33, 34. xii. 22, 24. ^d Luke v. 17, — 19.
^e John xi. 31, — 46. ^f Mat. xxi. 14, 15.

Advantages, I must just touch upon your other *Objection* against the Validity of the *Argument from Miracles*, taken from *Christ's rebuking* those that *sought them*. In some Circumstances, it is evident that he did: But all that we can infer from hence is, that there were some Circumstances, in which they were *unreasonably demanded*. Thus for Instance, when he had *in the Presence of Multitudes*, (who are, by the Way, expressly distinguished from *his Disciples*,) *healed the Lame, the Blind, the Dumb, and the Maimed, and MANY OTHERS*, who had been *cast down at his Feet*; ^g and after that, had *fed four thousand, with seven Loaves, and a few small Fishes*; ^h we are immediately told, that the *Pharisees and Sadducees came tempting him, and demanded that he should shew them a Sign from Heaven*; ⁱ thereby insolently taking upon them to prescribe to GOD himself, *what Kind of Miracles* they would have wrought for their Conviction. On this he very justly called them *a wicked and adulterous Generation*, and referred them (with greater Propriety than most *Commentators* have been aware,) to the grand *Miracle* of his *Resurrection*, ^k which was attended with a most illustrious *Sign from Heaven*; the *Descent of an Angel*, in the Sight of the *Roman Soldiers*, who guarded the *Sepulchre*; which they themselves testified to the *Jewish Rulers*, ^l and perhaps to some of these very Persons who now presumed on so unreasonable a Demand. —He elsewhere blames those, who *would not believe, unless they saw Signs and Wonders*; ^m that is, who would not yield to the most credible *Testimony of others*, tho' the Witnesses were ever so numerous and worthy of Belief, unless they had *that of their own Senses* added to the rest. —It is very probable, some very indecent Things had been said by his Enemies while *questioning with his Disciples*, to occa-

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^g Mat. xv. 30. ^h *ver.* 32,—38. ⁱ xvi. 1. ^k *ver.* 4.
^l xxviii. 4, 11. ^m John iv. 48.

26 *The Plea, that Miracles were used by Impostors;*

sion such a severe Expostulation as that, *Ob faithless and perverse Generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?* We cannot suppose, from the known Candor of *our Lord's* Character, that this was said without some peculiar Reason; and as the Words refer to much Condescension and Long-Suffering formerly used, in giving them much ampler Satisfaction than they could strictly have demanded, so we see, that whatever *insulting Airs* any of his *Enemies* might have put on, when they found *his Disciples* baffled by so stubborn a *Dæmon*, *Jesus* himself *rebuked* him with an Air of irresistible Authority, and immediately *cured the Child* in their Presence and that of all the *Multitude*.^a

Now when these Facts are set in this just and easy Light, I leave it, Sir, to your Invention, fertile as it seems, to shew how it follows as a Conclusion from these Premises, that *our Lord* judged *Miracles* not to be proper *Proofs of a Divine Mission*, and did not perform his *Miracles* as *such Proofs*. I shall only add, that as God never *intended* every individual Person should be an *Eye Witness* to *miraculous Operations*, it seems an amiable Instance of Wisdom and Goodness, in such Cases as these we have examined, as well as in that of *Thomas*, to check the Petulancy of such, as in those Days would not yield to *any Testimony*, but *that of their own Senses*, on such an Occasion.

All that remains to be examined under this Class of *Objections*, is “ what you say concerning’ the “ Possibility of *Miracles* being *used by Impostors*.” (Pag. 46.) This is indeed an important Topick, and has been handled with that Accuracy which it deserves by those who have professedly written upon it. Some Persons of great Eminence in the *Learned and Christian World* have so very lately examined

^a Compare Mat. xvii. 17, 18. and Mark ix. 14,—27.

and are of great Antiquity, often answered. 27

amined it, that it is quite *unnecessary* for me to resume the Controversy here: And you touch but slightly upon it, conscious as it seems, that after what they have said, it deserves little Strefs. I shall therefore answer, in almost as few Lines as your own, only saying,—that I see no Reason to believe, that the Phrase *Lying Wonders in Scripture* signifies, as you in your *Objection* suppose, *true Miracles to confirm a Lye*;—and that the Patrons of *Christianity* challenge all its Enemies to produce *any Instance of Miracles* wrought expressly *to confirm a Falsehood*, which have not been immediately, and on the very Spot, opposed by *superior Miracles* on the Side of *Truth*; and these attended with such *visible Degrees of Superiority*, as to render the *Triumph of Truth* more sensible, and more illustrious, than, in those Instances, it could have been without such Opposition.

What follows in your *51st Page*, concerning the Degree in which *Antiquity* impairs the Weight of *Miracles* said to have been wrought *many Ages ago*, has in Part been obviated already; and has been so often urged by the *Enemies of Revelation*, and so largely considered by its learned *Defenders*, that I think myself fairly dispensed with from insisting farther upon it here. I shall only add, that it must be a sensible Pleasure to those that wish well to *Christianity*, to see its Opposers reduced to the wretched Necessity of attacking it with *such Arguments*, as, if they will prove any Thing against it, will also *prove* that we can have *no rational Evidence* of any Thing that was done *before we were born*; or indeed, of any Thing which we have not *seen with our own Eyes*: An Absurdity, which I suppose no Man living can practise upon his own Understanding, so far as deliberately to admit it, tho' *Infidelity* can sometimes *remove its Mountains*, and bury them *in the Depths of the Sea*.

But there is another *very different Medium*, by which you endeavour to prove, that *Christianity is not founded on Argument*, i. e. that we are not to expect *rational Proof* of it; which will require a larger and more particular Discussion; I mean, “that we are *required to believe it on so high a Penalty.*” It seems methinks at the first Proposal, that *this Medium* is of a very extraordinary Nature. One would imagine, the Argument lay *the contrary Way*: That if God required our Assent to it *on Pain of eternal Ruin and Condemnation*, he must have made the *Evidences of it* very clear and strong, and such as every upright Mind must be able to see the Force of, on a diligent Enquiry, which such Minds will not fail to make. However you, Sir, are pleased to insist upon it in a contrary Light, and to argue from it, that something more convincing than *any Argument*, even *an immediate Revelation*, must be *necessary* to justify such a Demand.

The Terms in which you urge this Consideration, are so triumphant, that they rise even to *Insult*. “With what Regard, with what Patience rather, “can one” who expects *Reasons* for his *Faith*, “be supposed to attend to Questions propounded to “him, *under the Restraints of Threats and Authority?* “to be talked to of *Danger* in his Decisions, and “have the *Rod* held out with the *Lesson?* to have “Propositions tendered to his *Reason* with *Penalties* “annexed?—He disdains, with all Justice, an At- “tempt equally weak and unjust, of frightening him “into a Compliance out of his Power.” (Pag. 8, 9.)—It would be tedious to repeat a great Deal more which you say in the same Strain; in which I heartily wish, that the *Ignorance* which you seem to discover in the State of the Question, may another Day be allowed as some *Excuse* for the *Rashness* and *Arrogance* of the Language, in which you
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the Damnatory Sentence on Unbelievers. 29

treat it; which will not universally pass for *Demonstration*, tho' some may be weak enough to be carried away with the Torrent.

I know indeed, that the *Sentence* which the *Gospel* pronounces against *Unbelievers* has been thought by many a considerable *Objection* against the *Christian Scheme*; on which Account I the rather take this Opportunity of opening my Sentiments upon it, especially as I apprehend, it has often, on one Side or the other, been set in a very wrong Point of Light.

Now here I shall not attempt to solve the supposed Difficulty by pleading, that the *Denunciation* only refers to the Case of those, who should *refuse* to admit the *Testimony of the Apostles*, confirmed by *miraculous Works* of which they were themselves *Eye-Witnesses*. The Answer would not be allowed by you; since your *Objection* lies against the Demand in any Circumstance of Evidence: Nor do I indeed think the Foundation of the Solution just and true; since whatever Reference *one Text in Question* might have to the *Testimony* immediately borne by the *Apostles*, there are *many others* which cannot be so evaded. I chuse therefore to encounter the *Objection* in *all its Force*, allowing that *every one* who *finally rejects Christianity* is in a *State of Condemnation*, and that *there remains* for him *only a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries*.^p But then I conclude, on the Principles of common Equity, that this *only extends* to those who have *Capacities* and *Opportunities* of enquiring into its Evidences; since *Ignorance absolutely unavoidable* is a Plea so considerable, that it must have its Weight before a wise and righteous God. In the Instance of *Idiocy* and *Lunacy*, all the World allows it; and as the only Reason of *that* seems to be,

• Mark xvi. 16. † Heb. x. 26, 27.

30 *Faith is not merely a Speculative Assent.*

be, that *Ignorance* is then *unavoidable*, wherever it is so, it must certainly, on the like Principles, be allowed. But with *these Limitations* I freely declare, that the *Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on *Unbelievers*, is so far from appearing any *Objection against Christianity*, that I apprehend it greatly *increases its Internal Evidence*, when taken in Conjunction with the rest of the Scheme; tho' considered alone, it would to be sure be very absurd, to pretend it to be *any Proof* at all.

For the Illustration of this, I must first remove one *Mistake*, which seems to me a Source of perpetual Confusion on this Head, and on which most of the confident Things, which you have ventured to say on this awful Subject, depend, and with which they fall to the Ground: I mean, that an *Assent to the Truth of Christianity* is the main Thing intended by the Word FAITH, and required under *so high a Penalty*. On the contrary, nothing is more evident to me, than that (as I have largely shewn elsewhere,) *Faith* in such Passages of the *New Testament* as are here in Question, is considered as a *Practical Thing*, which includes in it, what the Word exactly expresses, *an Act of Trust, or Committing the Soul to Christ*, to be, under his Influence and Care, formed for Happiness, and conducted to it, according to the Method of Salvation exhibited in the *Gospel*.

It is true indeed, a Persuasion of the *Speculative Truth of Christianity* must be the Foundation of such a *Faith*, but it is far from being the *only*, or indeed the *primary* Property of it; nor is it that, which is chiefly referred to in these Passages in Question. I readily agree with you, that such an *Assent of the Understanding*, simply considered, could not without great Absurdity, have been demanded under *so high a Penalty*, or indeed under *any Penalty* at all; and

Such a Sentence may attend a Divine Revelation. 31

and this is all, that your Arguments and Defiances here amount to. But if Provision be made, that (excepting as above,) *all* to whom the *Gospel* comes, shall on due Consideration see *irresistible Evidence* to determine *that Assent*, they may justly be *threatned* with fatal Consequences as *Unbelievers*, whether that *Speculative Assent* be, or be not produced: Since it will appear, on that Supposition, they have either on the one Hand, notwithstanding fair and solemn Warning, *criminally omitted* taking those Measures which would infallibly and necessarily have produced a Conviction of the Truth; or on the other Hand, being convinced of it, have *acted contrary* to what they knew in their own Consciences that Reason and Duty required.

Taking the Matter in this View, it may perhaps seem so clear, that some of my Readers may wonder I should pursue it any farther: Yet as you lay so great a Stress on *this supposed Difficulty*, and as so many other Persons have seemed shocked with it, and some (as I have been informed,) have carried it so far as to *reject Christianity*, because they were *threatned with Damnation* if they did not believe it, I will more particularly open to you that View of Things, which convinces me that these *Damnatory Sentences* increase, rather than weaken, the *Internal Evidence* of that *Gospel*, to which they are annexed. And here I shall more particularly shew, *first*,—that there is not in the general any *Absurdity*, in supposing *such a Sentence* may attend a *Revelation* from God; and *then*,—that there is a peculiar *Propriety* in it, when connected with *such a Sort of Revelation* as *Christianity* in other Respects appears to be.

For the Illustration of the *first* of these, I would desire you, Sir, calmly to consider, whether it be in the Nature of Things absolutely *impossible*, that
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32 GOD might contrive *sufficient Evidence*;

an infinitely wise God should contrive *such Evidence* of the Truth of a *Revelation*, as should be *sufficient* to convince every honest Enquirer, who is capable of exercising Reason in the common Affairs of Life; and such only are here in Question. Can a *Mathe-
matician* invent a *Demonstration*, which almost every one of a common Genius shall with due Application infallibly understand; and cannot the *great Former* of the Human Spirit, find out a Way of effecting the like, by a *Proof* of another Kind? Or if no *one Argument* which Omniscience could furnish out, can have such a universal Effect, (which I think it would be great Petulancy and Folly to assert,) could not this wise and glorious Being exhibit a *Complication of Arguments* so adjusted, that some one of them at least should be suited to strike every such Enquirer, and to convince him? Nay, to bring the Matter yet lower, when a strong *Complication* of various *Arguments* is provided, is it absolutely *impossible*, that an all-comprehending Mind should contrive a *Scheme of Providence*, in Consequence of which every sincere and honest Enquirer should, either by some *External Occurrence*, (as meeting with a Book, or Friend, in some critical Moment of Doubt or Danger,) or by some *Inward Impression*, (his Thoughts being fixed and guided, as it seems to him, in a Natural Way, and without any particular Revelation,) be led into *such Views* of the *Evidence* as shall engage his Assent; while at the same time, a Mind under the strong Force of *vicious Prejudices* shall be left to *barden itself* against opening *Proofs*, to turn away from the increasing Light, and to aggravate trifling Objections, till it utterly rejects a most salutary Scheme? I ask you, Sir, and I ask every Reader, whether you, or he, will venture so to *limit* an All-wise and Almighty Being, as to say, that it is absolutely *impossible* he should adjust Matters, as on any one of the
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three former Suppositions? But if you cannot say, and prove it to be so, then be pleased with me to reflect on the *Consequence* of supposing any one of these to be a possible Case.

On such a Supposition, I would farther ask you, whether it would not be *Just* with GOD, to *condemn* those who should *reject a Revelation* attended with Evidence so adjusted and supported? that is, on this *Hypothesis*, to condemn Persons who thro' *vicious Prejudices* should *refuse* an upright and candid *Enquiry* into the *Truth*, and perhaps into the *Evidence of it*, attended with some *Circumstances* which tend powerfully to strike the Mind, and awaken Examination and Attention? I see not, how the *Justice* of this could be denied on any Principle, which will not infer, that GOD cannot punish any Vice of a Sinner's Mind, or any Irregularity of his Life, and will consequently overthrow *Natural Religion*.

Let us then imagine, in *Hypothesis* at least, (since it appears *no Impossibility*;) the *Evidence* adjusted as above, and the Resolution of *punishing* the Infidel formed; I would farther ask, whether in such a Circumstance it was, or could be, *unworthy* the Divine Being to *declare* such a Purpose and Resolution? Some valuable Ends, which might be answered by such a *Declaration* are obvious enough. It could not indeed *convince* any Man's Understanding; that the Doctrine so inforced was *true*; and I do not know that any one was ever weak enough to pretend it: But it might in some Degree *awaken* the Attention of an Enquirer; since tho' he could not believe the *Threatning*, till he discerned the *Evidence* of that *Revelation* of which it made a Part, yet he would easily see, that if it should indeed prove *true*, it must be a Truth of vast Importance; and would also see, that whatever Degrees of *Probability* appeared to be in its Favour

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34 *It would be of Use to make these Threatnings,* when first proposed, there must be equal Degrees of *Probability* that he would be miserable in Consequence of rejecting it. Besides, *this Declaration* might excite the Persons employed to publish the *Revelation* of which it made a Part, to act with greater Ardour and Spirit, and to suffer with greater Courage and Resolution, when they knew that the Happiness of Mankind was so intimately concerned in it. It might also awaken in all who embraced this *Revelation*, a Concern to keep it pure and unmingled with any Thing, which by a wrong *Association of Ideas* might occasion a *Prejudice* against it, whether from the *Absurdity* of its supposed Doctrines, or the *Immorality* of those who received and maintained it; since such *Prejudices* might prove so fatal. Now each of these appears to me a very important End, of which many *Objectors* against this Part of *Christianity* seem to be very little apprized. *

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* Agreeable to what I have said above, of the *various Use* of such *Threatnings*, it may be observed, that many of those Passages of the *New Testament* which express the Divine Purpose of *punishing the Rejecters of Christianity*, are not immediately addressed to *Unbelievers*, (tho' they are at other Times, as was very reasonable, solemnly warned;) but to those who were to be *Preachers of the Gospel*, whom therefore (if any such read this Passage,) I beseech and intreat *in the Bowels of Christ* seriously to consider them. Thus it is, in his *Charge to the Twelve Apostles*, (*Mat. x. 15.*) and to the *Seventy Disciples*, (*Luke x. 12.*) that *our Lord* represents *Unbelievers* as certainly devoted to so dreadful a Destruction, that it should be *more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for them*. And it is to his *Apostles* also, that, when risen from the Dead, he says, just after a Commission to *go and preach the Gospel to every Creature*, (*Mark xvi. 16.*) *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be Saved; but HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED*. Many Passages of the same Purport in the *Epistles* are addressed to *Christians*, no Doubt with the same general View of awakening their compassionate Efforts to deliver those wretched Creatures who were in such extream Danger.

and to omit them might occasion Complaint. 35

On the other Hand, Sir, if no such *Threatnings* were annexed, and the Purpose of GOD to execute his deserved Displeasure on the *Rejectors* of this *Revelation*, should at length take Place, would not the unhappy Creature have Room to make some such Reflection as this, when he was plunging into final Destruction? “ Why was not I *admonished* “ of the *Danger of Unbelief* in such a Case as this? “ When so many other Things were declared, “ and so many other Messages sent, why was not “ this one Article added, by the Messengers who “ brought the rest?” Now tho’ *Conscience* might tell such a Wretch, that every *vicious Prejudice* was

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ger. Compare 2 *Theff.* i. 7,—9. 2 *Tim.* ii. 25, 26. and *Jude*, ver. 23.

I must also take the Liberty to add, that there seems to me a very beautiful *Propriety* in the *Manner of our Lord's expressing* several of these *Denunciations*, which is not in a *direct*, but an *oblique Form*; which particularly became that gracious Messenger of the Divine Love, who visited the World, *not to condemn*, but *to save it*. Thus the awful Doom of *Caper-naum* and *Bethsaida* is uttered by *Christ*, not when speaking to them, but when distant from them, in the Form of a *Lamentation over them*. (*Mat.* xi. 20,—24.) So likewise is *Jerusalem* lamented over, as abandoned to Destruction for its incorrigible and perverse Infidelity, once when *Christ* was as far off as *Galilee*, (*Luke* xiii. 34, 35.) and afterwards, when only approaching, and beholding it from Mount *Olivet*. (*Luke* xix. 41, 42.) And this last Time the Ruin was predicted in *broken Language*, and with a Flow of *Tears*; expressing on the one Hand, the Benevolence of *our Lord's Temper*, which engaged him to mourn over the justest *Condemnation* which Sinners could bring on themselves; and on the other, the inevitable Certainty, and unutterable Terror of that *Destruction*, which was coming upon them. It is one Instance among a thousand, of that *fine Spirit* which runs thro’ all *our Lord's Behaviour*; and which renders it astonishing, that his Cause should meet with such malignant Opposition among many who set up for *Criticks* in the *TO ΠΙΠΕΙΟΝ*, and the *TO ΚΑΛΟΝ*, the *Decorum*, and the *Beauty of Actions*. I have known a *Criminal* touched, and even charmed, with the *Tenderness* which a *Judge* has shewn in passing a *capital Sentence* upon him; and I wonder, it should not be the Case here.

36 *The Absurdity of supposing a Revelation*

penal, and that if Mercy were indeed offered and slighted, the Consequence must be dangerous and fatal; yet it seems congruous to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, to foreclose such a *Plea* as this, even in the Mouth of a perishing Sinner.

On this View I hope it will appear *not incredible* in *Hypothesis* and *Speculation*, that a *Revelation* might come from GOD, the *Evidence* of which should be so adjusted, that all who have an Opportunity of examining into it might be *required* to receive and submit to it, *on Pain* of GOD's *highest Displeasure*; tho' you, Sir, have been pleased to paint this as a *Supposition* in itself flagrantly *absurd*. Nay I apprehend, it must follow from these Principles, that the very *Supposition* of a *Revelation* in general implies, on the one Hand, *Sufficiency of Evidence* to every candid Enquirer; and on the other, certain *Divine Displeasure* against the *Rejecters* of it, which if not expressly declared, will at least be implied.

But how far this is from a real *Absurdity*, may farther appear by viewing the Matter in an opposite Light. Let me imagine, a Man should profess to bring me a *Divine Revelation* with great Solemnity; and yet at the same Time should declare, that I might *reject it without any Danger*. I know not how others might judge, but I am sure *this* would appear to me so incoherent, that I should hardly give myself the Trouble of enquiring into his Credentials, unless some very striking Circumstance appeared at the first View. For it would be natural to conclude, it may be *true*, or it may be *false*: And if it be *true*, by the Confession of the Messenger I have no great Concern in it; I may be happy, without paying any Regard to it: It is therefore comparatively a *Trifling Concern*, and by Consequence so much *less likely* to be the Subject of a Divine Interposition.

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without any Threatning to such as reject it. 37

Take it therefore in any Light, and it appears to me, that an Obligation *on some high Penalty* to enquire into Credentials, and by Consequence to receive and obey the Command, is in the Nature and Reason of Things to be supposed as the Counterpart of the Honour of receiving a Message from GOD ; and, as the *Law* speaks, *transit cum Onere*, it comes to a Man (if I may be allowed the Expression,) with this awful Incumbrance, “ He “ must *reject it at his Peril.*” And agreeably to this Remark, we always find (so far as I can recollect,) thro’ the whole Series of the *Old Testament*, that where the Message sent from God was disregarded, some *signal Punishment* was inflicted on the Person to whom it was addressed ; which I mention, not as arguing from it, but as a Circumstance illustrating in one View the Reasonings above, and in another receiving Illustration from them.

These, Sir, are the Principles, on which I said above, that *Threatnings* against those who should disbelieve and reject *a Revelation* in Question, are so far from being any Argument against its being Reasonable and Divine, as some have vainly pretended ; that on the contrary, they are so suitable to a wisely concerted Scheme, that the *Omission of them* would rather be an *Objection* against a pretended Revelation, than any Argument in its Favour.

I shall beg Leave, Sir, to detain you a little longer on this Head, while I attempt to shew that *these Reasonings*, which appear of general Force, have a peculiar and singular Weight when applied to *Christianity* : Which will appear from considering the *Degrees of Evidence* to which it pretends ; and several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World.

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38 *Christianity has an Evidence thus adjusted.*

I have discoursed at large already on the Kind of *Evidence* with which *Christianity* was attended, during the Ministry of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and have referred to several Passages, in which the *Rejection* of it, is charged on such *vicious Prejudices*, as must render Men *highly criminal* before GOD; and some other Passages to the same Purpose may be seen in the *Margin*.¹ I shall only add here, that I apprehend, our blessed *Lord* (who said nothing in vain, and in whose short Sentences there is often a Weight far beyond what the Generality of his Enemies, or his Followers, have considered,) seems expressly to have asserted the *most extraordinary* of all the *Suppositions* made above to be *Fact*; I mean *that* of a *Divine Superintendency* over every well disposed Mind, to lead it into the *Evidences* of the *Truth* of his *Doctrine*. And this, you will observe, he has spoken in Terms suiting, not only the Period of *his own*, or the *Apostles* Ministry, but future Ages too. You will perhaps from this general Hint, recollect that important Passage: "If any Man will do his Will, i. e. the Will of my Father, εαν τις θελη ητοιεν, "if he be resolutely determined upon it," (as I have elsewhere observed, the *Phrase* plainly signifies *) *he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of myself*. And the Prophet *Isaiab* seems long before to have represented the Matter much in the same View, tho' according to his Manner, in more Figurative Terms; when he says, *An High Way shall be there; and it shall be called THE WAY OF HOLINESS;—the wayfaring Men, tho' Fools, shall not err therein.*²

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¹ Acts xiii. 46. xviii. 6. Rom. ii. 8, 9. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. 1 Theff. ii. 14,—16. 2 Theff. i. 6,—9. ii. 10,—12. Heb. iii. 7,—13. vi. 7, 8. 1 John v. 19. 2 John vii. 17.
* See *Family Expositor*, Vol. ii. pag. 47. 2 Isai. xxxv. 8.

I might also shew at large, if I were not afraid of running out this Letter to too great a Length, that not only those *Degrees of Evidence* to which *Christianity* pretends, but also several other *Circumstances* attending the *Scheme* itself, and the *Manner* in which it was introduced into the World, render the *Threatnings* annexed peculiarly *suitable* to it, beyond the Degree in which they might, on the Principles above, have suited a *Revelation* in these Respects *different from the Gospel*.

It is very material for the Illustration of this Point, to recollect that the *Christian Scheme* supposes Mankind under *Guilt*, and obnoxious on Account of it to *Misery*, to dreadful *final Misery*; and accordingly makes its Proposals, not merely under the Notion of a *Benefit*, but of a *Remedy*; of a *Remedy* without which Men were *perishing*. Now the necessary Consequence of this must be, the *Death* and *Destruction* of those who *reject it*. In this View the Sacred Writers, with great Propriety, sometimes place it. *GOD sent his Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish;—and therefore he that believeth not on him, is condemned already, because he hath not believed:*^t—It plainly appears from his *Unbelief*, that he is actually *under Sentence*; and as it follows afterwards, *The Wrath of GOD, that Wrath from which he might otherwise have been saved and rescued, abideth on him.*^u And to this Purpose *Christ* declares elsewhere, *If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your Sins,*^w shall perish with the *Guilt* of all those *Transgressions* on your Heads, from which I was so sincerely willing to have delivered you.

The *Threatnings* in Question are also *congruous* to the Importance of those *Blessings*, which are offered to all who embrace and obey the *Gospel*. These
are

^t John iii. 16,—18. ^u Ver. 36. ^w John viii. 24.

40 *The great Importance of its Blessings,*

are well known in Speculation; but, were they duly considered, they would appear to have much greater Weight than many are aware. A full Pardon of all the most aggravated Sins, which the true Penitent has ever committed; the Communication of Divine Influences, to enable us to conquer the Power of Sin to which we were enslaved, and to fit us for Happiness present and future; an Admission into the Family of God, and a Participation of all the Joys and Privileges of his Children; the Reception of our separate Spirits into the Presence of God, and to the most glorious Society, Enjoyments, and Services there; and at length, the Resurrection of our Bodies, and the Eternal Happiness of the whole Man: *Such Favours* offered to *condemned Sinners* by the offended Majesty of Heaven and Earth, must certainly have drawn after them *severe Punishments* on the presumptuous Creatures by whom they were slighted and despised, had they been notified and proposed by the meanest Inhabitant of the Celestial World, or even of our own, as an Embassador from God. But when to all this it is added, that a Person so glorious, so excellent, and so divine as the *Son of GOD* himself, *his only begotten Son*, became the Messenger of his Father's Love and Grace to us; and that he might testify it in a more effectual Manner, became also, for many succeeding Years, an Inhabitant of our low World; and at length submitted to such extream Evils, even to *Death itself*, to a *Death* attended with such astonishing Circumstances of Ignominy and Torture, for this great Reason among others, that he might affect our Minds with powerful Sentiments of religious Veneration, of Gratitude and Love; who can wonder, if there be an *awful Counterpart* to all these Miracles of Condescension and Mercy? Who can wonder, if the *Contempt* of *such a Gospel*, so circumstantiated,
and

and the Way of proposing them, require it. 41

and so sealed, be *penal* in Proportion to the Degree in which it is *criminal*? Can it possibly be imagined, that the *Son of GOD* should become Incarnate, and Bleed, and Dye; and that *his Spirit* should afterwards be sent down from Heaven, with all that splendid *Apparatus of various Languages* instantaneously taught, and *Miraculous Powers* every where exerted; and all this to make Way for a Discovery, which those to whom it was sent might trample upon with Impunity? that they might reject and deride it themselves, and perhaps make it almost the only serious Business of their Lives, to expose it to universal Contempt; and yet, tho' living and dying Impenitent, partake in the Day of final Retribution, with that *Redeemer* whom they have rejected and opposed, in the Joys he will bestow on his faithful Servants, and which he will share with them? This, Sir, is such a shocking *Incongruity* even in *Hypothesis*, that you yourself could not forbear exploding it; and I think you have done it with great Propriety and Spirit. (Pag. 45.) It is indeed as you represent it: The least Intimation of *Mercy* to the *finally unbelieving* and *impenitent* would have been a *Blemish* on the *whole Scheme*, and a Kind of *Toleration* for that *Neglect*, which in such a Case it would probably have met with in the World. Whereas it is now with the most becoming Majesty, that such a Dispensation of Wonders terminates in a *Day*, when this humbled and dishonoured *Saviour* shall appear in *flaming Fire*, taking *Vengeance* on them that *know not GOD*, and that *obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ*; who shall therefore be *punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* *

Permit me only to touch on one Consideration more, which illustrates the *Congruity* of these *Denunciations*,

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nunciations,

* 2 Theff. i. 8, 9.

42 *Strong Sanctions proper to fit for its Trials.*

nunciations, as a Part of the *Gospel Scheme*; and that is, the *Difficulties* thro' which *that Scheme* was to *struggle* in its early Infancy. It was wisely ordered by Providence for the Establishment and Edification of succeeding Ages, that the *first Professors* of *Christianity* should encounter great *Hardships* and *Sufferings* on Account of it; and it would be easy to shew, that a *Scheme* calculated for *universal Reformation* must expose to such *Trials*, when it made its Entrance into *so degenerate a World*. Now in this View there was an evident Necessity, that *the Fear of him, who after he had killed, could cast both Soul and Body into Hell,*[†] should be opposed to the Threats of cruel *Persecutors*. It was necessary, that the *Danger of Rejeſting, Deserting, or even Diſſembling the Faith* should be plainly and affectionately represented; otherwise Men would have held themselves fairly dispensed with from enquiring and looking into a *Scheme*, so likely to prove destructive to their Fortunes, and even to their Lives, in this World, and by its own Confession, by no means necessary to avoid greater Evils in another.

From all these Reasonings it appears to me undeniably evident, that as some *severe Threatnings* to those who *rejeſt it* must probably in any Case attend a *Divine Revelation*; so *these Threatnings* are so evidently *congruous* to the peculiar Nature, Design, and Circumstances of *Christianity*, that had they not made a Part of it, the *Absence of them* would have been a great *Diminution* to its *Internal Evidence*, and probably an effectual Bar to its Propagation in the World.

I am sensible, Sir, the grand *Objection* against all these Reasonings is taken, from the Appearance of a *virtuous* and amiable *Disposition* in some who *disbelieve the Gospel*, and from the Possibility that a

wrong

[†] Mat. x. 28.

The Case of such as have wrong Ideas of it. 43

wrong Association of Ideas in others, leading them to conclude those Things to be contained in the *Christian Revelation* which do not indeed belong to it, may engage some to *reject the whole* from the apparent *Absurdity* which they see in these spurious, tho' solemn, Additions to it; as for Instance, in those vast Tracts of Land, in which *Transubstantiation* and *Image Worship* are represented, not merely as consistent with *Christianity*, but as in a Manner essential to it, by those who are its established Teachers, and may therefore be presumed best to understand it.

As for the latter of these Cases, it must be considered, how far the Person so *mistaken* in the *Idea* he has formed of *Christianity* has fallen into that Mistake necessarily, and how far it may be charged on his own *Negligence* or *Mismanagement*. It is possible, that in some Countries *Christianity* may be so *misrepresented*, and the *common People* may be so utterly *incapable* of coming at its true Contents, that they may be looked upon as Persons *unavoidably ignorant* of it; and consequently are not included in the Number of those, whose Case we are now considering. But if any may have Recourse to the *Scriptures*, and will not give themselves the Trouble of *searching them*, to see whether these *supposed absurd Doctrines* are really contained in them, or no, they must stand by the Consequences of their *Indolence* and *Rashness*: And I fear, the *Nobility* and *Gentry* in *Popish* Countries, (who are the Persons among whom *Deism* probably prevails most,) are generally in this Case. Such might easily have discovered so much Good in *Christianity*, and so many Arguments in its Favour, as might have proved it worth their while to have read over the *New Testament* again and again, with an honest Desire of knowing what are *indeed* the *Doctrines* and *Precepts*

44 *The Virtues of Deists very deficient.*

contained in it. I question not, but such an Employment would have been a much more rational and useful Way of spending Time, than what the Persons in Question have often preferred to it; and it is not so *obscure*, as to leave a *candid Reader* in such a Case *capable* of imagining, it teaches, or requires, any Thing *absurd*.

As for the *supposed Virtues* of some who *know the Gospel* and *reject it*, I fear, Sir, when they come to be tried by the great Standard of *true Excellence in Character*, they will be found exceedingly deficient. *Virtue* is a Word of a very dubious Signification; and, as it is generally used, that Man is denominated *virtuous*, who is *temperate, just, and humane* in his Conduct, be he ever so *destitute of Religion*. Now with Regard to such Persons it is evident, that a wise and righteous God will never treat them, as if they had been *debauched, unjust, and inhumane*. Nevertheless, if such as these live *without GOD in the World*; if they *cast off Fear, and restrain Prayer before GOD*; if (which the very Fact of their *rejecting Christianity* proves,) they will not set themselves to *enquire* diligently and impartially into the Intimations of the Divine Will; if they are *unkumbled* before God for the various Transgressions of their Lives, and so proudly *conceited* of their own Reasonings, that they will set their *pre-conceived Opinions* on particular Subjects against all the Weight of *Internal and External Evidence* attending the *Christian Revelation*, when contradicting those Opinions; I cannot see on what Ground they can complain, if they be finally treated as Persons, who, while they have *reverenced Men*, have *forgotten GOD*: Nor can it be imagined, that, under the Load of so much Guilt, they will have any Claim to *future Rewards*, merely because they have had *Sense and good Nature* enough, to *judge rightly*
con-

What Deists may be in a hopeful Way. 45

concerning what would generally be the *best Interests* and *Enjoyments* of Human Life, even if there were *no Deity*; and so have chosen to live *like Men* rather than *Brutes*, so far as *Sobriety* and *mutual Kindness* alone were in Question.

Had the *best of Men* a suitable and continual Sense of the Majesty and Purity of the Divine Nature, and of that Love, Duty, and Zeal, which a reasonable Creature owes to its Creator, they would, with all their *humane* and *social Virtues* about them, fall down into the Dust before God, and say, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servants, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified!*² and they would feel a *Load of Guilt* pressing on their Consciences, and engaging them most attentively to listen to a *Scheme* by which *free and full Pardon* might be expected, in a Way most honourable to the Rights of the Divine Government. And if no Admonitions can bring those who are now *insensible* to such a Temper, we can only lament, that their *Conviction* is delayed to *so late*, and probably to *so fatal a Day*.

But if there be any where in a *Christian* and *Protestant Nation*, a Man *not yet* thoroughly *convinced* of *Christianity*, who, on the Principles of *Natural Religion*, reverences and loves the great *Author of his Being*; who pours out his Soul before him in the Exercise of private and publick Devotion; who humbly traces every Intimation of his Will which he has already received, that he may yield a constant and uniform Obedience to it; and seeks Illumination from the great *Father of Lights* for the farther Discovery of it: If there be a Person, who tho' yet in the State of *Hesitation* concerning the *Divine Authority* of the *Scriptures*, will diligently *search them*, not with a View to cavil and object, but honestly to see what is the Genius and Design

² Psal. cxliiii. 2.

46 *Christianity tends to make Men better.*

sign of them, and will also read and consult the ablest *Defenders of Christianity*, in order to gain a fuller Information in its *Evidence*; I will venture to pronounce, that such a Man is *not far from the Kingdom of GOD*, and doubt not, but that according to the Declaration of our faithful *Saviour*, he will ere long *know that the Doctrines is of GOD*.^a I cannot believe, that such a one ever *died an Infidel*; because I have abundantly stronger Evidence that *Christianity* is true, than I have of the *Virtue* of any one who *died denying it*. But you well know, Sir, that the *Generality* of our *Deists* are quite out of the present Question, being *most of them* such as a *Roman Censor* would not have borne in any of the Highest Ranks of *their Citizens*, how eagerly soever any may plead for their Admission into the *New Jerusalem*, the Presence of GOD, and the Mansions of the Blessed.

Nevertheless it is possible some may object, with Regard to the Person, whom we described above, as making *so hopeful a Progress* towards embracing the *Gospel*, what will he be the *better* after all, when it is embraced? What can the single Circumstance of *believing Christianity to be true*, effect towards recommending a Man to the Divine Favour, who is already supposed not only *temperate, just, and benevolent*, but *devout* too? This is a Question which I have sometimes heard advanced, tho' I do not recollect that you mention it; but I wonder it should enter into any Mind, who knows what the *Faith* which constitutes a Man a *real Christian* is, according to the Account given of it above, agreeable to the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*: And by the Way, had you, Sir, considered *that*, you would have found very little Room to triumph (as you do, *pag. 10.*) in our being obliged to *pray for its Increase*. Were it merely a *Speculative Assent*, your Arguments on this
Head

^a John vii. 17.

What is the Nature of the Faith it requires. 47

Head would be as conclusive, as they are foreign to the *Scripture Idea* of it; which is a *cordial and practical Acquiescence in the Scheme of Salvation by Christ*. This, Sir, evidently includes in it a becoming Affection towards *the Son of GOD*, that illustrious Person, whom, venerable and amiable as he is, every *Infidel* must necessarily neglect, and to whom when once revealed, *GOD* may most reasonably require express *Homage, Duty, and Subjection*, on Pain of his highest Displeasure. *Faith* also, in this View of it, will be the Foundation of such deep *Humiliation* before *GOD*, of such ardent *Love* to him, and does, in one Word, so illustriously ennoble, and improve, all the other Branches of a *lovely and virtuous Disposition*; that surely no one, who has either felt *its Power*, or even studied *its Nature* and genuine *Influence*, can long doubt to what Purpose it is demanded and insisted upon. And he that has observed the *Effects* it has produced, and the illustrious as well as numerous *Victories* it has gained over *the World*, beyond what any other Principle could ever obtain, will be unable to *depreciate it*, without greatly debasing the Nature and Extent of that *Moral Virtue*, which he pretends to exalt in Preference to it; as I think it were easy to shew at large, if the Compass of this *Letter* would admit it.

And thus, Sir, I have given you my deliberate Thoughts on the *Reasonableness, Justice, and Necessity* of the *awful Sentence* which the *Gospel* passes on those who *reject it*; and whether it may move you to *Gratitude, to Anger, or to Scorn*, I cannot dismiss the Subject without solemnly and earnestly *intreating you*, seriously to reflect upon it, as your own Concern, and to ask yourself, as an *Immortal Creature* shortly to appear at the Tribunal of *GOD*, whether you have not Reason to *humble yourself before him*

48 *Reflection on this Part of the Debate.*

him in the Review of this, when compared with the Manner in which you have ventured to talk *on this tremendous Subject*? Your Heart may perhaps be less impressible; but I am sure that for my own Part, were I to think, I will not say as an *bumble Christian*, but as a *sober and religious Deist* in Character ought, if *Christianity* had never been heard of, I would not for the whole World presume to say, as you have *in Effect* frequently done, “ that “ an Infinitely Wise God could not give a *Revelation* attended with such *rational Evidence*, as “ should render every Man to whom it came, * “ justly obnoxious to *high Penalties* for *rejecting* “ *it.*” Nay I think, it would fill me with Astonishment and Grief, that a *mortal Man* should be found, *arrogant and petulant* enough, to *limit the Majesty of Heaven*, by such an Assertion; and to declare in express Words, a *Disdain* at the Mention of *his Lifted Rod*, when *beld out* over those who should *despise* his appointed Method of Pardon and Salvation. May the Hour never come, when this *ill-judged Bravery* shall be lamented amidst *inconsolable Horrors!*

After so copious an Examination of this important Question, in which I have laboured to give you, and my other Readers, all the Satisfaction I could, I have not left myself Room to mention *many other Things* in your Essay, which might admit and require Animadversion. Of those yet remaining unhandled, your Account of the *Agency and Office* of the *Divine Spirit* seems the most considerable. I leave my Reader to consult it for himself, as it stands in your *56th and following Pages*: In which he will find a *Mixture of Truth and Falsehood* so blended together, as on the whole to amount

* N. B. I here suppose *extraordinary Cases* allowed for, as above.

What is advanced in the Third General. 49

mount to a *Scheme* apparently contrary to *Fact*; and in *Theory* so wild, that he will not find it easy to believe, it could be *seriously* proposed by any who enjoyed the Use of his *Reason*; or that *you* in particular meant any Thing by it, unless it were to *expose Christianity*, by representing *this* as its *Doctrine*, and its grand *Foundation*.

You must at least, Sir, add the Sanction of *your Name* to your Pamphlet, before you will be thought *seriously* to teach, (as in *pag. 59.*) “ that every *baptized* “ Person is *inspired* in a Moment with an *irresistible* “ *Light from Heaven,*” which yet, according to your 63d Page, may be resisted, and thereby *make Infidelity criminal*; “ a *Light*, by which our *Faith* is “ *completed in an Instant*, the most perfect and “ *finished Creed produced at once*, and made *self-evident* to the Mind in which it is lodged, in a “ *Way perhaps little differing from Intuition* itself; “ *such Characters* being stamped upon the Heart, “ *as no Misrepresentations* can ever possibly intervene “ *to corrupt, no succeeding Suggestions* of a different “ *Style, to dispute the Preference, or shake its* “ *Authority in the Mind.*” In one Word, “ we “ *are*” in Consequence of this *Extraordinary Operation*, (if we are to take the Matter as you represent it,) “ *brought under a Monitor and Guardian,* “ *which does not leave us for one Moment liable* “ *to a Possibility of Error and Imposition.*” These, Sir, are *your own Words*; and if any Reader, to whom I am personally a Stranger, should question whether any Thing *so absurd* as the last Clause is any where in the World to be found, your 60th Page will convince him how faithfully they are transcribed.

I apprehend, perhaps *with you*, that merely to *propose this Notion*, is to *confute it*. However for the Credit of the *Christian World*, I am glad to say, it is *no very common one*, and may, for any

50 *Consideration of this waved for the present.*

Thing I at present know, be quite peculiar; whatever *unguarded Approaches* some good Men may have made towards it, or whatever *Airs of Infallibility* they may have assumed, which, to do you Justice, I cannot but imagine, you meant by all *this Galimatia* to expose. It would be an easy Matter to vindicate *the Scriptures*, which you have pressed in to support this strange Representation; but every good *Commentary* upon them may furnish the Reader with an *Antidote* against such an Interpretation, if his *own Reflections* do not (as might reasonably be expected,) immediately supersede the Necessity of having Recourse to any *Commentary* at all. I shall not therefore at present pursue the Matter any farther; but leave you to be confuted, I will not say by every rational *Christian Writer* on this Subject, but even by every *Error* which any good *Christian* has fallen into, on this Head, or on any other; for every such *Error* as effectually confutes this Notion, as a thousand Volumes of the Strictest Argument could do it.

Nevertheless, Sir, if you still continue to urge the Matter, and *the Publick* seem desirous of it, I may perhaps take this your *Third General* under as particular a Consideration, as your *Two former*. In the mean time, I am well satisfied, that none who knows me will imagine, that I have declined the Task from any *Suspensions* which I entertain concerning the *Reality* or *Importance* of the *Operations of the Blessed Spirit* on the Mind, to enlighten and renew, to sanctify and strengthen, to cheer and to guide the *Children of GOD*, and the *Heirs of Glory*. I am continually bearing my *Testimony* to this great and weighty *Truth* in my *Sermons* and *Writings*; as I can never expect, that any Course of *Preaching* or *Writing* should be useful to the Souls of Men, in which so glorious a *Doctrine of Christianity* is either denied or omitted.

There

Other Parts of the Letter acquiesced in. 51

There are many other Particulars in your *Letter*, about which I shall have no Controversy with you at all, but shall willingly leave *those Deities* to plead, *whose Altars you have cast down*. The Imputation of the *Faith of Sureties* to the *baptized Infant*;—the *necessary Connection* between the Administration of that Rite, and the Communication of some *extraordinary Influences of the Spirit*;—the *Power of the Magistrate* to determine *Articles of Faith*, and to impose *Forms of Worship* by *sanguinary Laws*, or *Laws* in any lower Degree *penal*;—the *compelling young Persons* to declare their Sentiments on some of the nicest *Theological Controversies*, before they can be supposed at all to have examined them,—and *frowning severely* upon them, as soon as they appear to *suspect*, what they never had any *convincing Evidence* to engage them to *believe*:—These, and some other Particulars (which lie between the 95th and 101st Page of your Book,) I confess you have *rallied* with a just Severity. And I am particularly pleased with the serious Air with which the *Raillery* on these Heads is carried, even to the Defence of *Fire and Faggot* in the Cause of Religion; from which I presume, Sir, you apprehend yourself to be in no Danger. It will, no Doubt, be of Service to those Readers, who, without such a Key, might, in the Simplicity of their Hearts, have been led into a wrong Judgment of your Views, from those *Airs of Devotion and Orthodoxy*, which you assume in other Passages.

A Design to overthrow *Natural Religion*, as well as *Revealed*; to confound the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice*, and subvert, so far as a Mortal can do it, the *Throne of GOD* among Men; to destroy all the Foundations of *Truth, Justice, and Benevolence*, which arise from a Perswasion of his Divine Presence and

52 *The Tendency of the Author's Principles*

Providence, leaving us to all the Absurdities, the Temptations, and Miseries of *Atbeism*; is so black, and so horrid an *Enormity*, that I would by no means charge it, by any Train of Consequences, even on a *Nameless Author*. And indeed I will not allow myself so much as to think, that you were *capable* of setting yourself about it, as *our Law* expresses it in Matters of much less Importance, *knowingly and with Malice forethought*. Charity teaches me rather to hope, that it was in mere *Sport*, and Wantonness of Heart, you have thrown about these *Firebrands, Arrows, and Death*.^b But what the *Sport* has been, the Weapons themselves shall shew: And whatever you meant, I think it my Duty, before I conclude, to shew, that you have in Fact *laid the Foundation* of the *Temple of Confusion*, (if I may be allowed the Expression,) and pointed out the Way to the utter *Destruction of Religion*, in every Form, and in every Degree. I hope therefore, Sir, that how ungrateful soever the Subject may be, you will give me a patient Hearing, while I spend a few Moments in the Illustration of it; partly lest some unthinking People, dazzled by the *Sophistry* of your boasted Arguments should implicitly follow you, *not knowing whither they go*; and partly, as I insinuated in the Entrance of my *former Letter*, that I apprehended your Pamphlet had *such a Tendency*; for I should think I acted unworthy my Character as a *Christian* and a *Divine*, if I left such an Insinuation entirely unsupported. And indeed, Sir, if your Pamphlet has those Views, which (so far as I can learn) are universally imputed to it, I should hope nothing might be more likely to convince you of the *Weakness of those Arguments*, by which you attempt to shake the Foundation of *Christianity*, than to shew you, that if they *prove* any Thing, they prove a great Deal too much; *prove*, what I hope you would

^b Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

would abhor, as infinitely the most pernicious of all Falsehoods.

In order, if possible, to make you sensible of this, give me Leave to suppose *an Atheist*, or if that be too great a Monster to be supposed, *a Sceptick*, who has, and will have, no fixed Sentiments in *Religion* of any Kind, addressing himself to you, or to some Patron of *Natural Religion*, on *your own Principles*, and in many of *your own Words*, to some such Purpose as this.

“ It is a most *absurd Thing*, so much as to pretend to offer *any Defence* of *Religion*, so far as even to argue the *Existence of a Deity* from the *Works of Nature*, or to go about to prove that we lie under any Obligations to Sobriety, Honesty, or mutual Kindness. If such *Disputes* as these be allowed, there is *no ensuring Conviction*. (Pag. 5.) If the *Motives*, even to these Virtues, may be *examined* and considered, they may be *innocently rejected* to; for who shall ascertain the *Moment* when I am to become *virtuous*, if I am allowed to *examine* why I am to be so? (Pag. 93.) Your boasted *rational Evidence* of these Things is a false unwarranted Notion, without the least Ground to support it in Nature. (Pag. 7.) You say, *all Men* are to *think alike* upon these Topics; *all* to *acknowledge*, there is an Original, Intellectual Being, endowed with all Natural and Moral Perfections, and that all the Rules of Virtue and Duty are to be inviolably observed: But how should these Reasons of yours, whatever they are, and which therefore I will not condescend so much as to hear, produce this *Unity of Opinion* in these important Articles? I disdain to bestow a second Thought on *so preposterous a Scheme*. (Pag. 8.) Tell me not, that by neglecting to enquire into the *Existence of a GOD*,
“ and

54 *How an Atheist or Sceptick might argue*

“ and thereby running into an utter Disregard to
“ all that Gratitude, Veneration, and Obedience,
“ which, you say, I owe him, I may incur his
“ Displeasure ; or that by refusing to enquire into
“ the Nature and Obligations of *Virtue*, I may
“ incur a thousand other Inconveniences :—I can-
“ not have Patience to be *threatned* into Conse-
“ quences, to be talked to of *Danger* in Decisions,
“ and to have *the Rod* held out with the Lesson.
“ (*Ibid.*) It is *impossible*, there should be any such
“ Thing as *rational Religion* ; for if it be *necessary* at
“ all, it must be *equally necessary* for all Men, and
“ at all Times. *Children* must love and fear the
“ Deity, before they could know any Thing of
“ him ; and their *Knowledge*, if built upon such
“ Principles as these you offer me, would come
“ quite *too late* to regulate the *Practise*. (*Pag.* 13.)
“ You say, you find *Religion reasonable in Speculation* ;
“ but I tell you, in your own Words, *that is no-*
“ *thing to the Purpose* : The Question is, Whether I,
“ and every Man, be *bound to believe it*? (*Pag.* 18.)
“ And who can imagine this, who considers how
“ *few Men* are qualified for Reasoning ; (*Pag.* 17.) and
“ how possible 'it is, that if the *Examination* of
“ these Things were to be attempted, a Man
“ might not *live long enough* to go thro' with the
“ *Proof*? (*Ibid.*) What if it be indeed so, that the
“ Perfections of the *Deity*, and the Obligations of
“ *Virtue*, may be *rationally demonstrated* ; yet you
“ know, the *Generality of Apprehensions* extend not
“ beyond a *Simple Proposition*, and are thrown out
“ at once at the very Mention of a *Medium* : (*Ibid.*)
“ Nay the very *ablest and best of Men* are (as you
“ have taught me,) *disqualified for fair Reasoning*,
“ by their *Natural Prejudices*. We *Atheists* have
“ contracted a *Partiality* for particular Objects and
“ Notions, familiarized to us by long Acquaintance :
“ An honest and natural Fondness for *Hobbes*, and
“ *Spinoza*,

“ Spinoza, and the rest of our *old Friends*, will
“ never permit us to exert our Judgments in a
“ *disinterested Manner* ; not to say, how many
“ of the *Living* may be concerned in the Event.
“ (Pag. 23.)”

“ Besides,” might your *Atheistical* or *Sceptical*
Disciple say, “ it is an *immense Task* you would assign
“ me, a *Task* for which *Years* will not suffice, to
“ run thro’ all the *Acute* and *Metaphysical* Writers,
“ *Masters in Israel*, who have each of them had
“ their darling Argument, and have many of them
“ perhaps written whole *Folio’s* to illustrate it. Or
“ if you would lead me to quit the high *priori* Road,
“ (without examining which, it is nevertheless
“ plain, that I can have no full Idea of the Subject,)
“ and would argue from *Second Causes* and the *Harmony*
“ of *Nature*, how can I judge of this without un-
“ derstanding the *Laws of Nature* ? and how can
“ I attain the Knowledge of *those Laws*, but by a
“ deep and long Attention to *Mathematical Studies* ?
“ As I must take the *Faith of a Deity* in the Way
“ to *complete Virtue*, according to your *circular Ar-*
“ *gument*, that *he who comes to GOD, must believe*
“ *that he is* ; (Pag. 78.) so I must also take *Sir Isaac*
“ *Newton’s Principia*, after a great many other *pre-*
“ *paratory Books*, in the Way to *that Faith*. And
“ however the Gentlemen of the *Boylean Lecture*,
“ on whom you so pleasantly exercise your Talent
“ of *Raillery*, may confine their Hearers to ex-
“ amine only into the *Evidence on one Side of*
“ *the Question* ; I hope you, Sir, will give me
“ Leave to hear, what my Brethren, the *Atheists*
“ and *Fatalists*, have said to *destroy Religion*, as well
“ as what *its Votaries* have said in *its Defence*.”

“ Now,” may he proceed to say, “ if by some
“ happy Conjunction of Circumstances, I have
“ Genius and Learning, and Resolution, and Lei-
“ sure, and Fortune enough, to go thro’ this
“ *Ency-*

56 *Such Arguments as these must be answered*

“ *Encyclopædia of Ethical and Physico-Theological Studies*, it is not the Happiness of one in a thousand; and yet according to you, *Natural Religion* and *Morality* are Matters of *universal Concern*.
“ And which is worst of all, when I have finished this Course, in some future distant Period of Life, if I happen to attain it, the *Event* of this *Examination* is quite *uncertain*. Perhaps all my Labour may be lost, and I may find myself obliged to sit down in my present *Infidelity*; or if I attain to any Notions of these Things, they may be *changeable with every Wind of Doctrine*. (Pag. 26.)
“ Nay, if I continue to believe, *my Faith* will administer *no Comfort in the Reflection*; for I shall continually *forget the Fundamental Principles*, on which I have formed my Determination; (Pag. 29.) and even while I *remember them*, *my Faith* will never *influence my Practice*. (Pag. 13.) You,” may this importunate *Echo* of your Philosophy and Wisdom retort, “ you, who have studied what *Virtue* is, tell me it will require me to *deny my Appetites*, and to *bridle my Passions*: But what will *all these Principles* (even the rational Apprehensions of the Presence of GOD himself, a View to his Favour, and the Expectation of Immortality) do, when *weighed in the Scale* against *Demonstrative Good*, (Pag. 32.) i. e. the Pleasures of Sense, and the Ties of Secular Interest? The most valuable *Reversion* is but of *small Regard*, when compared with *that which is actually before us*. To what purpose then should I lavish away my Time, my Labour, and my Substance, to build a Vessel, which, even while you offer me the *Plan* of it, you tell me will *founder in the first Storm*, if it be not saved by *Miracle*?”

And now, Sir, arise and plead the injured Cause of GOD and of *Virtue*, against all this Train
of

of wretched *Sophistry*; and I will venture to say, that the *Arguments*, and the *Distinctions*, by which you confute the *Atheist*, shall be *your own Answer*. You would not, for Shame, acknowledge that he reasoned justly, in a Speech like *this*, which I, or rather *yourself*, have put into his Mouth. You would not urge him, to throw up all Thoughts of the *Reasons* and *Evidences* of *Natural Religion*, and to wait “ till he be inspired *in a Moment* with an “ *irresistible Light from Heaven*, by which his *Faith* “ should be completed *in an Instant*, a perfect “ *Creed* produced *at once*, and made *self-evident* to “ the Mind, in a Way little different from *Intui-* “ *tion.*” (*Pag. 59.*) I charitably believe, you would think the Subject *too serious* for such Kind of *Jargon*, and forgetting your *Harangue* to your *Oxonian Friend*, you would gravely inculcate very different Principles.

You would, no Doubt, shew your *Antagonist*, that he talked in a very crude and indigested Manner, and *confounded Things*, which should by all Means be carefully *distinguished*, and indeed are very easily *distinguishable*.—You would then to be sure own, and urge, that *all Mankind* are *capable* of some *Reasoning*, unless they be *Lunatics* or *Ideots*, who are confessedly out of the present Question; and that the great *Proofs* of *Religion* are so *plain*, that *a few Words*, and a *little Time* and *Labour*, may *clear them* beyond all *reasonable Objections*.—You would remind him, that *common Sense* might teach him in general to *distinguish* between what is *essential*, and what is merely *circumstantial* in an Argument, and might find out a *Medium* between being exquisitely learned in the History of *Controversies* relating to the *Deity*, and utterly unacquainted with any *Reason* for *believing his Existence*.—You would tell him, that the great *Author of Nature*, having given him *some Hints* of his *Being* and *Perfections*, (which the very
H question-

58 *The Answer to them will confute the Author.*

questioning of them, or even the Denial, would prove he *in Fact* had,) might justly require, that he should seriously and candidly *weigh* at least the *most obvious Proofs*; which if he did, he would undoubtedly see *his Obligations* to *believe* and *practise* accordingly. And when he urged the *Inefficacy* of these Perswasions to *influence his Practice*, you would perhaps add, before you were well aware,—that if a *rational Creature* could commit such an *Outrage upon Reason*, as to rush on to *prohibited Gratifications*, in the apprehended Presence of GOD, and at the known Expence of his Favour, he must *charge* the fatal Consequence *on himself alone*; and might in the mean Time be ashamed to confess himself *so mean a Slave* to every irregular Propensity of Appetite and Passion, and to talk of *the Demonstrative Good* of those Baits, which he knew in his own Conscience to be the *Instruments of final Destruction*.

In short, Sir, not to swell *this Recapitulation*, into which I am thus accidentally fallen, to the Length *that you have yourself given*, (*Pag. 109,—111.*) I think you must *answer him* by the very *same Considerations*, which I urged in my *former Letter*, when replying to you, and by Consequence must *confute yourself*. And as one who knows the *Importance* of the Matter, and wishes nothing more sincerely than to see you extricated from these *Labyrinths of Sophistry and Error*, I do now beseech you, that you would enter into your own Conscience, while the Matter stands in this Point of Light, and ask yourself, how you could possibly on your own Principles *reply* to this *Enemy of Natural Religion*? I dare say, the Publick would be pleased to see, how you would manage the Debate. But if you could not *defend even Natural Religion* without *confuting yourself*, then consider how you will answer it to GOD and to the World, not openly to *renounce Tenets* that must be so utterly subversive of it,

You

Remark on the Author's concluding Prayer. 59

You are pleas'd, Sir, in one of your concluding Pages, (*pag.* 112.) to intimate your Purpose of offering up in Behalf of your young Friend " your most ardent *Prayers* at the Throne of Grace, " that GOD would illuminate and irradiate his " Mind with a perfect and thorough Conviction " of the Truth of his *holy Gospel*." * But if the *End* of your *Letter* be indeed, what I find every Body I converse with supposes it was, to overthrow what you here call " the *holy Gospel*," and presently after, " that Divine Law dictated by the *holy Spirit*;" I cannot forbear saying, that such a Speech as this would become an *Atheist* much better than a *Deist*. It is, in that Case, so notorious an *Insult* on the Majesty of GOD, and the Throne of his Grace, as one would imagine no Creature should dare to commit, who apprehended but a remote Possibility that he might at length be obliged to prostrate himself before it, and ask the Life of his Soul there. It would pain my Heart so much, to think you should be capable of carrying Impiety to such a Height, that I am sometimes ready rather to forget all that looks like *Infidelity* and *Profaneness* in what you had before written, and charitably to *hope*, tho' *against Hope*, and tho' it be perhaps at some Expence of my Character that I should mention it, that you are indeed a *devout*, tho' *irrational*, *Believer* of the *Gospel*, and that your Treatise is to be numbred amongst the Wonders which *Enthusiasm* has wrought, But whether you wrote this Passage *in Earnest* or *in Jest*, it is with all *Seriousness* I now assure you, that I pour out my ardent *Prayers* before the Throne of Grace *for you*; that by the secret Influences of the *Blessed Spirit* on your Heart, (to whose Agency no *Prejudices* are invincible) you may be led into a wiser and a happier *Way of Thinking* than you seem at present to entertain; and that GOD may not charge

charge to your Account *the Ruin of those Souls*, whom this unhappy *Pamphlet*, whatever was intended by it, has so palpable and so fatal a Tendency to destroy. Could what I have written, in either of these *Letters*, be at all subservient to the Accomplishment of *this Wish*, it would be one of the most sensible Pleasures which can ever reach the Heart of,

S I R,

Your faithful humble Servant,

Northampton,
Dec. 1. 1742.

P. DODDRIDGE.

P O S T S C R I P T.

It was not till I had ended this *Second Letter*, that I heard of the *Answer* you have received from a *young Gentleman* at *Oxford*. I have not yet been able to get a Sight of it; but if, as may very probably be the Case, we have both fallen on many of the *same Things*, (as several of the Particulars I have advanced are obvious to every attentive Reader,) I conclude there must nevertheless be *something peculiar* in each; and it is very probable also, that our *Letters* may fall into different Hands. Had I met with any satisfactory *Answer* before, I should not have engaged in the Controversy; but as it is, I shall think my Pains well requited, if you, Sir, or the *Publick* may receive any *Benefit* from what I have written.

F I N I S,

AN
ANSWER
TO A

Late Pamphlet,

INTITLED,

CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*
Argument, &c.

IN

THREE LETTERS to the AUTHOR.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.



LONDON:

Printed for M. FENNER, at the *Turk's Head* in *Grace-*
church-street; and J. HODGES, at the *Looking-Glass*
over-against *St. Magnus Church, London-Bridge.*

M DCC XLIII.



A T H I R D
L E T T E R
T O T H E
A U T H O R
O F

CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*
Argument, &c.

In which the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Influences*
of the Blessed SPIRIT on the Minds of *Christians*
is vindicated from the Misrepresentations of that
AUTHOR, and shewn to be perfectly consistent
with the Exercise of *Reason* in Religion.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

GOD is not the Author of Confusion. I Cor. xiv. 33.

Συ δε φηλοδοτας

φωλος ΝΟΕΡΟΥ. Synes. Hymn. III.

L O N D O N :

Printed for M. FENNER, at the *Turk's Head* in *Grace-*
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M DCC XLIII.

(3.)



A T H I R D
L E T T E R
T O T H E
A U T H O R

O F
CHRISTIANITY, *not founded on
Argument, &c.*

S I R,

W H E N I concluded my last *Letter* to you, I was not determin'd upon this *Third* Address: But I make it in Compliance with the Request of several of my Friends, who think, that in Order to do full Justice to the Work I have undertaken, I ought to consider your *Third Part*. This they the rather urge, as it may give me an Opportunity of vindicating an important *Doctrine* of *Scripture*, which some of the *Friends of Christianity* have unwarily represented in such a View, as to encourage its *Enemies* to endeavour to plant their Artillery against the *Gospel*, on that Ground, from whence, if there be due Care taken, it is most capable of being defended. I am the more willing to comply with this Request, because I find your ingenious Correspondent at *Oxford* (whose *Letter* to you has, I doubt not, given

4 *The Author's Assertion in his Third General,*
the World a great deal of Pleasure,) has modestly
omitted the Discussion of *this*, as well as of several
other Points, which I have examined at large in my
Two former Letters.

I proceed therefore directly to the Consideration
of what you have advanced in the *Third Part* of your
Book ; in which you undertake to shew, that *Chri-*
stianity cannot be *founded on Argument*, i. e. that we
cannot be obliged to exercise our *Reason* in disco-
vering its *Evidences*, or judging of its *Doctrines*, be-
cause God has prescribed *another*, and *very different*
Method of coming at the *Knowledge of Divine Truths* ;
which is, (as you represent it, in the 56th and fol-
lowing Pages,) the *immediate Operation of the Holy*
Spirit upon our Minds, infallibly dictating to us the
whole Scheme and System of them, in such a Man-
ner, as to leave nothing to be done by *ourselves*, but
merely to receive and assent to *Doctrines* seen by
their own Light, under the Influence of his Teach-
ings.

Now, here, Sir, had you separated some Things,
which you offer in Illustration and Proof of this
general Assertion, from the rest, I should have
been very ready to have acknowledged their *Truth*
and their *Moment*, and had it been necessary, (which
I am well aware it would not have been,) to have
join'd with you in the Defence of both ; as you
will easily see by what I am farther to offer, and
must indeed well perceive from what I have alrea-
dy written in this Controversy, even tho' you should
be ever so much a Stranger to my other Writings ;
in all which I am continually referring to the *Ne-*
cessity of Divine Influences on the Mind, to form it to
Knowledge and Holiness ; and in some of which, (par-
ticularly my *Seventh Sermon on Regeneration*,) I have
set my self to defend the Doctrine at large, in a
Manner which must certainly appear very sincere,
and will, I hope, be found thoroughly convincing

if admitted, must subvert Christianity. 5

to all, who will seriously weigh it, and will abide by *Scripture* as the *Standard* of their *Faith* *. But my Complaint is, that what you teach on this Head, tho' in many Places very true, and expressed with great Propriety, is intermingled and connected with other Assertions, which seem to me quite unscriptural, and extravagant; and which, if they were to be admitted, must necessarily end in the *Subversion of Christianity*. For all your Scheme centers in this, "that these *Influences* and *Assistances* of the *Spirit of God* are of such a Kind, as to contain an ample *Revelation* of the *whole System of Christianity*, to every particular Person who is the Subject of it; so as to supersede the Necessity of any *Rational Enquiry* into the Evidences or Contents of Religion; and in such a Manner as to place him above all Dependence on *Scripture*,

* Had I not observed many other Marks of *very great Haste* in good *Mr. Seagrave's* Pamphlet, in which he has undertaken to adjust Matters between us, long before he had heard me out, I should have been much surprized to see my self charged with representing the *Agency of the Spirit* as *only necessary to confirm Faith, and quicken Obedience*, and with intimating that *Saving Faith must of Course follow a Religious Education*. Surely, he is too honest, thus to *misquote my Words* with Design, or to say such Things, had he read with any Attention at all, I will not say, *my Sermons on Education*, (in which I strongly assert the contrary, as well as in *those on Regeneration*;) but even the *14th Page* of my *First Letter* on which he animadvert; in which I speak of the *Influences of Divine Grace* as necessary to the Success of the most pious and prudent Attempt which *Parents* can make: And in my *Second Letter*, published several Days before his Pamphlet, (*Pag. 50.*) I speak of it "as the *Office of the Spirit*, to enlighten and renew, to sanctify and strengthen, to cheer and guide the Children of *God* and Heirs of *Glory*." I believe this *Rashness* to have been the Effect of a *pious*, tho' in this Respect, *ill-govern'd Zeal*, and therefore I can easily excuse it; but my Respect to that Gentleman leads me to wish, that he may have *Patience*, as *Solomon* well expresses it, (*Prov. xviii. 13.*) *to hear a Matter before he answers it*, because I desire that every Thing in which he engages may be *Wisdom and Honour* to him.

" and,

6 *How he represents the Spirit's Influence.*

“ and, in one Word, to make him absolutely *infallible.*”

That the Reader may not imagine, I mistake your Meaning, and aggravate the Matter beyond due Bounds, I shall transcribe a few Passages of yours, in which it will plainly appear, that you carry the Matter to this extravagant Height. And whoever attentively considers the Connection of many of these Passages with the rest, will immediately find, that what is *most extravagant* in these *Assertions*, is so *essential* to your Scheme, that were these Passages to be moderated, the Mention of *this Doctrine* would be quite foreign to your Purpose.

While you plead for the *Reality* and *Necessity* of such an *Influence*, you call it, in the General, “ *A constant and particular Revelation, imparted separately, and supernaturally, to every Individual.*” (Pag. 112.) And elsewhere, (pag. 56.) you speak of the *Spirit*, as “ the great Dictator, and infallible Guide, who is the promised Oracle to attend Believers to the End of the World, to irradiate their Souls at once, as the All-sufficient Origin of Faith, in Opposition to the Aids and Advices of Reason.” This you call (pag. 58.) “ the Light of Inspiration, and infused Evidence, which is of immediate Influence, and operates, as in the Case of Saul,” (as if that were to be consider'd as a common Standard,) “ without Delay:” A Principle, “ which effects Conversion,” (you must, I suppose, mean, to the Belief of Christianity as a Speculative Truth) “ by an irresistible Light from Heaven, and flashes Conviction in a Moment; — producing,” as you express it, (pag. 59.) “ the most perfect and finish'd Creed at once,” — so as to be “ the Sum and Substance of all Argumentation, and” (whatever that sublime Expression may mean,) “ the very Spirit and Extract of all Convicting Power,
“ of

Christianity must be false, if this be true. 7

“ of a Nature, perhaps, but little differing from
“ *Intuition* it self;” — in Consequence of which
“ there is nothing in the *Suspicious Repositories* of
“ *Human Testimony*,” (in which, it is evident from
other Passages, you include *Scripture*,) “ that can
“ deserve the least Notice, or be thought worthy
“ of a Moment’s Attention on this Subject.” You
call it, (*pag. 60.*) “ *A present and standing Miracle*
“ of our own, in Consequence of which we stand
“ no longer in Need of any of the Credit of An-
“ cient Miracles.” You tell us, it produces “ such
“ *indelible Characters* stamp’d upon the Heart, as
“ no Misrepresentations can ever possibly intervene
“ to corrupt:” And say, “ that this *faithful Mo-*
“ *nitor and Guardian* has promised to continue this
“ Office *to the End of the World*, that we may not
“ be left liable *one Moment* to a *Possibility of Error*
“ *and Imposition.*” So that, (not to multiply Cita-
tions from many parallel Passages,) as you express
it, (*pag. 90.*) in as strong and determinate Terms as
can be imagined, “ *Actual Infallibility* is the only
“ Title whereon to ground any *plausible Claim* to our
“ *Discipleship.*”

Now, Sir, I seriously apprehend, that every in-
telligent Reader will immediately conclude, that
if *this Representation* of the Matter were indeed the
genuine Doctrine of *Christianity* itself, this *Third*
Part of your Treatise, separate from the *Two former*,
which I hope have been already sufficiently con-
futed, would alone be an unanswerable Demonstra-
tion, that *Christianity* was *false*. If this be its Lan-
guage, and these its Engagements, it is evidently
condemned out of its own Mouth, for surely all *Christi-*
ans are not in Fact *infallible*. Every *Error*, and every
Contradiction maintained by any of them, on one
Side the Question or the other, evinces this; unless
both Parts of a *Contradiction* could be *true*. You
must

8 *The gross Absurdity of such a Scheme.*

must therefore, on these Principles, reconcile *Error* and *Infallibility*, which it seems very difficult to do: Unless you should think fit to evade that Necessity by saying, that *they only* among all the Contending Parties are to be acknowledged for *Christians*, who are *free from Error*; from *any Error*, of any Kind, or any Degree, in any Question in which *Religion* is concerned. And this surely, in the Judgment of every candid and impartial Man, would be no other than acknowledging, that there is *no such Thing as a Christian* now in the World. And this would consequentially prove *Christianity* itself *false*, as it is confessedly a Part of the Scheme, that it was to be perpetuated to all Ages by a *Succession* of *faithful Disciples*; which, according to the whole of your Argument, it was the Design of *this extraordinary Agency of the Spirit* to secure.

The *Absurdity* of this is so flagrant, that I suppose you will rather chuse to say, that the Reason why *Christians* fall into *Error* is, because they do not follow this *infallible Guide*. But you must give me Leave to remind you, that you have cut yourself off from this Retreat, by asserting *this Light* to be *irresistible*, and to *flash Conviction in a Moment*; and by saying expressly, that it is an *indelible Character*, instamp'd (as it seems by what you elsewhere maintain,) *at our Baptism*, and *incapable of being corrupted*. You cannot surely imagine such a *Subterfuge* consistent with saying, (as in the Place quoted above,) “ that *actual Infallibility* is the *only Title* to “ the *Claim* of being a *Disciple*.” An *actual Infallibility*, liable for want of due Attention to be mistaken, is as *incoherent an Idea*, as that of a *Square Circle*, or a *Cylindrical Cone*. *Christianity* must appear *ridiculous*, if it taught *such a Doctrine*; and you will, I hope, Sir, examine your own Conscience, as to the *View* in which you *wished* it should appear, when you fathered such a Scheme upon it.

As

As I cannot remember ever to have seen *the Doctrine of the Spirit's Influence* set in so injurious a Light, and turned so visibly to the *Reproach* of that *Gospel*, to which, when duly explained, it is so distinguished a *Glory*, I shall therefore set myself to canvass this Point with you at large: And hope to shew, that *this Misrepresentation* of what the *Scripture* teaches on this Head is as *gross*, as the *Scheme* itself is *inconsistent* and *absurd*.

Now that this Point may be set in as clear and easy a Light as possible, I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That the *Scripture* may say many *very important Things* of the *Agency* and *Operation* of the *Spirit* on Mens Minds, without carrying it to such a *Height* as you suppose.

Secondly, That it says many Things concerning *these Influences*, and the *Persons* under them, utterly *inconsistent* with your *Scheme*. And,

Thirdly, That the *Passages* on which you build your *Hypothesis*, will none of them, if fairly interpreted, *support it*, and several of them are in themselves sufficient to *subvert* and *overtrow it*, tho' they have been unnaturally *pressed* into a contrary Service.

Most of what I have farther to offer in Reply to your *Letter*, will be comprehended under one or other of these *Heads*; But before I enter into the Discussion of them, I must take Leave to premise one *Preliminary*; which is, That the *Question* we are debating, is not by any Means to be decided by *Human Authority*. I am very sensible, Sir, that some eminent *Divines* of the *Roman Com-*
B *munion,*

10 *Not Human Authority, but Scripture, to decide it.*
munions, and of the *Established Church* at home, as well as among our *Nonconformists*, have, in the Zeal and Humility of their Hearts, *expressed themselves* in a Manner which *cannot be defended*, and thereby have given too plausible an Occasion for your dangerous and fatal *Misrepresentations*. Yet I am not aware, that any of them, even *Bishop Beveridge*, or the celebrated *Arch Bishop of Cambray* himself, ever ran your Lengths; and their other Writings shew, how utterly they would have *abhorred* some of the Consequences, which you have drawn, or suggested, from these Principles. But my Business is *with the Law, and with the Testimony*; and where these holy and excellent Men have not spoken according to that Rule, I cannot believe that *Celestial Light* to have been in them, or suppose their Minds under the Guidance of that *Spirit*, whom, tho' by ill-judged Methods, it was undoubtedly their sincere and affectionate Desire to glorify: Taking the Matter, therefore, as the *Scripture* represents it, it will be very easy to shew,

First, That the *Scripture* may say many *very high and important Things* concerning the *Agency and Operation* of the Blessed *Spirit* on the Hearts of Believers, without carrying it so far as you represent, or laying any just Foundation for the Arguments you would build on such Passages.—Many Things may be said of the *χαρισματα*, or the *Extraordinary Gifts and Powers* of the *Apostles and Primitive Christians*, which were so *peculiar* to that Age, that We have no personal Concern in them at all:—And many Things might be said of *those Operations* which were to *continue* in all Ages of the *Church*, which, tho' of great Moment and universal Concern, may fall *very far short* of what you assert, and must maintain, in Order to establish the Consequences you would connect with these Principles.

It

Many Things relate to Extraordinary Gifts. 11

It is of great Importance here to recollect, (tho' you have artfully contrived, if possible, to keep your Readers from such a View,) that many Things in *Scripture*, which relate to the *Operations* of the *Spirit* of God on the Mind, have a *Reference* to those *Extraordinary Gifts*, which were *peculiar* to the *Apostles*, and in which we of these later Ages have no farther Concern, than as the general Knowledge of them may establish our Regard to the *Writings* of those eminent *Servants of Christ*, who were wisely and graciously distinguished by their Divine Master, by such *Extraordinary Endowments*, to fit them for the *Extraordinary Office* they sustained: An *Office*, by which they were called out to *plant the Gospel*, amidst a thousand *Oppositions*, *Discouragements*, and *Dangers*, in *Countries* where it was before utterly *unknown*; and also to *draw up* those important and sacred *Records*, by which the *Knowledge* of it was, in the purest and most comprehensive Manner, to be *communicated* to the *remotest Ages* and *Nations*. It would be quite foreign from my Purpose, to enter into a nice Enumeration of their *peculiar Gifts* and *Powers*. It plainly appears congruous to the general Scheme of *Providence*, so far as we can judge of it, that Persons destined to such a Work should have some *uncommon Furniture* for it; not only beyond what could be expected by *Christians* in future Ages, when the *Gospel* was settled in the World, and many *ordinary Helps* provided, of which the *Church* was then destitute; but also beyond what could be pretended to by *private Christians*, or even by *subordinate Ministers*, in those early Days: And accordingly, modest and humble as the *Apostles* were, we frequently find them speaking in their Writings as the authorized *Embassadors of Christ*, who bore unequalled Credentials from him; to whose Decisions therefore, both

12 *These were peculiar to the Apostolick Age,*
Churches, and their Ministers were to submit, if they
would not incur the Guilt of despising their common
Lord.

It will on these Premises therefore be very readily granted to you, that *these holy Men* might, as you speak, “ have many *particular Revelations,* “ *separately and supernaturally* imparted to each ;” and that in such a Manner as, while they were receiving them, might so far supersede the Exercise of *Reason,* as to leave them only to observe, report, and record *the Oracles of GOD,* delivered to *them,* as of old to the *Prophets,* who *spake as they were* immediately moved, or borne on, by *the Holy Ghost* ^a, tho’ *all the Lord’s People* had no Warrant to expect to be so immediately instructed and favoured. Whatever were the peculiar Signification of *the Word of Wisdom,* and *the Word of Knowledge,* which were given to the *Apostles* by the *Spirit* ^b, (concerning which there has been, and perhaps still may be, much Debate,) it is put out of question by many evident Passages in the *New Testament,* that the *Apostles* were *divinely assisted* in the Interpretation of the *Sacred Oracles* of the *Old,* and were also favoured with such comprehensive Views of the whole *Christian Scheme,* as they could not have learnt by any *Human Methods* of Investigation ; or even by the *personal Instructions* they had received from *Christ* in the Days of his *Flesh,* who expressly referred them to *the Spirit* as the great *Teacher,* by whom they were to be instructed in many Things which, while he was with them, they *were not able to bear* ^c. These were such Things, as *Eye had not seen, nor Ear heard, neither had it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive them* ; and it is easy to imagine, that with respect to these, they might very properly say, in a Sense peculiar to themselves, *GOD hath revealed them unto*

us

^a 2 Pet. i. 21.

^b 1 Cor. xii. 8.

^c John xvi. 12.

and do not warrant the Author's Assertions. 13

us by his Spirit, which searcheth all Things, even the deep Things of GOD^d: For we have received the Spirit which is of GOD, that we might know the Things which are freely given us of GOD; which Things also we speak, in Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, so as to be judged by no Man, because we have the Mind of Christ^e.

These, Sir, were glorious *Apostolical Prerogatives*, in the highest Sense which the Words will bear; yet I cannot but observe, that, so far as we can judge by the *New Testament*, the Degree of *Inspiration* granted to *them* would not warrant some of those Expressions which you use, when describing *that* which you suppose *common to every Christian*. You will find it hard to prove, that *all this Conviction* was *flash'd* into their Souls *in a Moment*; that *a finish'd Creed* was produced in their Minds *at once*; and that *none of them* were *for a Moment* left liable to a *Possibility of Error*. I think the contrary is demonstrable, even with regard to *them*; tho' I doubt not their being at length *led into all necessary Truth*, and qualified to transmit it to us, without any Mixture or Alloy of Falsehood.

The *Scripture* may also, without establishing your peculiar Doctrines on this Head, farther teach, (as I am well satisfied it does,) that the *Holy Spirit* was to *continue with the Church* in all Ages, *even to the End of the World*; that it was to be his *stated Office* to *convince Men of Sin*, to direct their believing Regards to a *Saviour*, and to *glorify Christ*, by *taking of his Things*, and *shewing them*^f, not only to the *Apostles*, but to *succeeding Believers*. It may teach us, that, by his Influence, *GOD, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darknes, shines into our Hearts, to give the Knowledge of his Glory*, as reflected from
the

^d 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. ^e Ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. ^f John xvi. 14.

14 *Those Operations that continue in the Church,*
the Face of his Son^s; that he irradiates our *Under-*
standings, and sanctifies our *Affections*, so that in
 Consequence of this, when we commence cordial
 Believers, *we are born of the Spirit*. The whole
 Genius of *Scripture* may lead us, (as I am fully per-
 swaded it does,) chiefly to ascribe unto his gracious
Influences, our *Understanding* in Divine Things, as
 well as our *Disposition* to comply with the *Method of*
Salvation which the *Gospel* exhibits, and with the Pre-
 cepts it establishes. *All this* may be granted, may be
 asserted, may be contended for, without maintaining
 “ a constant and supernatural *Revelation*, to be
 “ imparted to every *Individual*, so as to be the *All-*
 “ *sufficient Origin of Faith*,” not only in *Neglect* of
 the Aids of *Reason*, but “ in *Opposition* to them.”
 There may be *all* that I have here supposed, and
 yet there may be no “ *irresistible Light*, to flash such
 “ a *Conviction in a Moment*, as to produce a *finish’d*
 “ *Creed at once* ;” so that from that illustrious *Æra* of
 Illumination, “ *Scripture* should be thought unwor-
 “ thy of a *Moment’s Attention*, and a *standing*
 “ *Miracle* produced, which should supersede our
 “ *Necessity* of attending to *those* which were an-
 “ ciently wrought in *Confirmation* of the *Gospel*.”
 Great Encouragement may be given, in the Use of
Rational Means, to hope for the continued *Influence*
 of the *Spirit* to improve our Knowledge ; tho’ we
 may be, not only for a *single Moment*, but during
every Moment of our Lives, liable to err in the Circum-
 stantials of Religion ; Nay, I see no Reason to
 ground the *Claim* of our *Discipleship*, upon any Pre-
 tence at all to *actual Infallibility*.

Prove, Sir, if it lies in your Power, the *neces-*
sary Connection between what I have here acknow-
 ledged, (I think, with most other *Christians* in all
 Ages,) and *that Part* of your *Scheme*, which I here
 deny

do not suppress the Use of Reason in Religion. 15
deny to be by any Means a Consequence from it. For you must easily see, that these *controverted Branches* of it are the only Foundation of *that Conclusion*, towards which you are all along driving: Since upon any other *Hypothesis*, but that which the extravagant Language I have so often repeated expresses, the humble and diligent Use of our own *Reason* in Matters of *Religion* is so far from being *superseded*; that on the other Hand, it will (as I shall presently shew more at large,) appear a most *necessary Duty*, in Consequence of this very *Promise* of *Divine Assistance*; if we would not turn it into an ungrateful Insult on those Natural Methods of Information, which *Providence* has given us, and to the Improvement of which the *Promises of Grace* were intended to animate us.

Having thus illustrated and confirmed this general Remark, which may be applied to a Multitude of *Texts* in the *New Testament*, which it will not by any Means be necessary particularly to enumerate in this Debate; I now proceed,

Secondly, To shew that the *Scripture* says many Things concerning the *Influences of the Spirit*, and the *Persons* under various Degrees of them, which are utterly *irreconcilable* with *your Representation* of them, as stated above.

And here the leading Thought is, that the *New Testament*, (of which we here especially speak,) frequently supposes, and expressly requires and institutes *the Use of such Means*, in Persons under the illuminating and sanctifying *Influences* of the *Spirit*, as you suppose to be entirely *superseded* by those *Influences*.

And for the Truth of this, I appeal to the whole Tenor of the *Sacred Writings*, in which you find
such

16 *The Scripture still requires the Use of Means,*
such Exhortations and Instructions given, and such Re-
gards required to them, as must certainly prove,
how far the Christians to whom they are directed,
were from such an Extent, and such an Infallibility
of Knowledge, as you suppose inseparably connected
with a Claim of Discipleship, and necessarily to re-
sult from the Teachings of their Divine Monitor.
But it would be tedious and useless to take up my
Reader's Time with Particulars: Let him read over
the *Epistles* to the *Corinthians* and *Galatians* in par-
ticular, with *your Principles* in his View, and judge
whether almost *every Chapter*, and in some Places
every Verse, does not strongly reclaim against them.
Indeed, according to your Representation of the
Matter, nothing could have been more *superfluous*,
than the very Institution of a *Stated Ministry* in the
Church. According to *St. Paul's* View of it, *this*
was a great and important *Design* of our Blessed
Redeemer, when after the Triumph of his *Ascension*
he distributed the Royal Donative of his *Spirit*, and
gave under its Influence, besides *Apostles, Prophets*
and Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers;— to perfect the
Saints for the Work of the Ministry, in Order to the
gradual Edification of the Body of Christ; till all should
come, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of
the Son of GOD, unto a perfect Man, even unto the
complete Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of
Christ, or to the State of a full-grown Christian^h.
Reconcile this, Sir, if you can, with *your Scheme* of
their *shooting up at once*, into the *full Knowledge* of
every Thing relating to *Religion*, into *actual Infal-*
libility, and such a glorious *Independency* on all the
Methods of *Human Instruction*.

The *Contrariety* of this to the whole Scheme and
Tenor of *Scripture* is so plain, that I shall add on
this

^h Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

and that, even in those that are Teachers. 17

this Head only *one Remark* farther, as a Specimen of many more which might fill a Volume: I mean, that *such Advices* are given even to those, who were appointed the *Teachers of others*, and consequently must be supposed to have a peculiar Share of *Divine and Supernatural Illumination*; whereas, on your *Hypothesis*, they would have been *unnecessary*, even to the *least and meanest* of their Charge. Thus, when *Paul* takes his Leave of the *Elders at Ephesus*, he solemnly commends them to the *Word of GOD's Grace*, as what was able to build them upⁱ. And in Terms yet less liable to Objection, when writing to *Timothy*, (tho', as an *Evangelist*, superior by far to the Class of *Ordinary Ministers*, and endowed with *Miraculous Gifts* nearly approaching those of the *Apostolick Office*,) he charges him, in his *First Epistle*, to give *Attendance to Reading*, and to *Meditate on the Divine Things* he had learnt^k: And yet more expressly in his *Second Epistle*, as *Timothy from a Child had known the Holy Scriptures*, which the *Apostle* testifies, were able to make him wise to *Salvation, thro' Faith in Christ Jesus*, he solemnly charges him to *continue in the Things which he had learned*^l; that is, no doubt, in the *Study of these Scriptures*, as well as of those *Instructions* he had received from *Paul*; each of which would, according to you, have been equally superseded. And then, instead of talking of "*Manuscript Authorities, and Paper Revelations, the suspicious Repositories of Human Testimony, in which to a Man illuminated from above, there could be nothing of Consequence enough to engage a Moment's Attention,*" (*your own* never to be forgotten *Words*,) the *Apostle* closes the Period with this remarkable Testimony; *All Scripture (or the whole Scripture) is given by Inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for DOCTRINE, as well as for Re-*
C *proof,*

ⁱ Acts xx. 32.

^k 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

^l 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

18 *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Spirit's Agency.*

proof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; that the Man of GOD, i. e. not only the Christian, but the Minister, the Evangelist, the Apostle, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works^m.

And thus, Sir, by the Review of *these Passages*, in Comparison with a Multitude more which might easily be added to them, we are taught the true *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Illuminating Influences of the Spirit*, (which are now chiefly in Question;) and I shall endeavour in a few Words to propose it, without the Assistance and Incumbrance of those *Technical Phrases*, which *Modern Divines* have introduced; and which, how profitable soever many of them may be, cannot I suppose seem absolutely necessary, to any who regard the *Scripture* as a complete Rule.

Now I apprehend the Substance of it to be this. *GOD* is the great *Father of Lights*, the *Author* of all the *Understanding* divided among the various Ranks of Created Beings; who, as he at first *formed the Minds of Angels and Men*, continues the *Exercise of their Intellectual Faculties*, and one way or another *communicates to them all the Knowledge* of every Kind, which they possess*. But whereas there were *certain Points*, which it was *necessary* for Men to know in this fallen State, in Order to their Recovery and final Happiness, which they could
not

^m 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

* In this View, *all our Knowledge* of every Kind may be called a *Revelation from GOD*, and be ascribed, as it is by *Elibu*, to the *Inspiration of the Almighty*: (Job xxxii. 8.) But the Words REVELATION and INSPIRATION are so generally used in a much stricter Sense, and with Reference to a miraculous *Divine Interposition* to communicate *Knowledge*, not attainable, or to be expected, in a Natural Way, that I think it *fittest* commonly to confine these Words to that more special and elevated Signification.

not possibly have discovered by the most accurate and intense Use of their Natural Faculties; GOD was pleased by his *Holy Spirit*, in a Manner which we cannot particularly explain, to *reveal them* to the *Apostles*; and after having furnished them with *sufficient Credentials*, to prove, to all impartial Enquirers, that the *extraordinary Doctrines* they taught, were not the *Reveries* of an heated Imagination, but indeed *Instructions from Heaven*, he directed these *Apostles*, by an *extraordinary Influence* on their Minds, to record the *History of such Facts*, and to write *such Instructions* to the *Churches* with whom they were immediately concerned, as should happily contain an exact, unaffected, and full Representation of the genuine *Christian Doctrine*, as well as of the *Manner* of its being *introduced* into the World, and *established* in it. This *grand Design* is so happily executed, that I doubt not, but every Person of common Capacity might, on Reading the *New Testament*, understand, by the mere Use of his *Natural Faculties*, what *the Institutions of Christ* are; as well as he might understand *those of Solon or Lycurgus*, by reading the Writings of *Xenophon, Plutarch*, or any other ancient Historian.

But I further apprehend, that as the *Gospel* was a *Scheme*, in which the Divine Glory and the Salvation of Men were so intimately concerned, the *Spirit of GOD*, which had in a more imperfect Degree operated on Mens Minds under the *Mosaick Dispensation*, to assist their *Understandings* in apprehending the Sense of the *Sacred Oracles*, and to affect their *Hearts* in Conformity to their practical Design, did, and does, in a yet more abundant Manner, interest himself in the Preservation and Efficacy of this *nobler Institution*, in the first Establishment of which he had so illustrious a Part.

There is Reason to think, that in the earliest Age *his Interposition*, even in those who were not

20 *His Agency at first was more sensible than now;* the *Original Depositaries* of this *Revelation*, might be more sensible and remarkable, than now. It seems very congruous to the Nature and Circumstances of Things, so far as we can judge of them, (for I take not upon me absolutely to assert it,) that among the other *miraculous Gifts* bestowed by the *Apostles* on the *first Ministers*, whom they settled in new formed *Churches*, some of them might immediately relate to the *Understanding* and *Memory* of the Persons so ordained; in Consequence of which they should, for the Benefit of the *Flocks* respectively *committed to their Care*, more readily *apprehend*, and more exactly *retain*, what the *Apostles* taught them, than in the mere Strength of their *Natural Faculties* they could have done.

Yet, as the *Spirit* was to *abide with the Church always*, and all true *Christians* are, agreeably to that Promise, represented as *born of the Spirit*, as *led by it*, and, by Virtue of its Operations, as *one with Christ*, it seems to me apparent, that to *confine his Operations* to the *miraculous Gifts* and *Powers* of those *early Ages*, is in a great Measure to *subvert Christianity*, or at least to rob it of its greatest Glory, and its Professors of their noblest Support and Encouragement. But, if we grant his *continued Influence* on the Minds of *Christians* in any Degree, as we cannot suppose it to be a blind and irrational Impulse, urging us to what we see no just Reason to pursue, it is very *analogous* to the Reason of Things to suppose, that he *operates* upon our *Understandings*, as well as on the *other Faculties* of the Soul.

We readily allow, that *the Manner of these Operations* cannot be clearly and fully express'd, as neither can we explain that of *Sensation* or *Memory*. But this Ignorance of the *particular Manner* does not, as one would imagine some apprehended, leave Men at Liberty to assert, at Random, whatever they please

yet be still acts, tho' not in a miraculous Way. 21

please about it. We may reasonably conclude, that it is not the *stated Office* of the *Divine Spirit* to reveal *New Doctrines*, which the *Scripture* does not teach; for if it were, *GOD* would undoubtedly, as when he formerly added to *prior Revelations* given to his *Church*, furnish the Persons to whom such Discoveries were made, with *proper Credentials* to authorize their Report: And if this cannot be proved, it ought not be asserted. Nor can we imagine it *his Office*, to reveal, by an *immediate Suggestion*, the *Doctrines* already delivered in *Scripture*, to those who may have daily Opportunities of learning them from thence. My *First Letter* proved, that there is in the Nature of Things *no Necessity* for this, since the *Truth of the Revelation* may to such be known without it; and to say, that where *that Truth* in general is known, there is a *Necessity* of such a *Revelation of particular Doctrines*, in Order to their being understood, is making a sad Compliment to the *written Word of God*, and is indeed making it quite an insignificant and useless Thing. If any *such Facts* can be produced, let the Evidence of them be laid before the World, and all due Regard shall be paid to them; but *in Theory* it seems *improbable*, because so plainly *unnecessary*, that *God* should do that in a *miraculous*, which he has so amply provided for in an *ordinary Way*. Of this at least I may be very confident, that he hath never given any Encouragement, either in the *Old Testament*, or the *New*, which should lead Men to expect and hope, that he should thus come, and *whisper in their Ear*, by *immediate Inspiration*, the *Truths and Doctrines* which he *speaks aloud in his Word*, and which they will neither read nor bear there. I think a Man might as well expect, that if, when entering on a *Course of Study*, he were to put out his own Eyes, *God* should, by *Miracle*, give him the compleat and orderly Idea of all the Characters

22' *There may be a real Operation of the Spirit,*
Characters of *Books*, which he might otherwise
have read *.

Far be it from me in the mean time to deny,
that GOD may, by an *extraordinary Agency*, render
Mens Faculties more capable of *Apprehension*, where
Divine Things are concerned, than they might
otherwise be. He may, no doubt, *do it*: He
may also awaken a *dormant Idea*, which lay neg-
lected in the Memory, with unusual Energy; he
may secretly attract the *more attentive Regard* of the
Mind to it; and give a Man both an *Inclination*,
and an *Ability* of tracing its various Relations,
with an unusual Attention, so that a Lustre before
quite unknown shall be (as it were) poured upon
it; while in the mean time *Prejudices*, which ren-
dered the Mind indisposed for the Search, or Ad-
mission and Acknowledgment of *Truth*, may be
suspended, and even by imperceptible Degrees *dis-*
sipated. In all these Particulars, there may be a
real Operation of the *Spirit of GOD* upon Mens
Minds, under which they may not themselves be
conscious of any Thing at all *extraordinary*, tho'
it be indeed so. You well know, Sir, that in the
Natural World, the *Divine Agency* accomplishes all
by *Second Causes*, and yet in such a Manner, that
hiding itself (as it were) behind them, it is seldom
taken Notice of: According to that fine Expression
of Mr. Thomson,

Alone HE works in all, yet HE alone
Seems not to work.—

As

* I must intreat the Reader to observe, that I do, in the
following *Paragraph*, speak chiefly of *such Influences of the*
Spirit, as I apprehend, in some Degree, *common* to all real and
sincere *Christians*; allowing there are Cases of a very peculiar
and distinguished Nature, in which GOD goes out of his usual
Methods, both of *Providence* and *Grace*, to reclaim, renew, and
enlighten some very great Sinners, in a Manner which no Man
living has any Warrant to expect. See my *Sermons on Rege-*
neration, Sermon. VIII. pag. 263, 264.

where we do not see any Thing extraordinary. 23

As *Christians* we must believe, that *Angels* are employed for our Preservation from Day to Day ; yet I suppose we generally pass through Life, without being able to fix on any one Circumstance concerning which we can assuredly say, “ This was “ the Effect of *Angelick Interposition.*” And thus may there be a *real Operation* of the *Holy Spirit* upon the Mind, to render it *more susceptible*, or *more tenacious* of Divine Knowledge ; while all seems to be done by the *Regular Exercise* of the *Human Faculties*, in Concurrence with which GOD works. And in Consequence of this, a *Divine Truth so learnt* may not, and will not, be considered, as an *immediate Revelation* from GOD, nor be assented to as on the Credit of *this Operation* ; but as on the Evidence of *Reason* or *Scripture*, which the Mind under this Guidance is enabled to discern.

And on this Head I desire it may be remembered, (for it is too evident to be disputed,) that our Obligation to attend to any *particular Notice*, which GOD has given us either of *Truth* or *Duty*, does not depend on its being a *Notice* given us in *this*, or *that distinguishing Way*, whether *Natural*, or *Supernatural* ; but upon that which is common to all Kind of *Notices* from GOD as such. Nor does our Obligation to follow any *good Inclination*, which arises in our Mind, depend upon its being *naturally* or *supernaturally* produced, but simply, or at least chiefly, upon the *Evidence* we have of its being *Good*. Nay, I will venture to say, (on this Foundation,) that it seems to me, that *extraordinary Divine Influences*, imparted in this *imperceptible Way*, are much more *suitable* to the Wisdom and Goodness of the adorable Being, from whom they come ; as they much better agree with a *State of Trial*, and with the general Scheme of conducting us by *Faith* rather than

24 *The Scripture ascribes it to the Spirit,*
than *Sight* : As it likewise does, that *Angels* and
Devils should be *invisible* to Human Eyes.

On the whole, therefore, comparing one Part of this Account with the other, when our Minds have been *deeply impressed* with *Divine Truths*, when we have been *awakened* diligently to attend to them, studying the *Scripture* not merely as Matter of Curiosity, but with a serious Desire of learning how the Favour of God is to be obtained ; when we have felt our Hearts strongly impressed with good Affections ; when we have been animated by an *inward Vigour*, much better felt than described, to vanquish strong *Temptations*, and with Patience and Resolution to discharge our *Duty* in the midst of Difficulty and Discouragement ; I think, the *whole Tenor of Scripture* directs us to ascribe this, not only to the *Goodness* of Providence, in making us *Rational Creatures*, and making us acquainted with the excellent *Revelation of Truth and Duty* contained in *Scripture* ; but also to the secret and gracious *Influences* of the *Holy Spirit* on our Hearts, in Concurrence with those other Advantages. And it seems to me quite trifling, to amuse our selves with nice *Speculations*, where *Nature ends*, and where *Grace begins*, or what *Specifick Difference* there is between the *Knowledge* we obtain from each, while their *Operation* is *united*. Should a Number of *Mechanicks*, to whom their Master had allowed *Two Candles* for their Work, instead of pursuing their Business, set themselves curiously to observe the *Difference* between their *Size* and *Materials*, (if such Difference there were ;) and in Consequence of those Observations to dispute, whether in the *Compound Light* of both they could *distinguish* the Rays of *each*, by any peculiar *Purity* and *Lustre* apprehended in the one, rather than the other ; we should certainly think them very *idly employed*,

and does not encourage nice Speculations. 25

ployed, and their Master would give them very little Thanks for so ill-judged a *Curiosity*. On the like Principle, I freely acknowledge, it has often grieved me to the Heart to observe, how many *Volumes of Polemical Divinity* have been written on *Questions*, which neither *need*, nor *admit Determination*, on this Topick, as well as others.

But it is much for the *Honour of Scripture*, that it meddles not with *these Niceties*. It lays down the *general Principles* I have mentioned: It exhorts Men to take all *proper Measures*, to obtain the *Knowledge of Divine Things*, by *Reading*, by *Meditation*, i. e. undoubtedly by the Exercise of their *Rational Faculties*, which it expresses by *being Men in Understanding*ⁿ; And it farther directs, that all these *Pursuits* should be undertaken, and carried on, in an humble Dependance on GOD, who *giveth Wisdom*, and *out of whose Mouth cometh Knowledge and Understanding*^o. He *begins the good Work in us*, he *carries it on until the Day of the Lord*^p, and *worketh in us both to will and to do*^q. Under these *Influences*, we ascribe unto GOD the Glory of every Intellectual, Moral, and Spiritual Attainment, humbling our selves before him, that these Attainments have been no greater; which they undoubtedly might have been, in Consequence of a more diligent Use of the Means and Opportunities, which he has afforded, and to the faithful Improvement of which he has given, and limited, his *Promises of farther Supernatural Assurances*; though I am very far from saying, they are imparted *only to such*, as might on *these Promises* have pleaded a Claim to them.

This, Sir, I really take to be the *Scripture-Doctrine of Divine Influence*, and particularly of the
D *Spirit's*

ⁿ 1 Cor. xiv. 20. ^o Prov. ii. 6. ^p Phil. i. 6. ^q Phil. ii. 13.

26 *The Author gives a different Account,*

Spirit's Office in Illuminating the Mind: But you easily saw that *this*, instead of establishing what you teach of throwing aside the *Exercise of Reason* in Religion, would utterly have overthrown it, and would (as I observed above,) have made the diligent Use of *that Reason*, in Concurrence with humble Prayer and the Use of *proper Means* of Information, *the only Way* in which we could warrantably have *expected* such enlightning and sanctifying Influences. You therefore have thought fit to give *another Representation* of the Matter, directly contrary to what I have stated above; and you have attempted to prove it by many remarkable Passages of the *New Testament*.

Now I really apprehend, and own, whatever you might intend by this Argumentation, that if *these Scriptures* are *rightly applied*, and will establish the Purpose for which you bring them, *Christianity is overthrown*; and all I have been saying, in this Part of my Letter, must prejudice, rather than support it: Since if *your Representations* are just, it teaches a *Doctrine*, not only *absurd in Theory*, and *false in Fact*, but also *self-contradictory*; and contrives to render *entirely vain* and *insignificant* all those *grand Preparations*, which it describes as made for teaching the *Gospel* in a *Natural Way*, and the prudent Use of which it so warmly inculcates, in a Multitude of other Passages. And therefore,

Thirdly, I shall consider in this View what *you* alledge from *Scripture* upon this Head; which I shall handle as an *Objection*, drawn from the *supposed absurd* and *contradictory Representation* of the *Doctrine* of the *Spirit's Influence* in certain *Passages* of it; and shew, that *those Texts* on which you build *your Hypothesis*, will none of them, if fairly interpreted, *support it*, and several of them are in themselves sufficient to *subvert* and *overthrow it*.

Now

Now here, Sir, it seems proper to observe to the Reader, that you have no where *marshalled your Arguments* on this Head; perhaps conscious, that they would make but an indifferent Figure, when professedly brought together. You chuse rather to boast, that they are many and great, than particularly to shew us *what they are*: And therefore after slightly mentioning *a few Texts* in your 56th Page, which I shall presently examine, you gallantly say, "It were endless to recount all the *innumerable Passages*, throughout the *whole Scripture*, "that concur in ascertaining this:" And then you intermingle the Mention of several *other Texts*, with the Course of your Declamation on this Subject; not canvassing the *Sense or Connection* of them, nor seeming to attend to any thing more than the *Sound*: For which in the 105th Page you make a general, and, I think, remarkable *Apology*. "That "in the Haste of your Zeal you may have laid "yourself open unguardedly enough, if the Thing "were to be examined according to the Rules of "strict Criticism: But that it is enough for your "Design, if the main Drift and Scope of your "Argument may be allowed to be, upon the whole, "maintained only with some tolerable Degree of "Propriety, so as to carry just the Face of some- "thing plausible and consistent."

Your young Friend, in his Reply, has touched upon this extraordinary Passage of yours, in so handsome a Manner, as to render it less necessary for me to insist upon it. I am very ready to make you all the Acknowledgments, which such a frank Confession of your own Uncertainty, on a Point which you have so often confidently asserted, can be supposed to merit. But really, Sir, I cannot agree with you, "that a Critical Punctuality is not at all "material to the Purpose in hand." If so despe-

28 *The Subject requires a Critical Exactness.*

rate a *Charge* be advanced against the *Gospel*, as that it teaches the *monstrous Doctrine*, which I have from *your own Letter* represented above, I am sure it *ought to be proved* in the most convincing Manner, with such a *Critical Punctuality* as shall make it apparent, not only that *some Passages* in it *may possibly* admit of such a Sense, but that *those* on which you lay the main Stress of your Argument, *cannot* with any tolerable Propriety *bear any other*. And if, when both the Interpretations were proposed, there were *some Degree of Probability* in Favour of *yours*, which I am persuaded will never in any one Instance be the Case ; it would remain farther to be examined, whether that Preponderancy of *Probability* were sufficient to counterballance *all the Arguments* in Favour of *Christianity*, which must otherwise be given up as absurd. But this *last Consideration*, which I mention chiefly on Account of its great Weight in every *Objection* against the *Gospel*, and because it seems to be so often forgot, need not be insisted upon here ; as I believe the Reader will easily perceive, when the Particulars are examined.

I have therefore given my self the Trouble of *collecting your Proofs*, as carefully as I can ; and when I have placed them in what I apprehend *their most natural Order*, I shall consider them particularly : And so much the rather, as *several* of the *Texts* must be acknowledged to have *some Difficulty* attending them, and I apprehend the *Examination of them* may be agreeable and useful to many of my Readers ; though it be so *unnecessary* with Regard to *your self*, who it seems meant nothing more, than to amuse the World with what might *carry just the Face of something plausible* : A Trial of Skill, which on so weighty a Subject might well have been spared, and which may perhaps on the Sequel be found, what *Attempts on Scripture* generally are, *rolling a Stone* which may
return

Account of the Proofs the Author has cited. 29
return upon the Mover, and may prove far more burthensome than was at first imagined.

Now here, that we may proceed in something of *Method*, I will range the *Texts* you have been pleased to produce, (either as containing your *Doctrine*, or as referring to it,) in such an *Order*, as I imagine may give the best *Varnish* to the *Conclusion* you would infer from them; at the same time mentioning the *Page* in which you cite them, that the *Reader* may be fully satisfied, they are such as you have thought fit to mention, how needless, and how unfortunate soever to your Cause, the *Mention* of some of them may appear.

In different Places therefore you think proper to remind us, that our *Lord* himself taught, that *no Man* could come unto him, unless it were given him by the *Father*; (pag. 57.) and promiseth the *Spirit*, who was to testify of him, and to lead his Followers into all *Truth*: (*Ibid.*) That accordingly the *Apostles* declare, that *Faith* is the *Gift* of *GOD*; (*ibid.*) and that he who believeth, hath the *Witness* in himself; (pag. 56.) which is so necessary in *Order* to *Faith*, that *no Man* can say that *Jesus* is the *Lord*, but by the *Holy Ghost*; (*ibid.*) for the *Natural Man* receiveth not the *Things* of the *Spirit* of *GOD*, for they are *Foolishness* unto him; neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned*, (pag. 103.) even by that *Spiritual Man*, who judges all *Things*, while he himself is judged of none: To him is made known that *Internal Word*, which is in his *Mouth*, and in his *Heart*, so that he need not say, *Who shall ascend into Heaven, or who shall descend into the Deep?* (pag. 79, 80.) In Reference to this therefore, he who believeth not, makes *GOD* a *Liar*. (Pag. 54.) Without granting this, you tell us, we can never account for the *Apostle's* pronouncing an *Anathema* on himself or an *Angel* from *Heaven*, who should preach a contrary *Doctrine*;
(pag. 11.)

30 *The Texts he alledges, not to his Purpose.*

(pag. 11.) or for his exhorting *Christians* to be *all of one Mind*, and to *think and speak the same Thing*, which without such an infallible universal Teacher would be quite impossible. (Pag. 65.) With Reference also to this Teaching we are exhorted to *become as little Children, that we may enter into the Kingdom of GOD*; which you seem to understand as a Command to lay aside *our Reason* wherever *Religion* is concerned: (Pag. 75.) In which Sense, it seems, *every high Thing*, i. e. every Argument, is to be *captivated to the Obedience of Christ*. (Pag. 84.) And finally, that if *Faith* were built upon any other Foundation, it would be utterly *absurd to pray for its Increase*; (pag. 10.) and that *Infant-Baptism*, here taken for granted to be a Divine Institution, would on any other Scheme be *unjustifiable and unintelligible*. (Pag. 69.) These, Sir, are (so far as I can find,) the *grand Foundations*, on which you build the Doctrine I am now opposing; but how precariously, I question not many will see from reading the *Enumeration* I have given in this Connection, which is *that* I would have chosen for them, if they had been in this View *my own Arguments*. Nevertheless, for the Reasons given above, we will discuss them a little more particularly.

That we may remember what we are about, I must intreat my Reader to recollect, that if the *Texts above* answer your Purpose, they must prove an *immediate Revelation* of the whole System of *Christianity* to every particular *Christian*, in such a Manner, as to make it unnecessary for him to enquire into any other Evidence from *Reason* or *Scripture*, to evince the *Truth* of the *Gospel* in general, or of any *Branch of it* which might be proposed to his Examination.

Having premised this, I hope to make it appear, on the Review, — that *some* of the *Texts* in Question do

do not refer to any *Revelation of Truth* at all ;—that *others* were *peculiar* to the *Apostles* ;—and that *no one* of them will *answer your Purpose* ; because there is none but what may be fairly interpreted, in an important and useful Sense, far short of what you would give it. I think, *every one of the Texts* will fall under one or another of these *Three Classes*. And here, as I aim not at puzzling the Cause, but at *stating the Truth* in a fair Light, I shall at once *allow you* every where, as much as I do in my Conscience think *ought to be allowed* to each Passage in Question ; though I am very well aware, (as you may perhaps learn from some other Hand,) that a great many Things might be said to render some Things *dubious*, which in the Course of the Argument I am ready to *grant you*.

When *our Lord* tells us, *No Man can come unto him, except it be given him of the Father* ; and the *Apostle* testifies, that *Faith is the Gift of GOD* ; it may indeed imply, that any one, who is brought cordially to *believe the Gospel*, and to *apply to Christ* for Salvation, according to the Scheme laid down in it, has Reason to ascribe it, not only to the *Divine Goodness* in granting him a *Revelation* of the great *Truths* of our Religion, but also to the *secret Influence* of *Divine Grace* upon his Heart ; so fixing his Attention to those Truths, and so affecting his Soul with them, as effectually to produce that *cordial Consent* to the Terms of the *Christian Covenant*, which is often in *Scripture* expressed by *believing*, or by *coming to Christ*. And how many Thousands will gladly acknowledge the *Reality* of *such an Influence* on their Minds, who pretend to no *immediate Revelation*, and who *embrace the Gospel*, because they see such *Rational Evidence* of it, as they apprehend

32 *The Spirit should testify of Christ.*

prehend sufficient to convince every impartial Enquirer; an *Evidence*, within the Reach of *all*, who live in a *Christian Country*; nay, actually attained by *many*, who, clearly as their *Understandings* are convinced, feel nothing of the *Efficacy* of these Truths on their *Hearts*!

Again, *Our Lord* pronounces, that *the Spirit should testify of him*^t: But you will please to recollect, that *this Promise* was immediately addressed to the *Apostles*; and that it would have had an important Meaning, if it had only referr'd to those *Miraculous Works*, by which the *Spirit* confirmed that glorious and convincing Testimony, which the *Apostles* bore to the Truth of the *Gospel*.—A *Promise* to them, to *guide them into all Truth*^u, might also be *peculiar* to the *extraordinary Office* which they sustain'd, in Order to the Execution of which it was *necessary*, that *these Things* should be *taught them* by an *immediate and personal Revelation*, which Thousands more might receive, without any *such Revelation*, from their Lips, or their Writings. So that, if such an *immediate Revelation* to every *Christian* in all Ages cannot be proved from some other Argument, it is certain that the Mention of *this Scripture* will prove nothing to the Purpose, and *St. Paul's Question*, *Are all Apostles*^w? will be a sufficient Reply to the Allegation of it on this Occasion.

It seems indeed much more to your Purpose, that the *Apostle John*, when writing to a Community of *Christians*, speaks in Language bearing some Resemblance to this of *our Lord*, to him and his Brethren in that illustrious Office; particularly where it is said, that *he who believes, hath the Witness in himself*^x; and that *they had an Unction from the Holy One, and knew all Things*^y. Yet will neither

^t John xv. 26. ^u John xvi. 13. ^w 1 Cor. xii. 29. ^x 1 John v. 10. ^y 1 John ii. 20.

The Believer has the Witness in himself. 33

ther of these Expressions, which are some of the strongest used in the whole *New Testament* with Reference to this Point, by any Means *answer the Purpose* for which you produce them.

The *Believer* may surely be said to *have the Witness within himself*, as his *personal Experience* of the *Power* of the *Gospel* on his *own Heart* affords him a noble *Internal Evidence* of its *Truth*. This is the Interpretation, which *Dr. Watts* has at large given of *this Text*, in his excellent *Sermons* upon it; and what I have said in my *First Letter* may, I hope, do something towards setting it in its just Light. And though I acknowledge, that it is a very possible Case, that *some Christians* may be favoured by *GOD* with *uncommon Operations* on their Souls, in Consequence of which the Evidence of their own sincere Piety may, in an extraordinary Manner, be clear'd up, and their Dejection and Distress of Spirit remov'd; yet I apprehend, *that* given above is the *only Sense* in which it can be *universally asserted* concerning *every Believer*, that *he has such a Witness within himself*: As if it had been said, The true *Christian*, in what ever State or Circumstance, *has a Work within*, which, were it to be attentively surveyed in its proper Light, would appear a glorious *Evidence* of the *Divine Authority* of the *Gospel*, by Means of which it was produced.—And as *this* is the *Work* of the *Spirit of GOD* upon the *Christian's Heart*, it is an *Unction from the Holy One*, in Consequence of which *he knows all Things*: Not *absolutely*, so as to be *omniscient*, which I think you do not your self pretend to be the Sense of the *Phrase*; but *he knows*, (according to that *lax Sense*, in which the Word *ALL* is frequently used,) whatever is absolutely *necessary for him to know*, in Order to his Salvation and Happiness, which is to him *all in all*: He *knows* many great and glorious Things, of which *all who reject Christianity* remain ignorant,
E and

34 *He has an Holy Unction, and knows all Things.*
 and which *those*, who, though they *profess it, yet do not cordially believe it*, know but in a very lifeless and unaffecting Manner, so that it hardly deserves to be called *Knowledge*. In Consequence of this, the happy Persons spoken of above *need not that any should teach them*^z, i. e. they need not to be taught over again *those great Lessons*, which to the Rest of the World are the most necessary of all others, and such as the *Apostle* had been laying down above, that *Jesus is the Christ*, and that *God hath promised us eternal Life in him*^a. Yet it was necessary, in the *ordinary Method* of Divine Proceeding, that, previous to *this Anointing*, they should be taught these Things by Human Methods of Instruction, as *St. Paul* argues; *How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a Preacher*^b? Nay, it is plain from other Passages in *this Epistle*, that the *Apostle John* thought *other Lessons* might be useful to them, though this *Unction of the Spirit* had been poured out upon them, and had effectually taught them *this*.

I now come to *that Text* of the *Apostle Paul*, which you mention immediately after laying down the *Proposition* of your *Third Part*, as if it were in so many Words a *Demonstration of your Doctrine*, and call it "one plain Word, by which it is fully set forth," that *no Man can say, Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*^c. But here, Sir, I suppose you will not maintain, that *this Text* means to assert, that it is *impossible* for any Man, without some special Assistance of the *Holy Ghost*, to utter these Words, *Jesus is the Messiah*; or even that it is *impossible*, without an *immediate Revelation* of the *Truth of Christianity*, to make an *hypocritical Profession* of the

^z : John ii. 27. ^a Ver. 22, 25. ^b Rom. x. 14. ^c : Cor. xii. 3.

None calls Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. 35
 the *Christian Faith*. Common Sense therefore, and common Justice will require, that they be taken in a *qualified Interpretation* of them. And I think, the Design and Meaning of them may best be fixed by *consulting the Context*: A Task, which in this, and every other Place, seems too great a Drudgery for such a sprightly and free Genius as yours; and yet, Sir, quite *necessary* to every Man, that thinks it worth his Care *not to speak at all Adventures* when he quotes *Scripture*, and especially (as one would imagine) *important*, where a *Text* is introduced with such a grand Parade.

The *Apostle*, in the *Chapter* referred to, is evidently discoursing on the Subject of *Spiritual Gifts*, or some *extraordinary Operations* of the *Holy Ghost* in the primitive Church, concerning which the State of Things at *Corinth* made it necessary that he should give some Directions. Now he lays down this as a *Preliminary*, that there was no Reason to apprehend, that *any but Christians* had any Room to pretend they were under *such Operations*; and on the other Hand, that *every true Christian*, whether he were, or were not *distinguished* by his *Miraculous Gifts*, had however *felt the Power and Operation* of the *Spirit of GOD* on his Heart. And this I take to be the general Sense of the *3d Verse*, on which you lay so great a Stress: “ *No Man*, to be sure, “ *speaking by the Spirit of GOD, calleth Jesus accursed*: The *Jews*, who pronounce their solemn “ *Anathema’s* upon *Christ*, and *blaspheme his Name*,” (to which this Phrase seems clearly to refer,) “ tho’ “ they may pretend to the *Spirit of GOD*, so often “ spoken of in their *Scriptures*, make a vain and “ impious Pretence to it: *And no Man can call* “ *Jesus Lord*, i. e. can really and cordially *acknowledge his Authority*, but by Virtue of the “ *Operation* of the *Holy Ghost* upon his Heart: So “ that some Reverence is due in this Respect

36 *The Righteousness of Faith speaks on this wise,*
 “ to every Christian, even though his Gifts should
 “ not be peculiarly bright; nay, though” (which
 for any Thing I can find might often be the Case,)
 “ he should have received none of those *Miracu-*
 “ *lous Gifts* at all, about which you *Corinthians* so
 “ eagerly contend.” In this easy View of the
 Passage, the *Remark* seems exceeding *pertinent*.
 But what imaginable *Connection* is there, between
 a *sanctifying Influence on the Heart*, productive of real
 Piety, and a *full Revelation of a perfect Creed at once*,
 or of any single Article before unknown, *with a*
Light little different from Intuition it self, and which
 renders the Assistance of *Reason and Scripture* quite
superfluous. The Manner in which the *Apostle* ad-
 dresses to the real *Christians at Corinth*, abundantly
 demonstrates, how far he was from supposing *that*
 to be the Case, and how far he would have been
 from allowing *such an Inference* from any Prin-
 ciple laid down by him, here, or elsewhere.

As little to your Purpose will you find that other
 boasted Passage of *St. Paul* in his *Epistle to the*
Romans, which you quote in your 79th Page, as if
 it were the very *Design* of the *Apostle* to establish
 your whole Notion and Doctrine in it. Accord-
 ingly you say, “ But the *Passage*, that most fully,
 “ and beyond all Possibility of Misconception,
 “ describes to us the true Nature of *Faith*, in
 “ manifest Opposition to that mistaken Notion of
 “ a *Rational One*, which some had it seems errone-
 “ ously entertained, is in the *Tenth Chapter* of the
 “ *Epistle to the Romans*, where the whole Question
 “ is discussed at large, and thus precisely determi-
 “ ned:” And then you quote the Words them-
 selves, which are these. *The Righteousness which is*
of Faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine Heart,
Who shall ascend into Heaven?—or who shall descend into
 the

Say not, Who shall ascend into Heaven? &c. 37
the Deep? — The Word is nigh thee, even in thy
Mouth, and in thine Heart, &c.^d

Now, Sir, you must pardon me, if I express my Surprise, that you should thus pompously quote a Passage, in which the *Clearness* of the *Scripture-Revelation* is asserted, to prove that it is attended with *such Obscurity*, that it is not to be expected, that any Man should understand it; otherwise than in Consequence of an *immediate Revelation*, i. e. by *Miracle*. I readily acknowledge, that the Passage is something difficult; but it seems to me so far from clearly *expressing your Doctrine*, that I do not see, how it can bear to be interpreted so, as in any Measure to give it the *least Countenance*.

You well know, Sir, that *these Words* are an *Allusion* to, and a *Quotation* from the *Old Testament*; where *Moses*, in his eloquent Manner, congratulates the People of *Israel* on their being favoured with so *clear* and so *full* a *Discovery* of the Will of GOD in his *written Law*; in Consequence of which there was no Need for them to say, *Who shall go up for us to Heaven?—or, who shall go over the Sea for us?—The Word is very nigh thee*, says this illustrious Legislator, *even in thy Mouth, and in thine Heart, that thou mayest do it*: It is easily understood, easily remembered, and on the whole, admirably fitted to impress and affect the Mind. In *Allusion* to this, the *Apostle*, with great Beauty and Propriety, tells the *Christians* to whom he wrote, that the *Revelation* of the *Gospel* by *Christ* was as *plain* and *evident*, as that of the *Law* by *Moses*: *The Righteousness which is of Faith* (i. e. the *Gospel*, which teacheth us the Way of *Justification by Faith*,) *speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above?) Or who shall descend into the Deep? (that is, to bring up*
Christ

^d Rom. x. 6, & seq. ^e Deut. xxx. 12, 13, 14.

38 *The Word is nigh thee, in thy Mouth and Heart.*

Christ again from the Dead?) As if he should have said, “ Had *Christ* never descended from Heaven, or
“ had he never risen again from the Depths of the
“ Earth in which he was buried, we might indeed
“ have been at a Loss to know the *Way of Salvation*, and might have been left, like the Rest of
“ the World, in a Thousand Doubts and Uncer-
“ tainties. But now, since *Christ* has descended from
“ Heaven to bring the Gospel, and has risen from the
“ Dead to confirm it, we well know the *Way* :
“ And blessed be God, it is very *easy* and *practica-*
“ *ble*, open to every one that shall receive the Gos-
“ pel, and very *nigh* him, in more Senses than
“ one, *in the Mouth, and in the Heart*. Let but *the*
“ *Mouth, and the Heart*, do their respective Parts,
“ the one cordially *believing in Christ*, and the other
“ courageously *confessing him*, in such a Manner as
“ to approve that inward Sincerity ; and *Salvation*
“ *may be obtained*, even though *the Law* hath been
“ *broken*, that awful *Law*, which, intelligible as it
“ was, did still rigorously insist upon it, that *the*
“ *Man* should exactly *do its Precepts*, who would
“ *hope to live by them*.” This, Sir, is the Affir-
tion, and Illustration of the *Apostle* ; and how
widely this differs from the View in which you have
introduced it, I am perswaded, that you and my
other Readers will easily see. They will, no
doubt, think the Turn you have given it, an
Instance of admirable Invention and dextrous Ad-
dress ; and as you seem not solicitous, that it should
be thought *solid*, I hope all Parties will be a-
greed.

Another of your *Texts*, which I would by no
means leave uncavassed, and which, at first Ap-
pearance, seems much more favourable to your
Cause than the former, though not so much glo-
ried

! Rom. x. 5.

Natural Man receives not Spiritual Things. 39

ried in, is that of *St. Paul* in his *first Epistle* to the *Corinthians*: *The Natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of GOD, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, &c.*^s. From hence you would infer, that it is only by an *immediate Inspiration* from the *Spirit*, that *Divine Truths* can be *known*, and consequently that *Reasoning* must be quite *superfluous* in such a Pursuit. I shall not here reply, as some have done, that *ψυχικος* signifies a Man who proceeds in his Religious Enquiries merely on Principles of *Natural Reason*; while *πνευμαλικος* signifies one who admits of a *Divine Revelation*, and allows Arguments deduced from its Authority. If this were to be granted as the Sense of these Two Words, the *Meaning* of the *Text* would be, that *Revelation* teaches some Things which *Reason* could never have discovered. This, I think, is the Sense *Dr. Clogget* gives of the Passage, in his laboured Explication of it: But I cannot acquiesce in it; because it will by no Means follow from hence, that *the Natural Man cannot receive them*, and they must be *Foolishness to him*: On the contrary, were a Man to *reason well*, he might in many Instances discover *Harmony, Beauty, and Wisdom*, in those *Doctrines, Schemes, and Facts*, which are known *only by Revelation*. I shall therefore grant, that by the *Natural Man* we are to understand, one who is sunk in the *Animal Life**; one, who under the Influence of those false Maxims, which the Corruption of Mankind has introduced into the World, is rendered

^s 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

* This, I think, the *Etymology* of the Word *ψυχικος* may well intimate; and the Use of it elsewhere may warrant the Explication. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 44, 46. *Jam.* iii. 15. and *Jude* ver. 19. in the two last of which Passages it is rendered *Sensual*.

40 *Spiritual Things are spiritually discerned.*

dered *Carnal*, and *Sensual*, and consequently attached to Views of Secular Interest, or Vain-Glory. Such Persons are indeed *unwilling* to admit of *such Truths* as the *Gospel* teaches, and therefore choose rather to object against its *Evidence*, than to *submit* to its *Instructions*. This the *Apostle* might well assert; and as the Counter-Part of the Thought might lead his Readers to reflect, that they who feel these Prejudices conquered in their Minds, and are brought to *discern* the Beauty and Glory of those *Truths* which the *Gospel* teaches, have Reason to ascribe it to the *Influence* of the *Divine Spirit* on their Hearts; or in other Words, to own, that *these Truths* (which were at first revealed to the *Apostles* by the *Spirit* of God, and therefore are called *his Things*;) are *spiritually discerned*. In Consequence of which *the happy Man*, almost like one restored to Sight among the Blind, *αὐακρῖναι παύλα*, *discerns all* the Objects with which he is surrounded, *while he himself* *π' ἑδενος ἀνακρῖνεται*, *is discerned by none* of them; but perhaps is proudly censured, by these prejudiced and bigotted Creatures, as a *mere Visionary*, for those Judgments which are most rationally formed, on Principles which every impartial Enquirer will understand. If this easy Interpretation of the Words be admitted, they will appear quite foreign to your Purpose, and applicable to Multitudes to whom no single Truth of *Christianity* was taught by *Miracle*, but who by *Divine Grace* were inclined to receive that *Gospel*, which the *Apostle* tells us, in the preceding *Verse*, he and his Brethren taught, *comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual*: A Care, which, whether it refers to the Manner of their Investigation, or to that of communicating the Sacred Knowledge, would be quite *unnecessary* on your *Hypothesis*. So unlucky for your Cause will *Criticism* and *Connection* be found, in this Instance, as well as the former.

That

He who believeth not, makes GOD a Lyar. 41

That he, who *disbelieves* the Gospel, *maketh* GOD a Lyar ^h, (i. e. rejects his Testimony as unworthy of Credit,) will be true, if GOD has borne any Testimony to the Gospel at all, which is, or might be known by such a Rejector of it; and will be no less the Case, where the *External Testimony* of Miracles is in Question, than if the *Inward Impression*, which you maintain, were to be granted. This Text therefore, by no Means determining how the Testimony is borne, can be of no Service to your Cause.—Nor will that Cause find a surer Refuge in those Words of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians; *Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach a different Gospel to you, let him be accursed* ⁱ. This is only a strong Way of saying, that the Gospel, which they had already been taught, was so assuredly true, that any one, who should presume to contradict it, far from being worthy of any Regard, would rather be worthy of a Curse; and that it would be an Argument of damnable Apostacy, in an Apostle, or even an Angel, to attempt to subvert it. Were this Passage to be taken in the most rigorous Sense that can be imagined, it would amount to no more than this; that the Evidence, which they had received of the Truth of Christianity, was greater than GOD would ever permit an Angel to bring against it, were it possible for one of those Celestial Spirits to revolt, and appear with a contrary Doctrine. And this is what we all believe, upon this general Principle, that GOD will never permit any Evil Spirit, (and such any Angel contradicting the Gospel would certainly be,) to work more and greater Miracles to overthrow Christianity, than have already been wrought to confirm it. Now this might have been true, even though all the

F Operations

^h 1 John v. 10. ⁱ Gal. i. 8.

42 *Christians should be all of one Mind,*

Operations of the *Spirit* had ceased in the remoter Ages of the Church, or though the Illumination of our Minds by his *immediate Influence* had been no Part of his Office.

But you triumph greatly in this Thought, that without such a *plenary Revelation* of the Truth, to every particular Person, by the *immediate Inspiration* of the *Holy Ghost*, it would be impossible that *all Men should be of one Mind*; which nevertheless the *Apostle prays* that *Christians* might be, and *exhorts* them to labour after. But I wonder, Sir, you should not see, that when he offers *this Petition* for them, or addresses them with *such an Exhortation*, he plainly supposes, they were not at present under such an *uniting Guidance*, in Consequence of which (as you express it,) they were preserved from the *least Possibility of Mistake*. So that, even on your own Principles, you must be obliged to admit of some *qualifying Interpretation*: And it so easily presents it self, that I think hardly any Writer but your self has missed it. *To be perfectly joined together in the same Mind, and the same Sentiment*, (as I think it is most natural to translate εν τη αυτη γνωμη^k;) *to have the same mutual Disposition, or Affection*, (το αυτο φρονειν εν αλληλοις, as it is elsewhere express'd^l, or εις αλληλους, as in the *Parallel Passage*^m;) plainly signifies *to cultivate Harmony, or Unanimity, or to maintain a Friendly Disposition towards each other*, notwithstanding some Diversity in their Taste, Opinion, or Customs. And that *this* is the Meaning of the Expression is evident, from what the *Apostle* elsewhere says, both to the *Corinthians*, and to the *Romans*, to whom these Exhortations are addressed; where he supposes, there would be a *Difference* in Opinion and Practice among them in some Things, and

^k 2 Cor. i. 10. ^l Rom. xv. 5. ^m Rom. xii. 16.

and think and speak the same Thing. 43

and yet urges them to *think favourably* of each other, and to *receive one another* ⁿ, as Christ had received them all, if sincere Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles; and how different soever their Apprehensions might be, as to the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness, the Expediency or Inexpediency, of some Practices which were in Question among them. And thus does the *Apostle* explain himself in that *Parallel Text* ^o, where, when he had so tenderly intreated them, by the *Consolation of Christ*, by the *Comfort of Love*, and by the *Communion of the Spirit*, that they should be like-minded, [*ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε*, that ye may be unanimous,] he adds, *having the same Love, being of one Accord*, *τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἐχούτες, συμψυχοί*, which two Phrases explain the former; as if he should have said, *Let your Souls be joined together in the same Love*: And then he adds, *τὸ ἐν ὁμοθυμίᾳ*, which if it be not a mere Repetition of the first Clause, *τὸ αὐτὸ φρονήτε*, be unanimous, may perhaps be rendered, *attend to and prosecute* (the *τὸ ἐν*) *the One Thing*, that great leading Concern of vital practical Religion, *the Service of GOD and the Salvation of the Soul*, which our Divine Master has recommended to us as *the One Thing needful*. How well this Interpretation suits the *Greek Word*, *φρονεῖν*, used in all these Places, you, Sir, if at all conversant with *Greek Writers*, cannot but know. And if you are a Stranger to them, which I would not suppose, I am sorry you have been misled by an *English Translation*, to fasten an *Absurdity* upon the *Sacred Writer*; as if he was childish enough to imagine, that *Intreaties* could bring People to think alike in disputed Points; and *this* without telling them, (which on your Supposition must be the Case,) what that *One Thing* was, in which they were to think alike. Whereas on our easy and obvious Interpretation

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ⁿ 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Rom. xv. 7. ^o Phil. ii. 1, 2.

44 *We must become as little Children,*

tation there needed no such Explication at all ; as the Exhortation referred to a *Charitable Temper*, recommended in a Variety of strong Expressions, and not to this or that particular Sentiment. And, permit me to say, though by way of Digression, Would to GOD that *these Texts* were rightly understood by *Christians* in general ; and that such a Divine Principle of *mutual Love*, in Consequence of our *Union in Christ*, might prevail more, where we cannot in your Sense be of one Mind, nor unite in one External Form, whether of Worship, or Discipline ! I would hope, the *Attacks* made on common *Christianity* are in some Measure leading us to this : And I earnestly pray, that Infinite Wisdom may over-rule *that Evil*, to the Production of *so great a Good*.

The only *Scriptures* in the *Catalogue* which I gave above, which remain yet unhandled, are those which relate to our *becoming as little Children*, that *we may enter into the Kingdom of GOD* ^p, and to the *captivating every Thought to the Obedience of Christ* ^q. The former of these Passages stands more immediately opposed to ambitious Views of *worldly Greatness*, than to an overweening Opinion of *our own Understandings* ; tho' I readily acknowledge, that according to the Genius of *our Lord's* teaching in general, it may well be considered as a Warning against the latter, to which the *Text* in *Corinthians* does no doubt relate. But what can you infer from hence, to support the Peculiarities of *your Doctrine* ? We readily grant you, that *such Texts* remind us, of what indeed *Reason* it self would teach, if impartially consulted, that when we have discovered the *Evidence* of a *Divine Revelation*, which the Natural Weakness of our Minds might engage

^p Mat. xviii. 3. ^q 2 Cor. x. 5.

and every Thought be captivated to Christ. 45

engage us to wish, and to enquire after, we are teachably to *submit* to its Instructions. We are to be sensible, that *our own Understandings*, when compared with the *Supream Intelligence*, are infinitely less than *that of a little Child*, when compared with *ours*. We are therefore humbly and quietly to *sit down*, as it were, *at the Feet* of the *Divine Teacher*; and though several *plausible Objections* may arise in our Minds, and many Things taught may be *inconsistent* with our preconceived *Prejudices*, and with what through their Influence we should have expected, we are to suffer *those Prejudices* to be overruled by so high an Authority, and to acquiesce in this, that *the Lord has said it*: And this is as really *our Duty*, when he is speaking to us by *his Messengers*, as it was *theirs* when he was speaking *immediately* to them. So that you can never infer from hence a *personal*, and much less a *complete and instantaneous Inspiration*, till you have proved, either that I can never be assured that *God speaks by another*, or that if I am, I may *disregard it*, and dispute against it. The *latter* of which is so notoriously *absurd*, that I never heard it seriously maintained; and the *former* has been a thousand Times *confuted* by those who have written in Defence of *Christianity*, and so lately in particular by those who have *answered* that unhappy Creature who called himself *the Moral Philosopher*, that I need say nothing of it here, especially after what I have written in my *former Letters*.

But I cannot dismiss the Head, without reminding you of one important *Scripture*, which illustrates the Explication I have given of those last mentioned, with a beautiful Variety of most proper Expression. I mean *that* in the *first Epistle* of *Peter*, where the *Apostle* exhorts *Christians*, that *laying aside all Malignity, and Debate, and Hypocrisy, and Envy,*
and

46 *Christians to be like new-born Babes,*

and Calumny, (so common among some who call themselves *Christians*, and so often exercised against the most faithful and zealous *Ministers of the Gospel*,) they should like new-born Babes desire (as we render it,) *the sincere Milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby* †. It is in the *Original*, το λογικον αδολον γαλα, *the rational fraudless Milk*: Which is as if he had said, “ The *Instruction* we give to those of you, “ who are yet but *little Children in Christianity*, is “ *sincere and unadulterated*, as *Milk* that flows *immediately* from the Breast of the Mother into the “ Mouth of the Infant; and if you will exercise “ your *Reason* honestly and wisely, you may easily “ see, how excellent and useful *our Doctrine* and “ *Precepts* are. Come then, with the Gentleness “ and Simplicity of *little Children*, and receive “ them; while we are ready, with all the Tender- “ ness of an affectionate Mother for her Suckling, “ to impart them to you; *to impart, not only the “ Gospel of GOD, but, if it were possible, even our “ own Souls also, because you are dear unto us* †.”

This is indeed, according to the wise and affectionate Expression of *St. Paul*, to be at once in *Malice Children, and in Understanding Men* †. For I can think of nothing so *Rational*, as diligently to *examine* the Credentials of any Thing offered us as a *Message from GOD*, and then humbly to *submit* to it without cavilling and disputing, when we are satisfied that it wears the Stamp of his Authority. Whereas to set at naught all the *Internal and External Evidence* of *Christianity* so often represented, insisting on it as the *absolute Condition* of our *believing*, that it be *immediately revealed* to us from Heaven by *miraculous, perfect, and irresistible Inspiration*, is so far from looking like this *Infant-Simplicity*, that it seems much more to favour of that

† 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. † 1 Thess. ii. 9. † 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

Other Scriptures occasionally vindicated. 47

that *Malignity* and *Haughtiness of Temper*, which such Passages as these were intended to guard us against. So *unbappy* have you generally been, from first to last, in the *Choice* of those *Scriptures* by which you would *just add some Face of Probability* to a *Notion* in it self *so absurd*, as that which you have advanced concerning the *Illumination of the Spirit*.

There are several *other Scriptures*, Sir, which, in the Course of your Harangue, you have *occasionally* touched upon; as if you thought they afforded some Countenance to *that Notion*: But the Inference is so precarious, that one would really imagine, you mentioned them only with an Intent to make *your Pamphlet* as rich as possible in such Kind of *Burlesque*. I am sure you will acknowledge, that *those* I have already canvassed are the *Strength of your Cause*. However, for the *Vindication* of the *others* from *that Injury* you have offered them, I shall touch here (by way of *Digression*;) on two or three *Passages of Scripture*, which you, Sir, seem to have brought in merely for the Sake of *exposing them to Contempt*: A *Contempt*, of which I think they will appear by no Means worthy, and consequently which may fall where it was least intended.

In your *66th Page* you refer to what is said of the *Samaritans* ^u, and tell us “ that it is recorded, “ *Many believed in Christ readily for the Saying of the “ Woman.*” And then you add, with great Triumph, “ A notable Foundation truly for Confidence “ and Conviction, and perhaps Martyrdom, &c.” Now, Sir, it is hard to imagine, for what Purpose *this Reflection* could be introduced, unless it were to give a Specimen of *your Good-will* to the *Scripture*:
It

^u John iv. 39.

48 *Many believe on the Saying of the Woman.*

It seems in effect telling the World, that you think *St. John* has assigned a very ridiculous Reason for *their Faith*, and consequently was a despicable Writer, in this Instance at least. I shall not insist on your quoting the *Text* with the Addition of the Word *readily*, which is perhaps in *Italicks* by a Mistake of the Printer. But I desire it may be remembered, that we cannot infer from this Expression, that these *Samaritans* were brought to a *true and saving Faith in Christ*, so as to *continue in his Word*, and approve themselves *his Disciples indeed*; which you artfully take for granted, in your Manner of putting the Case. You will find little Reason confidently to infer this, from its being said *they believed in him*, if you recollect, that the *Evangelist*, but a few Paragraphs before, (i. e. in the Conclusion of his *Second Chapter*;) had spoken of *many who believed in Christ*, to whom *he would not commit himself, because he knew what was in Man*^w; i. e. he knew that *their Faith* was not resolute and sincere, nor *they* Persons on whose Steadiness and Fidelity he could depend. So it is very possible, that some of these *Samaritans*, knowing *the Woman*, might from *her Report* learn to conceive of *Christ* as an *extraordinary Person*, from whom therefore they entertained some great Expectation; though they might not have the Resolution to *follow him fully*, as you suppose they would of Course do, even to *Martyrdom*. Indeed when *Christ* was *come into their City*, and had discoursed among them, we are told, that *many more believed, because of his own Word*; and they declare, that *now they believed, not because of her Saying, but because they had heard him themselves*^x; which intimates, that they looked on *her Testimony* as a very small Matter, when compared with the Satisfaction which their *personal Converse with Christ* had

^w John ii. 24, 25. ^x John iv. 41, 42.

The Disciples slow of Heart to believe. 49

had given them. And if any of the Persons, who at first declared their Regard to *Christ* on the *Testimony of the Woman*, could afterwards be so regardless of him, as *not to give him the Hearing*, though *he abode two Days in their City*; it was surely a very *bad Specimen* of that *Faith and Zeal*, which you think would have engaged them to *lay down their Lives* in his Cause; as it would plainly shew, that they apprehended themselves very little concerned with him, how extraordinary a Person soever he might be.

Presently after you mention *another Text*, as it seems much with the same pious Design, namely, that in which *our Lord* upbraids the *Two Disciples* on the *Way to Emmaus*, saying, *Oh Fools, and slow of Heart to believe! &c.* And then you add, “ Can any one imagine, all this was merely because a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought a thorough Conviction?— Is it to be believed, that God would reproach any of his Creatures with a *defective Intellect*, when he was pleased to give them no better?” We have here, Sir, a Complication of *Mistakes*: The *one* (as in a former Instance,) founded upon the Impropriety of *our Translation*, in rendering *αἰεῖνοι*, *Fools*, which (as I have elsewhere observed,*) ought to be *translated*, in a softer Manner, *thoughtless or inconsiderate Creatures*; which contains *no Reflection* at all on the *Natural Defect* of their *Intellect*, but on their *culpable Neglect* of using the *Rational Powers* which they possessed. I cannot forbear adding, that if the *Miraculous Illumination*, which you suppose referred to, had been so *irresistible and instantaneous*, as you tell us it was, there would have been *no Room* for any such *Reflection*, and consequently the *Text*

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† Luke xxiv. 25.

* *Family Expos.* Vol. ii. p. 618. Note (e).

50 *Two other Passages considered,*

would be left quite defenceless, which on the common Interpretation admits of so easy a Solution.— There is *another Error* in supposing, as you do, that the Ground of this gentle Reprehension was only, “ that a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought “ a thorough Conviction.*” If you mean by a *Narrative of four Hours*, our Lord’s Discourse with them as they were walking to *Emmaus*, it is unlucky indeed. For not to say, *how many Hours* this Conversation might employ, which is not very material; it is certain, *this Reproof* was *previous* to the principal Part of *this Conversation*, as you will easily see in the Passage it self, and referred to the Opportunities they had enjoyed for *Months* and *Years* before, of acquainting themselves with the *Prophetick Writings*; which if they had diligently and impartially done, they would have judged it *no incredible or improbable Report*, which they had received from the *Women* who had *been at the Sepulchre*, and affirmed that *Jesus was risen from the Dead*.

I shall take Notice but of *Two Passages* more, which you have in like Manner *disguised*, that you might the more easily *expose* them. These are what you introduce in *Pag. 78.* where you say, “ That the “ Scripture-Test and Standard for finding out “ the Spirits of Truth is no more than this; “ *Hereby shall ye know them: Every one that confesseth that Christ is come in the Flesh, is of GOD.* “ Now (say you,) this is evidently what Philosophers “ call *Arguing in a Circle*, and *begging the Question* ;”
(which

* I find, since *this Letter* was gone to the Press, the *Author* is so conscious to himself, how little Ground there was for *this Reflection*, as to alter the Passage in his *Second Edition*. But as he has not acknowledged any *Mistake*, I did not think it needful to recall my Papers, and shall leave the *Animadversion* as it stands for those, who may have only seen the *same Edition* I made use of in writing these Remarks.

(which, by the way, are not quite *synonymous Terms* :)
“ But in *Faith* we see it is a necessary Preliminary ;
“ *He that cometh to Christ, must believe that he is.*”
—As to the *latter Part* of this Sentence, every body will perceive, that, however dignified by *Italicks*, it is a *Scripture of your own making*. It is indeed said in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, that *he who cometh to GOD, must believe that he is*”. The Sense of which is plainly this, “ that a Persuasion of “ the *Being of a GOD* must be the *Foundation* of all “ *Rational Religion*, and particularly of all *Devotional Addresses.*” And how a Person of your Sense could think of representing this as a *Circular Argument*, it is almost impossible to imagine ; unless it were merely to humour the *Character* you had assumed, of a *Christian* whose *rapturous* and *enthusiastical Divinity* might transport him into an entire *Forgetfulness* of his *Logick*, and perhaps teach him to reckon *that Forgetfulness* among the *special Gifts of the Spirit*, which he imagined he had received ?
—But as to the *former*, or to speak more properly, the *only Text of Scripture* which you have here repeated, (for the *other* is merely *burlesqued*,) I mean *that in John*”; Archbishop *Tillotson* might long since have furnished you with an *Explication*, which sets it above this *Cavil*, which I confess, from the mere *Sound of the Words*, might easily present it self to the *Mind of a Superficial Reader*. He justly observes, (if I remember his *Interpretation* right,) that *this Epistle* was written, when *Christianity* had been for a considerable *Time* settled in the *World* ; and that it might now be considered as a *Test of Doctrines*, sufficiently confirmed by a *Train of most illustrious Miracles*, and a *Variety of other Evidence*. In Consequence of this, a Person, presuming to teach by any *Spirit*, *that Jesus was not come in the Flesh*, might

52 *A Reply to the Author's Argument*

as reasonably be *rejected* by *Christians*, as a *pretended Prophet* among the *Jews*, who, upon the Credit of a *Dream*, or a *Vision*, should attempt to draw them to *Idolatry*. The *Evidence* attending the *Mosaic Religion* was so vastly *superior to that*, which could be supposed to arise from any *pretended Dream, Vision, or Sign*, that he might be justly and reasonably *rejected* without looking into his *Credentials*. But will this, Sir, at all prove, that *these Persons* to whom the *Apostle* addresses, *received Christianity* at first *without any Evidence* at all; laying it down as a first Principle, that *it was true*, and (resolving nevertheless to *reason* a little,) inferring from thence *it was true*, and roundly concluding, *It is Divine, because it is Divine?* This, Sir, is your candid Representation of the Matter: But I would hope, few Readers *Heads* are weak enough, even after your *Whirl of Words*, to be *turned round* in this *imaginary Circle*.

But to return from this *Digression*, I shall proceed now to examine the *only Two Arguments* which I remember on the Head I have been speaking to, that are *yet unanswered*: I mean, *that* from our being *required to pray for the Increase of our Faith*, and *that* which you draw from *Infant-Baptism*.

I readily grant you, (without cavilling at the Argument as drawn from a particular *Scripture*,) that it is our Duty to *pray that our Faith may be increased*: But I think *no Argument* can be drawn from hence, to prove that it is *not to be promoted by Rational Methods*; any more than we can argue, that *Virtue* is not to be *rationaly cultivated*, because we are to *pray for its Growth* in our Souls. What I have already said of God's operating upon us as *Rational Creatures*, and in Concurrence with the *Exercise of our own Faculties*, when compared with what

what I have said in my *Second Letter*, concerning the *Nature of true Faith*, is an abundant Solution of this Objection. *Reasonably* may we *desire*, that God would awaken our Minds to Diligence in *searching after Truth*; that he would present the *Evidence of it* before us in a clear and convincing Light; that he would guard our Hearts from those corrupt *Prejudices* which might obstruct its Entrance into them; and that he would *remind us*, from Time to Time, of those great *Religious Truths* which we do believe, with such *Spirit and Energy*, that our Temper of Life may, in a suitable Manner, be *influenced* by the realizing Persuasion. In *such a Prayer*, methinks, every *virtuous Deist* must join; as I firmly believe, that would Men heartily join in it, and act accordingly, they would soon cease to be *Deists* in the *Negative Sense* of the Word. And in Proportion to the Degree in which we see *evident Reason* to believe the *Truth of Christianity*, we may *reasonably pray*, that God, by the *Influences* of his *Holy Spirit* on our Minds, would give us more comprehensive Views of its *Evidence*, and would impress a more lively Sense of its great *Principles* on our Hearts; that our *Faith* may not be a *cold Assent*, but *powerful* in the Production of its genuine Fruits.

It is, on the other Hand, very true, that a Man, who does not see *Reason* to believe the *Gospel* to be a *Divine Revelation*, cannot *rationaly pray* to be confirmed in that Belief, or even to be brought to it; but it is evident, that whatever Rule the *Scripture* gives on this Head, it gives to those who profess to admit its *Divine Authority*. And a Search into *Rational Evidence* is so far from being *inconsistent* with *such a Prayer*, that where Doubts and Difficulties arise in the Mind, which, though they do not entirely destroy the Assent, introduce Perplexity, *such Enquiry* is the wisest Method we can take

54 *His Argument from Infant-Baptism*

take to secure an *Answer* to our *Prayers*; provided they be reverently, prudently, and candidly made. But this rather belongs to the Subject of my *First Letter*. What I have just-now said may be sufficient to shew, that the *Scripture*, if it encourages us to *pray for the Increase of Faith*, (which I readily allow that it does,) gives us no Room at all to expect any *New Revelation* in Answer to *those Prayers*, which is the only View in which the Mention of them could be material to your Cause.

I shall conclude this Head with asking you seriously, whether you think *Simplicius* desired or expected an *immediate Revelation*, like that which you describe, when he *prays*, “ that GOD would accurately rectify the *Reason* which he has given us, and remove the Mist that hangs upon our *Understandings*, that we may discern Things *Human* and *Divine*! *” If you think *such a Prayer* as this *consistent* with the Use of *Reason*, which he desires might be *purified* and *guided*, you will easily see, that we may on the very same Principle *pray for the Increase of Faith*, without any of those *Enthusiastical Apprehensions*, which you represent as *essential to Christianity*.

There yet remains to be considered the Argument you draw from *Infant-Baptism*, which you apprehend would be very *absurd*, if it were not supposed to be attended with such a *Communication of the Spirit*, as that which is now in Debate between us. “ Can a Man,” say you, “ be *baptized into a rational Religion*?” (by which I suppose you mean,

* Ικέλευω σε, Δεσπόσα, — συμπραξαι ως αυλοκινήσις ημιν — προς διορθωσιν ακριβη τε εν ημιν λογη, — και αφελειν τελευας την αχλυ των ψυχικων ημων ομμάτων, οφρα γνωσκομεν ευ — η μιν Θεων, ηδε και ανδρα. *Simplic. Comment. ad fin.*

is built on a wrong Foundation. 59

mean, Can *that Religion* be rational, of which *Infant-Baptism* is a Part?) “Where is *Reason* concerned, when *Babes* accept the Terms of Salvation “by *Deputy*, and are entitled to all the Privileges “of the most extensive *Faith* by *another’s Act*? “By the *Baptismal Ceremony* they commence *true* “Believers at once, and are made *Heirs of Heaven*, “you know, by the *Faith* of their *Bonds-men*.” (Pag. 9.) And to the same Purpose, in your 69th Page, “The Merits of the most *finished Conviction* “are already theirs by *Imputation*, &c.”—

Now here, Sir, I am obliged to say, that if there be any *Form of Baptism* in the *Christian World*, which justifies such Inferences, and such a Manner of speaking, I am extremely sorry for it. But I am very confident, the *Scripture* teaches nothing of this Kind; and it is by *that*, and not by the *Rubrick* of any particular *Church*, whether *Popish* or *Protestant*, that the Merits of this Cause are to be tried.

I cannot see, how any *Sponsor*, whether he be, or be not a *Parent*, can pretend to *answer for a Child*, that he shall *believe*, or *obey* the *Gospel*: Nor does the *bringing Children to Baptism*, by any Means imply it. What Reason we have to conclude *Infant-Baptism* a Rite of *Divine Institution*, I shall not now enquire. It is enough if I shew, that admitting it to be so, (which I really think it is very reasonable that we should admit,) it by no Means implies this absurd Consequence. *Other Ends* might be answered by it, valuable enough to justify the Wisdom of the *Ordinance*: As for Instance, Hereby *Parents* may give a publick Token of their *Faith* in *Christianity*, and their consequent *Desire* that their *Children* may partake of its Benefits, and answer its Demands: Hereby they may solemnly declare their *Resolution* to *train them up* in the Institutions of our Blessed Master, and their *Resignation*
of

56 *His Design, to expose Infant-Baptism.*

of them to the Disposal of Divine Providence, if God should see fit early to remove them: *This* also may remain, throughout all Generations, as a *Memorial* of the *Tenderness* which *our Lord* shewed to *little Children*, and of the *Perpetuity* of that *Covenant*, the Efficacy of which reaches from one Generation to another: And to add no more, it may lay a *Foundation* for affectionate *Addresses* to the *Children* afterwards, as being already *listed under the Banners of Christ*, so far as they could be *listed* by the *Act of another*; so that they must either *confirm*, or, in Effect at least, *renounce* what was then done. All these valuable Purposes, and many more, may be answered by *Infant-Baptism*. But it will by no Means follow from hence, that this Rite *affects the Eternal State* of the *Child*; or that, if it did *affect* it, there must be such an extraordinary *Communication of the Spirit* to it, as you suppose. You allow, in express Terms, that there is *no Act of the Child* at all, and that it *believes nothing*. How this consists with its having a *perfect Faith* wrought in its Mind at once, is not possible for me to conceive. I must therefore conclude, that you meant nothing more than to *expose this Practice*, as you elsewhere expose *Persecution*, by intimating that it *cannot be defended*, unless *your Doctrine* were to be *granted*; whence you are sure, every thinking Man, who yields to this Part of your Argument, will conclude, that it *cannot be defended at all*. On the other Hand, it seems sufficient for me here to have shewn, that *your Nation* is not connected with *Christianity*, even allowing *Infant-Baptism* to be a Part of it. May the Time at length come, when a *Zeal* for the Honour of the *Gospel* shall more effectually engage all its *Ministers*, to adhere to the *Purity* both of its *Doctrines* and *Institutions*, and not to overload it with those *Additions of their own*, which furnish its *Adversaries* with Matter of Triumph! In the mean
Time,

His Remark on the Adjustment of Evidence. 57

Time, may those *Adversaries* consider, that they are answerable to God for the *Impartiality*, with which they *enquire* into the Contents of *Christianity*, and that they are to take their *Notions* of it from the *New Testament* alone! which if you, Sir, had been pleased to have done, you would never have mentioned *this Argument*; nor from any Thing you could have met with *there*, could you ever have thought of it.

Having thus dispatched the *Three grand Articles* of your Pamphlet, I do not remember any Thing very material in it, which I have left untouch'd; for *little Slips*, which neither affect the *Main Argument*, nor the Honour of *Scripture*, are not proper for the Notice of *One*, who values his own Time and his Reader's, and seeks not to insult *his Antagonist*, nor to expose him to any unnecessary Contempt. Yet I cannot close without a *Remark* or Two, on what you insinuate, with so much *Disdain*, concerning "the ingenious Contrivance," (as you are pleased to call it,) "of abating the Degree of Evidence, to leave the more Room for the Merit of Volunteers; with the Duty of cultivating a pious Propensity to the Affirmative, soliciting the Assent of our own Minds, and endeavouring to help our Unbelief." (Pag. 111.) This Manner of Representation is so *ludicrous*, that it is not easy to determine your *Meaning*. But I suppose it to be *his*. Some considerable *Writers* in Favour of our *Religion* have often said, what indeed many Passages of *Scripture* seem to favour, "that the Degree of Evidence attending it was *wisely adjusted* in such a Manner, as to make it *as a Touch-Stone* to the Temper of those to whom it came; and that instead of quarrelling with *Providence* for not giving it the *greatest possible Evidence*, we ought rather to *adore its Wisdom* in such an *Adjustment*."

H

This

58 *It is injurious to Religion to deny this,*

This seems to be *the Notion* you *ridicule*; and if it be, I wish, that for your own Security from the Rebound of *Ridicule ill-placed*, you had condescended to shew *its Absurdity*.—Seriously to maintain that *such a Sentiment* is *contemptible*, would indeed be another Stab at *Natural Religion*, as well as *Revealed*. Do you imagine it, Sir, *impossible*, that the Blessed God should have given any *more convincing Proofs* of his *Being and Perfections*, than those which every Man now actually sees? I grant, *these Proofs* are *sufficient*, to convince any Reasonable Person: But I ask it again, Whether God could not *contrive any* which should be *more striking*, and in Fact *more effectual*? To say, that *he could not*, is *limiting the Holy One of Israel* in so foolish and so profane a Manner, that I hope, Sir, you would *abhor* the Imputation of it: And to own, that *he could* have done it, and yet has omitted it, if at the same Time he acts wisely, is in Effect *owning the Notion* you so scornfully reject; or, in other Words, *owning* that an *Evidence* attempered and *abated in a certain Degree* is such, as it is *fit* for God to give, and to prefer, in many Instances, to *higher Degrees* in their own Nature very possible.—And where, I beseech you, Sir, is the *Absurdity* of thus *trying Mens Integrity*, any more than of *trying their other Virtues* in the Course of Life? Is it not *possible*, there may be a certain *Degree* of *Pride*, or of *Licentiousness*, so odious to God, that he should *give* even to his own *Revelation*; only *such a Degree of Evidence*, as he knows *such Persons* will, through the free and criminal Abuse of their own Faculties, be ready to *reject with Scorn*; while *Persons* of a more *humble and ingenuous Temper* will see and submit to it? Nay, I will add, must it not of Course be so in the Nature of Things, that the *Internal Evidence* of any *Revelation* must strike *those Minds* most, which have the truest Taste of *Moral Excellency*.—One would have thought,
that

that what the sagacious Author of the *Analogy between Reason and Religion* has there said on this Subject, might have engaged any one who has read it, as you intimate you have done, to treat the Topic with more Respect; and I shall remit you to a repeated Perusal of that solid and useful *Treatise*, with only this one farther *Question*; “Whether you do not think there is such a Thing in the Human Heart, as the Counter-part to the Character you deride,—an impious Propensity to the Negative, a Soliciting the Dissent of our own Minds, and an endeavouring to promote our own Unbelief?” If you think, the Will has no remote Influence upon the Understanding as to its Enquiry into Truth, and that corrupt Affections never lead a Man into Error, from which (had his Heart been more upright,) he might easily have been preserved, you contradict not only your self, (compare Pag. 63, 64.) but the Common Sense and Experience of Mankind; and introduce an Universal Fatality, that worst of Monsters, which will swallow up Virtue and Religion together, and leave the Mind an easy Prey to every Error, and to every Vice, which will owe its cheap Victory to the Air of Irresistibility, with which it makes its Appearance.

And is this, Sir, after all, the Situation, in which you would wish to leave the Mind of your Reader? or is it such a Situation, that a wise and benevolent Man, would think it worthy of his Time and Labour, to endeavour to bring his own Mind, and that of others into it? I would intreat you, Sir, at parting, seriously to consider, how far you would have Reason to rejoice in the Success of what you have writ, if it should be thus successful. I should think nothing more instructive and edifying to you, than to pause on the Consequences. You would indeed thereby gain a Triumph: But would

60 *The pernicious and evil Tendency*

you, if you were a *Soldier*, for the Sake of *that*, lay your Country in Ruins? And what else would *your Success* in this Controversy do? Let us suppose Men convinced, that neither *Christianity*, nor *Natural Religion*, are capable of being rationally defended, or (if you like the Expression better,) are founded on *Argument*: And what follows? You would indeed thereby free some, for whom it is possible you may have some peculiar Concern, from the *Anxiety* which the secret Apprehensions of *Religion* give them, in the Pursuit of their prohibited Pleasures: Yet could you not secure them entirely from some *Recoilings of Heart*, and *Anguish of Conscience*, which will sometimes be thrown into *Convulsions* even by these very *Opiates*. At least, in the *Intervals* of these *Agonies*, you would embolden them to lay the *Reins* on the Neck of *Appetite* and *Passion*, which, where *Human Laws*, or an innate *Generosity of Temper* did not restrain, would trample down every other Obstacle, and drive on to the *Ruin of Society*. And as for those who are truly *Religious*, you would, as *Tully* speaks, on Supposition of a much smaller Evil, (the *Ruin of Friendship*;) take the very *Sun* out of their *Heaven*. You would destroy the *Entertainment* of their *Solitude*, the *Cement* of their *Friendship*, the *Joy* of their *Prosperity*, the *Support* of their *Adversity*, the *Light* of their *Life*, the *Hope* of their *Death*; and would leave the most pious *Mind*, of all others the most desolate. For what *Desolation* can be imagined equal, or comparable, to that of falling from so high a *Hope*, from so glorious a *Prospect*, into the gloomy, cheerless, and hopeless *State*, in which a *Mind* destitute of *Religion* must of *Necessity* find it self? If this, Sir, were to be the certain *Effect* of reading your *Book*, (as I think it must be, if the Principles of it were to be admitted, and its *Consequences* pursued;) what a *Calamity* must it have been to any
wis

wife and good Man to *meet with it*? I shall not aggravate at large, but only add, that to have been, though ever so undesignedly, *the Instrument of such Mischiefs*, the fatal Occasion of grieving the Good, of hardening the Bad, of subverting Religion, and, by an inseparable Consequence, of dishonouring God, and of ruining Men, is certainly to be numbered among the most *lamentable Evils*.

It is possible indeed, that you did not *lay a Plot for all this*. If you will permit me, Sir, to speak with all Plainness and Freedom, I am ready in my own Judgment to conclude, from comparing one Thing with another, that you are a Kind of *humorous Sceptick*, who intended chiefly to *amuse the World*, and to shew your Address in *puzzling the Cause*, and *attacking Christianity* in a peculiar *Disguise*, which you apprehended you could manage artfully, on a Side which seemed to you most open. Perhaps you attended to no farther *Consequence*, than that some of your Readers would *smile*, and some of them would be *confounded*, and many say you had *played your Part* in a dextrous Manner, and cut out *Work for Divines*, who, amidst the Variety of *Forms* you assume, might find it *more difficult* to deal with you, than with an *Enemy* who *more openly* declares War, and wears a Habit by which he may more certainly be known. *Views like these* may amuse and animate a *light Imagination*, and it may look no farther. But *the Effect* of Actions depends not on *our Foresight*. This is certain; either *Religion*, both *Natural* and *Revealed*, must be judged *irrational*; or *your Book*, whatever were meant by it, must be judged *pernicious*, and must draw after it a very *Solemn Account* in the Presence of God. I heartily pray, you may be thoughtful of *that Account* in Time, and dismiss you, as you did your Young Correspondent,
with

with a *Text of Scripture*, which contains an *Admonition*, the Weight of which no intelligent *Heatben* could question. How gaily so ever you may have affected to *sport your self*, with these important Topicks, *Be not deceived*, for *GOD is not mocked*; but *whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall be also reap*. A Harvest of *Future Glory*, I suppose, no Man in our Age and Country expects to secure by *opposing Christianity*; and I will venture to say, that, so far as I can learn, few of its *Enemies*, various as their Forms, and specious as some of their Pretences may have been, have for the *Present raised the Character* of their *Knowledge*, or of their *Virtue*, among the best Judges and *Examples* of both, by any *Attack* they have made upon it. And if you, Sir, how considerable soever your Natural Talents may be, should prove the *first Exception* to this general Remark, it will be a *great Surprize* to

Your most humble Servant,

Northampton,
March 4. 1742-3.

P. DODDRIDGE.



C O N T E N T S.

AS some of my Friends, for whose Judgment I have a great Regard, have expressed their Wish, that I had distinguished the *general* and *particular Heads* laid down in my former *Letters* by *Numbers*, or given *running Contents in the Margin*; I shall, notwithstanding what is already done at the *Top of the Pages*, subjoin here a Kind of *Analysis* of the *Three Letters*, by which a compendious View of the chief Thoughts may easily be taken in their mutual Connection, or any particular Passage soon found.

CONTENTS of the FIRST LETTER.

N. B. A. C. signifies the *Author of Christianity not founded on Argument*.

The *Occasion* of the Author's engaging in *this Controversy*, an Apprehension of the *dangerous Tendency* of A. C's *Pamphlet*, which *represents Christianity as irrational, Scripture as useless, and Miracles as uncertain*; Pag. 3,—5. *misrepresenting the Spirit's Agency, and calculated, on the one Hand, to encourage the wildest Enthusiasm, and on the other, to destroy all reasonable Faith in the Gospel*. Pag. 6, 7. The *Subject to be treated seriously*. Pag. 8.

The *First general Head* of A. C's *Book* to be examined in this *First Letter*, in which he asserts,
and

and labours to prove, that *Reason could not be intended by GOD to lead us into true Faith.* Pag. 9. The *Sense of this Proposition stated.* If it signify, as in its Connection it ought, that *Reason is not to be at all consulted in judging of the Evidence and Sense of a supposed Revelation,* it is plainly *absurd,* and *inconsistent* with any plausible Pretence to *Religion* at all. Pag. 10. If it signify, that *Christianity is not capable of any Rational Proof which the Generality of Mankind can understand,* (which is the most favourable Sense the Words can bear,) it is undertaken as the chief Business of *this Letter,* to prove the contrary. Pag. 11.

The Author having premised, that it is possible, the *Rational Evidence of Christianity may not be well understood by some good Christians, who may, without Danger to their Salvation, lay a disproportionate Stress on some Arguments.* Pag. 12. proceeds to shew,

I. That both the *Internal and External Evidence of Christianity are capable of a much easier Illustration than A. C. allows, if its Founder's Institutions be pursued.* Pag. 13. And here it is more particularly shewn,

1. That a *pious Education, by the Divine Blessing, will probably impress the Minds of Children with an early Sense of GOD, and Love for Scripture.* Pag. 14, 15.

2. They will soon be capable of *Understanding some Proofs of GOD's Existence, and a Future State.* Pag. 15,—17.

3. It will be easy to make them see, that the *Bible is an excellent Book.* Pag. 17, 18.

4. A *reasonable View of the External Evidences of Christianity may be given to young People as they grow up, by the Assistance of proper, and those cheap Books.* Pag. 18,—21.

5. *Hints of the chief Objections, with their Solutions, may also be given them.* Pag. 21,—23. *This Method*

Ibid often in Fact pursued. Pag. 23. Reflection on the Neglect of such due Care in many Instances, which makes young Persons an easy Prey to a most implicit and irrational Infidelity. Pag. 23, 24.

6. They whose Education has been neglected, or who have out-grown its Influence, being awakened to reflect on Christianity, (before, on slight Evidence, admitted as true,) may from Experience of its Vital Energy obtain a New and Rational Proof. Pag. 25,—27.

7. This Persuasion may be much confirmed by observing the Course of Providence, and its Correspondence with Scripture and inward Impressions. Pag. 27, 28.

8. And yet more evidently, by observing the Character and Conduct of true Believers, and comparing it with that of Infidels, as appearing in their Lives and Writings; Pag. 28,—31. and particularly, the Manner in which Christianity is attacked. Pag. 31, 32.

II. Transition to the Examination of A. C's Objections; the Consideration of which makes the Second Part of this Letter. Pag. 33.

Obj. i. This Evidence cannot be obtained by all. *Ibid*.—Answered, by the Consideration of what might be done, if Parents, Masters, and Ministers would perform their Duty. Pag. 33, 34. Mankind not so weak, and incapable of receiving Instruction, as A. C. has represented them. Pag. 35, 36.

Obj. ii. The Examination of these Proofs would take up a great deal of Time, during which the Mind is left in a State of extremely dangerous Hesitation. Pag. 36.

Ans. The Objection most unreasonably supposes,

1. A full View of the Controversy in its utmost Extent and Accuracy to be necessary to a Rational Faith: Pag. 37,—39. And,

2. A total Disbelief of Christianity during the Examination of every particular Argument. Pag. 39,—41. Precautions to be taken to prevent this. Pag. 41, 42.

Obj. iii. A Faith so produced will be the Effect of the Prejudices of Education, and this Propen-

fity to believe Christianity inconsistent with Philosophical Indifference. Pag. 42.

Answ.—1. *An absolute Indifference about a Question in Debate is neither possible in many Cases, nor necessary in any to an honest Enquiry.* Pag. 42, 43.

2. *The Education of Children in true Religion is absolutely necessary to prevent very dangerous Prejudices against it, which would be inseparable from neglecting it.* Pag. 43, 44.

3. *These Objections against a Religious, lie also against a Virtuous Education.* Pag. 44, 45.

Obj. iv. Such a Persuasion as these Methods could produce, would be founded on partial and imperfect Views of the Question. Pag. 45.

Answ.—1. *The most important Arguments on both Sides may be generally taught.* Ibid.

2. *An accurate Examination of the Controversy may, and ought to be taken by Persons of Liberal Education, especially by those intended for the Christian Ministry.* Pag. 46, 47.

3. *More Reasons may be learnt for Christianity, than against it, in which, after all, Men must acquiesce without being omniscient in any Thing.* Pag. 48, 49.

Obj. v. This will still be a Faith built on Human Testimony. Pag. 50.

Answ.—1. *Not so far as it arises from Internal Evidence.* Ibid.

2. *Neither is all Human Testimony to be despised.* Pag. 51.

3. *Nor is that here appealed to unworthy of Regard.* Ibid.

4. *Nor are private and unlearned Christians unable to come to rational Satisfaction as to the Certainty of the most important Facts alledged, which the Enemies of Christianity themselves confess, and dare not deny.* Pag. 52,—55.

Remark on the Divine Wisdom in permitting the Opposition of Infidels, and over-ruling it to so valuable a Purpose, which Penal Laws against them would destroy. Pag. 55, 56.

Obj. vi.

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Obj. vi. That the most Rational Arguments can never give the Mind such Satisfaction, as should animate us to subdue our Passions, and endure Martyrdom for the Gospel. Pag. 56.

Answ.—1. A sufficient Provision in Reason is made for both.

2. Neither is indeed so hard, as some would represent.

3. *Facts shew, that both have been effected, where no immediate Revelation has been pretended.* Pag. 56,—60.

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CONTENTS of the SECOND LETTER.

The chief Design of this Letter to examine the *Second Head of A. C's Tract*, in which Christianity is represented as owning that it is not founded on Argument. Pag. 3.

General View of what is to be disproved, and of what is to be established here. Pag. 4.

Previous Remark for stating the Question, which A. C. has artfully shifted. Pag. 5.

It is proved in Opposition to A. C.

i. That Christ brought rational, plain, and weighty Arguments to establish his Mission. Pag. 6,—8.

ii. That the Apostles did the like; which is proved from the History of the Acts, and the general Tenor of the Epistles. Pag. 9, 10.

iii. That there was nothing absurd and preposterous in this Attempt and Conduct of the First Preachers of Christianity. Pag. 10. For the Illustration of which it is farther shewn,

1. That the Doctrine they taught was capable of a plain and easy Rational Proof. Pag. 10,—12.

2. That they allowed their Hearers competent Time to examine it: Pag. 13, 14. Whereas A. C. represents the Question much more difficult, than it really was, either to Jews or Gentiles; Pag. 14,—17. and

the Assent much more immediately demanded. Pag. 17, 18.

A more particular View of the *different Characters of the Apostles Hearers*, as they might fall under the Class of *the Scornful, the Candid, or the Indolent.* Pag. 18,—20.

Reasons for having taken it for granted in this Part of our Reasoning, that Miracles are proper Proofs of a Divine Mission: Pag. 20, & seq. In which it is particularly shewn,

1.) That *Christ and his Apostles argued from them.* Pag. 21.

2.) That *they are improperly represented by A. C. as mere Natural Effects of Gospel-Benevolence.* Pag. 22, 23.

3.) That *Christ's Care to conceal some of his Miracles is grossly misrepresented, in express Contradiction to numberless and most obvious Facts.* Pag. 23, 24.

4.) That *his Rebuke to those that demanded them in some particular Circumstances, was very consistent with the general Design of his Miracles.* Pag. 25, 26.

5.) *The Plea, that Miracles may be wrought by Impostors, is invalid, and has been often answered.* Pag. 27.

6.) *Their Antiquity is no Proof of their Uncertainty.* Ibid.

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The Reality of such a General Sentence is allowed. Pag. 29. To account for it, it is premised, that *A. C's Objection is founded on a false Notion of Faith, as a mere Assent, whereas really it is a Practical Thing, in which not only the Understanding, but the Will is concerned.* Pag. 30, 31. And then it is urged,

i. That *there is in general no Absurdity, in supposing that a Sentence of Condemnation on those who reject it may attend a Revelation which comes from GOD:*
Since

Since—*He may contrive an Evidence, which he knows to be reasonably sufficient for the Conviction of every one to whom it is addressed;—and on that Supposition, may determine to punish those who will not submit to it;—which if he has determined, it is Mercy to add a Threatning of that Punishment, which might answer many valuable Ends.* Pag. 31,—36. And as this is possible, so it may very probably be the Case, on Supposition of a Revelation. Pag. 36, 37.

ii. That these general Reasonings have peculiar Weight, when applied to Christianity: Pag. 37. Considering,

1. The Representation which the Scripture makes of the Degree of its Evidence. Pag. 38.

2. The Nature and Circumstances of the Scheme itself, bringing to guilty Creatures such important Blessings in so extraordinary a Way. Pag. 39,—41. And,

3. The Manner in which it was introduced, and the Difficulties it was to struggle with, which required such strong Sanctions. Pag. 42.

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(2.) From the supposed Virtues of some who reject Christianity:—*Which yet are too deficient to vindicate them; Pag. 44, 45. and if sincere and prevailing, will produce Faith; Pag. 45, 46. and receive glorious Accessions from it.* Pag. 46, 47.

These Reflections seriously recommended to A. C. to check a Rashness which may be very dangerous. Pag. 47, 48.

His Notion of the Spirit's Agency briefly stated and objected to; Pag. 48, 49. referred to farther Consideration. Pag. 50.

Some Things in A. C's Book granted to be reasonable. Pag. 51.

The Tendency of his main Principles to overthrow Natural, as well as Revealed Religion, urged and represented at large. Pag. 51,—58.

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A general Plan of the Answer laid down. Pag. 9. *The Scripture, not Human Opinion, the Standard* by which the Matter is to be tried. Pag. 10. *It is proved,*

I. That the *Scripture may say great Things of the Spirit's Influence, on the Apostles,* Pag. 10,—13. and on *inferior Christians* in former or later Ages, Pag. 13,—15. *without carrying Things so high as A. C. does.*

II. That the *Scripture says many Things concerning the Spirit's Influence, utterly inconsistent with those which A. C. has ascribed to it, and which are essential to his Scheme*; Pag. 15. *requiring the Use of proper Means of Instruction, not only in private Christians, but Ministers, even in the Apostolick Age.* Pag. 15,—18.

Hence the *true Scripture-Doctrine of the Spirit's Influence* in this Respect *may be deduced*; Pag. 18. concerning which it is observed,

1. That *GOD is the Author of all our Knowledge.* Ibid.

2. That

2. That his Spirit gave extraordinary Revelations to the Apostles. Pag. 19.

3. That tho' he does not renew the Revelation already made and recorded in Scripture, yet

4. He continues to influence the Minds of Christians in succeeding Ages, to promote Knowledge and Holiness: Pag. 20, 21.

5. Our Progress in either of which is therefore to be ascribed to him. Pag. 22. Tho'

6. The Manner of this Influence cannot be fully described: Nor

7. The Influence itself in many Instances distinguished from the rational Operation of our own Mind in Concurrence with Second Causes. Pag. 22, 23.

8. Unprofitable Curiosity on this Question to be waved. Pag. 24, 25.

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