



# Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

✓

*The Pretences of Entbusiasts,  
as grounded in the Articles of the Church,  
considered, and confuted:*

---

A  
S E R M O N

Preached before the  
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

At St. MARY'S,

On SUNDAY, August 6. 1769.

---

By WILLIAM HAWKINS, M. A.  
PREBENDARY OF WELLS,  
Late POETRY PROFESSOR, and FELLOW of *Pembroke*  
College, in OXFORD.

---

PUBLISHED BY DESIRE.

---

---

O X F O R D,

PRINTED AT THE CLARENDON-PRESS,  
For Dan. Prince; and sold by J. Rivington, in St. Paul's  
Church-Yard, London. M. DCC. LXIX. 6<sup>d</sup>

5-

**Imprimatur,**

**N. WETHERELL,  
Vice-Can. OXON.**

**Oct. 2. 1769.**



---

JOB Ch. xxxvi. V. 26.

*Behold God is great, and we know  
him not.*

**T**HE incomprehensible attributes and operations of the Divine Nature are plainly asserted in this text, and in many others equivalent to it, both in the Old and New Testament; which there is no occasion at present to produce.

From these words then I shall take occasion to illustrate an observation, which hath been often made, and will not, in general, be denied; which is, that our belief, our notions, and our sentiments, in relation to Divine truths, ought to be regulated and circumscribed by the discoveries God has been pleased to make of himself. And then I shall conclude with a suitable application.

Now, in the first place, this doctrine of the incomprehensibleness of the Divine Nature, Attributes, and Operations, affects, more or

A

less

less, the case of three different classes of unbelievers : first, that of absolute atheists ; secondly, that of infidels, who deny the truths of revelation ; and thirdly, that of certain Christians, who have called in question particular points of that revelation ; to which, in general, they profess to subscribe. And it is well worth remarking, that the two last of these never fail to attack the former with such reasonings and arguments, as, if pursued through their just consequences, may fairly, and successfully, be urged against themselves. For, if the professed atheist affects to decry the fundamental principle of all religion, the Being of a God, on account of the pretended extravagancy and inconceiveableness of it, will not the other observe, in order to confute him, that, unless a consistent, uniform, and intelligible system could be built on the ruins of this capital article, such his exception can have no weight ; and, that the fact is, we are encompassed in a state of mere nature, with as great difficulties as those with which the atheist pretends to be perplexed ; that the infinity of time, or eternity, as well *à parte ante* as *à parte post*, the infinity of space, the infinite progression of number from unity,

unity, and the infinite divisibility of quantity, (to mention no other particulars) are natural mysteries, which utterly exceed our conceptions at the same time that they command our assent. But do not these very considerations, which justly resolve the principles of atheism into terrors of conscience, rather than conviction of judgment, import, that the primary notion which the human mind can frame of God is this general and complex, yet negative, idea of incomprehensibility; and, consequently, that there is a certain pre-eminence, if I may so call it, in the Divine Essence, Attributes, and Operations, which absolutely precludes investigation. It will follow then, that all mysteries, whether natural or revealed, that is, such as are relative to this Divine Nature, and these Attributes, and Operations; it will follow, I say, that all mysteries, considered purely as such, stand upon a level in point of credibility. For instance, you have no stronger, or more adequate, conception of the immensity of space than of his omnipresence that fills it: nor is the manner of the existence of something from all eternity more intelligible than that of the eternal generation of the Son of God.

Faith, therefore, cannot have a surer foundation in human reason, than in Divine authority. This, in general, will not, cannot, be denied, or disputed. And yet, there are certain mysterious doctrines, peculiar to Christianity, which are contained in passages as plain in respect of grammatical construction as words can make them, to which even such authority, in some peoples' judgment, seems not to have given a sufficient sanction. For these doctrines have professedly, on account of their mysteriousness, been explained away by elusive methods, which will leave all interpretation precarious: while, at the same time, the proper question is, whether that mysteriousness can be reasonably urged as an objection to their authenticity? For, if the Divine Essence be necessarily incomprehensible, no revelation can possibly make it less so; so far from it, that the very idea of a Divine revelation implies a revelation of mysteries, *i. e.* of truths undiscoverable and inconceivable, by our natural faculties: and, accordingly, the credit of revelation is not shaken, but confirmed, by the number and importance of such truths. Because it is but natural to expect a more ample display of wonders, and  
 larger

larger discoveries of sublime and sacred points of faith in this revelation : except God is the less to be believed the more he communicates to us of his nature, attributes, and dispensations. What, indeed, can be more absurd than to ascribe absolute and incomprehensible perfection to God, and, at the same time, to limit and circumscribe that perfection ? or, in other words, to acknowledge the scriptures as the only rule of faith in relation to such perfection, and yet to reduce that rule to the measure of our own judgments and apprehensions ? Attempts, we know, have most preposterously been made to interpret, even upon scriptural principles, and in an argumentative way, doctrines, which those very scriptures declare to be incomprehensible ; and, consequently, out of the reach of the human mind, not only to investigate of itself, but fully to comprehend when revealed. The great Apostle of the Gentiles frequently represents the whole evangelical system in this light. He assures the *Corinthians*, that he *spake the wisdom of God in a mystery* ; and the *Romans*, that the *preaching of Jesus Christ was according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began*. Sometimes he  
applies



applies the same term to particular points of Christianity. Thus, in his discourse on the resurrection, he tells the *Corinthians*, he *shows them a mystery*; and, when he asserts in his epistle to *Timothy*, that *great is the mystery of godliness*, he exemplifies the same in the incarnation of the Son of God: *God manifest in the flesh*. Why therefore any pure scriptural doctrine, as that of a Trinity of Persons in the Divine Essence, or of the satisfaction Jesus Christ made for sin by the sacrifice of himself, should not be as credible as that of the eternal existence of a single person in the Deity, or of the infinity of space, or of the divisibility of matter, I presume, no sufficient reason can be assigned.

It is, indeed, equally amazing and melancholy to observe, to what lengths the insolence of infidelity will go, and within how narrow a compass it industriously endeavours to reduce the mystery of our holy religion. There have been those, who, merely to get rid of a point of faith, have had recourse to such a chimerical notion as that of a virtual and effectual, instead of a real and essential presence of the Deity: as if their philosophy required them to acknowledge the immensity  
of

of space, but to explain away the ubiquity of the Godhead; *i. e.* to admit and reject difficulties, as it were, in one and the same breath. That the scriptures, in mysterious points, have been wrested by sophistical constructions to the purposes of infidelity, has already been intimated; and I have further to add, that they have sometimes been even totally overlooked. A late author\* very confidently asserts, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body has no manner of warrant from primitive belief, or scriptural authority. In support of this assertion, he hath plausibly enough reconciled a text or two to his beloved tenet, which have been generally referred to this doctrine; but a great number of other passages, by which the same is directly and explicitly proved, he has left wholly unnoticed. This single consideration overturns his credit at once; and demonstrates the absolute futility of his formal and elaborate inquiry, when or why the article of the resurrection of the body was first inserted in the publick creeds. And, after all, in this, as in most instances of the same sort, unbelievers do not so properly remove mysteries as exchange

\* Dr. Sykes.

them :

them: and it will be as impossible to build a consistent and intelligible system on the ruins of the leading doctrines of Christianity, as on those of the fundamental article of all religion, the existence of a God. It might easily be made appear, that infidels agree no more among themselves than they do with us. But, to confine the above remark to the author and doctrine before us, we find him acknowledging the Gospel to be "uniform concerning the resurrection of the dead," but asserting that "the Apostles never required the belief of any particular *modus* or manner of it; never said any thing of the resurrection of the body or the flesh." Now, I apprehend, he that believes the resurrection of the dead, but denies that of the body, hath little colour of pretence to charge others with credulity\*.

\* The resurrection of the dead must necessarily imply the resurrection of the flesh or body; and he who *at this day* should *question*, as the three disciples did after the transfiguration of our Saviour, *what the rising from the dead should mean*, may, with equal grounds, question any other point of revelation: or, in other words, he who professes to believe, that *all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth to the resurrection, that the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and death and the grave deliver up the dead that are in them*, but denies, at the same time, the resurrection

But farther, it will be found owing to a strange affectation of avoiding difficulties, in matters wherein difficulties are unavoidable, that certain notions and opinions, remarkable equally for their extravagance and uncharitableness, have been adopted with zeal, and avowed with vehemence, even among believers themselves. The doctrine of absolute predestination to life or death eternal has its main ground in our utter inability to conceive the certain prescience of future contingencies; or to reconcile the freewill of man with the foreknowledge of God. Here then is con-

*resurrection of the body, is a strange infidel, who believes more than ever did the Evangelists!*

The Gospel, says the learned Doctor, "is uniform concerning the resurrection *of, or from, the dead:*" but "the Apostles never required the belief of any particular *modus* or manner of it; they never said any thing of a resurrection *of the flesh, nor body, but left such matters to be found out in after times.*" (Inquiry, &c. p. 8.) Let the reader judge how far the doctrine in question deserves to be called a modern invention; while I just observe, that the *only* difference between the Doctor and the *common* believer in point of faith in respect of the same seems to be this: the latter, agreeably to revelation, believes the *resurrection of the body* to be the necessary, though inconceivable, *modus* or manner of the *resurrection of the dead*; whereas the Doctor believed, that *the dead are raised without any modus or manner at all.*

B

fessedly

fessedly another mystery; but be it so: Is there nothing mysterious or incomprehensible in the predestinarian hypothesis? Or are we in this case too required by piety or prudence to have recourse to absurdities in order to get clear of a mystery? For how God could, by a decree previous to the foundation of the world, consign over the far greater part of mankind to everlasting destruction without being in any sense, or in any degree, the author of evil; in what manner Jesus Christ *gave himself a ransom for all*, of whom an amazing majority were predoomed to damnation; what we are to understand by certain means of salvation mercifully vouchsafed to Christians, which yet God had arbitrarily predetermined should be ineffectual; how we shall make consistent those passages of scripture which strongly and clearly represent the necessity and efficacy of supernatural assistance, and divine grace, with others that as plainly and undeniably point out eternal happiness as the proper object of our own free choice, and most earnest endeavours; or, in a word, how we can ascribe absolute moral perfection, if I may so call it, to God, without attributing to him such properties as are necessarily connected

ned with our idea of absolute moral perfection; *i. e.* how imperfection can be perfection, it concerns the advocate for absolute decrees to inform us. The case is, his only, or, at least, his principal exception to the contrary hypothesis, which is founded in it's mysteriousness, precludes in a manner the very possibility of a solution to such inquiries as the above; because after such exception he cannot with any face number *election* and *reprobation* among the *mysteries* of Christianity; and therefore so far as he rests the merits of his cause merely on our acknowledged want of conception of the compatibility between divine foreknowledge and man's freewil, he appears to lean upon a *broken reed*; and one might think, would he but suffer such considerations to have their due impression upon him, could not but see and confess the weight of reason, and the general scope and tenour of scripture to be on the side of the contrary doctrine. In consequence of such conviction he must admit that some of the strongest \* of those expressions which seem

\* I say, *some* of the strongest &c. because the expressions, and passages referred to in this paragraph are only a part of those which are usually urged in support of the Predestinarian system. They are such however on which great stress has been always lay'd; and therefore this limitation of their sense

to countenance the doctrine of predestination have an import and signification similar only to that of many passages in sacred writ, which, all agree, are not strictly and literally to be understood; that God can no more really *predestinate* a particular number of persons either to eternal happiness or misery, by a previous and absolute decree for that purpose, than he can really be *angry* with his creatures, or *repent* of his own dispensations; that such phraseology is analagous, and adapted purely to our finite ideas and apprehensions, and is significant only of certain effects and events consequent on our own free acts and proceedings; and accordingly that those who believe and obey the Gospel, who act consistently with their obligations, and in concurrence with the necessary though resistable influences of the spirit of grace, are, if they persevere, as directly and effectually in the way which leadeth unto eternal life, as if they were strictly and pro-

and significancy is a very considerable deduction from the authority which this system pretends to derive from the holy scriptures. And, all this while, the doctrine, in general, is pressed with the full weight and force of what is here or elsewhere advanced by myself, or by others of far superiour judgment, who are my leaders in the argument. (See *Rational Inquiry*, p. 170, &c. &c.)

perly

perly *called* or *elected* by God in preference to all others, or were absolutely *ordained* to salvation, or had literally their names *written* in the *book of life*.

After all however we are under this head maintaining rather a matter of opinion, than a fundamental point of faith; nor do we assert, that it is equally necessary to believe, that Jesus Christ was the *Saviour of the world* in the general sense here contended for, as that he took our nature upon him, or died upon the cross. But notwithstanding this, the same scriptures which are the rule of our faith in the strictest sense should be the rule of our sentiments also; and accordingly it nearly concerns us to have a right judgment in all religious matters; especially such as essentially affect the honour of God, and the spiritual peace and quiet of man. To what degree any particular error in religion may be sinful, or how far one is more capital than another, it will be of little consequence to inquire. Our aim should be to be as free from all errors as possible. In short, either scriptural declaration, or rational and necessary inference, is the proper ground of religious faith and persuasion; of such faith and persuasion as is not to be shaken



shaken by any seeming irreconcilableness, or contrariety whatsoever. Indeed, if we indulge the excursive faculty of imagination beyond the bounds which reason and scripture have set us, we shall find ourselves inextricably entangled in gross inconsistencies, and sometimes in horrid impiety too. That the most perfect *freedom* of agency must be ascribed to God, cannot possibly be controverted; and yet does he not *necessarily* foreknow his own actions? Does he not *necessarily* act agreeably to the eternal rules of justice, wisdom, purity, and holiness? That God is in no sense the author of *evil*, whether natural or moral, every reasonable man, and, much more, every Christian, will maintain; yet is it not certain, that, had this world never been made, neither *sin* nor *death* could have *entered into it*? Such vague disquisitions as these may lead to downright blasphemy in many instances; but can, at best, only terminate in uncertainty and scepticism.

Consequently it is gross folly, it is the highest presumption, to attempt by *searching to find out God* in this state of mortality; to bring infinite to a finite test; or to call in question certain discoveries he has been pleased  
to

to make of himself, or his dispensations, merely because they lie above the level of our finite apprehension. And therefore our belief, our notions, and our sentiments, concerning Divine truths ought to be regulated and circumscribed by the letter, or the evident tenour of revelation.

I pass on therefore to the proposed application. Now it is evident from the foregoing remarks, that no system of religion, or, indeed, of irreligion, is without its difficulties; and those too, inexplicable ones: and, consequently, no objections, drawn purely from such difficulties, will lie against that plan or scheme of theology, which is most simple, easy, and uniform in itself, and, at the same time, most agreeable to holy scripture, and to received articles of faith. The substance of the Christian dispensation may be comprized in a few words: The three Persons of the blessed Trinity concurred in the oeconomy of man's salvation: Creation was necessary to capacitate him for happiness at all: Redemption by the sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the whole world was necessary for the recovery of that happiness which he had forfeited by transgression: Sanctification

tion is necessary to render effectual our natural endeavours to perform the conditions required on our part of the Christian covenant. The first of these points proves itself: the two latter may be as fairly demonstrated from scripture as any doctrine or tenet can be proved from any other writing. And the conclusions they naturally and obviously lead to are equally rational and comfortable. Why then should we suffer ourselves to be perplexed with the difficulties or mysteries with which they are necessarily attended? Mysteries so justly resolveable into the acknowledged incomprehensibleness of the *deep things of God*; his nature, properties, and operations? *Behold, God is great, and we know him not*, is a sufficient reply to any man who shall deny the existence of the three Persons in one Divine Nature, the incarnation of the *second* of these Persons, the compatibility of man's freewill with the gracious operations of the *third*, the resurrection of the body, or any other point of doctrine manifestly contained in, or deducible from, the sacred writings. Again, the conformity of any doctrine with received articles of faith is a very powerful recommendation of it. The short system I have here been delineating

neating is evidently consistent with, or derivable from, these articles. But is there a single article of any creed received among us that, in the least, countenances the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation*, as stated and avowed by it's predestinarian advocates? And yet this doctrine has been, and is, maintained with as much earnestness and assurance, as though it were a point of belief not less incontestable than that of the incarnation, or passion, or resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I am aware, it may be said, as triumphantly it has been, that this doctrine has sufficient warrant from the articles of our Church. Which pretence may be thought to deserve a particular confutation. That it hath such warrant in some degree must be admitted. But I beg leave to observe, that, in a Church which disavows infallibility, we cannot, in common candour, be supposed precisely and exactly to adapt our notions or sentiments on all religious points to the strict letter of a few paragraphs in some of the articles before us; that a latitude of interpretation in matters not of faith, but of opinion, must be allowed from the nature of the thing; that, accordingly, many, of whose orthodoxy and affection there

never was the least ground of suspicion, have freely and publickly declared themselves agreeably to such latitude of interpretation; that, without the allowance contended for, it will be impracticable to reconcile some passages in these articles with others, or with what must, in reasonable construction, and from regular inference, be supposed to be the sense of the Church in the publick offices of her liturgy; but that with this allowance, a rational and uniform scheme of religion may be framed, with which the articles in question, notwithstanding the rigour of their literal sense, may, without violence of straining, be made to correspond. In the article of *predestination* and *election* there are, no doubt, many expressions which at first sight seem to support the opinion we have been arguing against; particularly such as the following: “ Predestination  
 “ to life is the everlasting purpose of God,  
 “ whereby he hath constantly decreed to deliver from damnation those whom he hath  
 “ chosen in Christ out of mankind — wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit be called according to God’s  
 “ purpose by his spirit working in due season  
 “ — they be justified freely — they be made  
 “ sons

“ sons of God by adoption — they are such as  
 “ feel in themselves the working of the spirit  
 “ of Christ &c.” These expressions, however,  
 are not only qualified by the concluding clause  
 of this article itself, which tells us, that “ we  
 “ must receive God’s promises in such wise as  
 “ they be *generally* set forth to us in holy  
 “ scripture :” but also by the literal sense and  
 obvious tenour of other articles \*. The se-

\* It may yet farther be observed, there are inaccuracies  
 (not to give them a harsher name) in the second clause of  
 this very article which plainly enough discover entanglement,  
 where nothing less was intended than elucidation. “ For  
 “ curious and carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to  
 “ have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s  
 “ predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the  
 “ devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into  
 “ wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than  
 “ desperation.”

I freely own, I know not how to make sense of these words,  
 without considering the doctrine of predestination, as one of  
 the devices of our spiritual enemy. It seems, the *having con-*  
*tinually before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination, is a*  
*most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust men either*  
*into desperation, or into wretchedness of living equally perilous.*

Are we not hereby then cautioned, in effect, against these  
 spiritual dangers, these diabolical delusions? Is it not our  
 duty as well as interest to endeavour to avoid both these ex-  
 tremes? Yet how can we possibly do this but by NOT *having*  
*before our eyes the sentence of God’s predestination* in the sense  
 contended for by our adversaries? And so whether this arti-

cond article avers, that Jesus Christ “ truly  
 “ suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to  
 “ reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacri-  
 “ fice not only for original guilt, but also for  
 “ actual sins of men.” It is asserted in the 7th  
 “ article, that both in the Old and New Testa-  
 “ ment everlasting life is offered to mankind by  
 “ Christ, who is the only mediator between God  
 “ and man, being both God and man.” The  
 9th article maintains, that “ there is no condem-  
 “ nation for them that believe, and are baptized,  
 “ notwithstanding lust and concupiscence hath  
 “ of itself the nature of sin.” By the 27th  
 we are given to understand, that “ baptism  
 “ is not only a sign of profession, and mark  
 “ of difference whereby Christian men are  
 “ discerned from others that be not chri-  
 “ stened; but it is also a sign of regeneration,  
 “ or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument,  
 “ they that receive baptism rightly are grafted  
 “ into the Church; the promises of the for-

cle, though considered as favouring predestination, does not  
 in a great measure defeat itself, let others judge.

I could wish we had been directed by the article before us  
 to “ receive God’s threatenings, as well as *promises* in such wise  
 “ as they be *generally* set forth to us in holy scripture.”

(See *Rational Inquiry*. p. 183.)

“ giveness

“ giveness of sin, and of our adoption to be  
 “ the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are  
 “ visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed,  
 “ and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto  
 “ God.” And the 31st article declares, that  
 “ the offering of Christ once made is that per-  
 “ fect redemption, propitiation, and satisfac-  
 “ tion for all the sins of the whole world  
 “ both original and actual.” The doctrine  
 comprized under these several passages is  
 plainly subversive of the predestinarian system,  
 and the notion of a sensible *new birth*, or re-  
 generation, of late so confidently insisted on  
 among us.

Again : The predestinated to eternal life  
 are said to *feel in themselves the working of the  
 spirit of Christ*, according to the article above  
 cited : but that by this phrase we are to un-  
 derstand no more than that good men have a  
 firm trust and persuasion that they are under  
 the real, though secret, direction and in-  
 fluence of the Holy Spirit, cooperating with  
 their own sincere endeavours, and cherishing  
 the pious dispositions of their hearts, may be  
 collected from the sentiments of the Church,  
 as to this point, in \* her offices in general,

\* See *Rational Inquiry*, p. 183.

and



and especially upon a most important occasion. In the form for ordination of deacons, the bishop asks the candidate, not whether he *actually feels himself inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*; but whether *he trusts that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost &c.?* A question which manifestly imports *not* a sensible inspiration, but such a confidence and persuasion only as I have just mentioned. And it is farther observable, to the same effect, that in the form of ordination of priests this question is wholly omitted; the only one relative to the qualification of the candidate being the following: *Do you think in your heart that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of this Church of England &c.?* Is therefore the bishop supposed to take it for granted, that the party before him *is sensibly moved by the spirit of God?* Surely, not. But he may reasonably be supposed to take it for granted, that he appears with the same disposition, and under the same persuasion *now* which he had before avowed upon his admission to the *inferiour* order of deacon. And, by parity of argument, those solemn words in the very act of ordination, *receive*  
*the*

*the Holy Ghost*, cannot be understood to convey, or infuse a portion of extraordinary and perceptible grace; because this can be no more requisite to the due and regular discharge of the office of priest, than it was a necessary qualification for admittance into it. To the same purpose it may once more be remarked, that even in the form for consecration of archbishops, and bishops themselves, we meet with no such question as that under consideration.

There are, besides, other articles, the strict letter of which may be imagined to favour the principles of those I am concerned with. The most remarkable of these are the 13th and the 18th. The former runs thus: “ Works done before the grace of Christ, “ and the inspiration of his spirit, are not “ pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring “ not of faith in Jesu Christ; neither do “ they make men meet to receive Grace, or “ (as the school authors say) deserve grace “ of congruity; yea rather for that they are “ not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but “ they have the nature of sin.” The words of the other article are these: “ They also “ are

“ are to be had accursed that presume to say,  
 “ that every man shall be saved by the law or  
 “ sect which he professeth, so that he be  
 “ diligent to frame his life according to that  
 “ law, and the light of nature. For holy  
 “ scripture doth set out unto us only the  
 “ name of Jesus Christ whereby men must  
 “ be saved.” Now, I apprehend, agreeably  
 to the latitude of interpretation just now  
 claimed, these several expressions taken all  
 together will amount to no more than an utter  
 renunciation of all *propitiatory* merit (as I have  
 elsewhere expressed myself) in any mere hu-  
 man service, which hath in effect the nature  
 of sin, inasmuch as it cannot exempt from the  
 penalty incurred by sin; and an absolute dis-  
 avowal of any *right* or *title* to salvation but  
 what is derived from the efficacy of the sacri-  
 fice of the death of Christ. But if the me-  
 rits of that sacrifice be universally imputable,  
 and if every *good work*, *i. e.* every work done  
 on principles of conscience, and with true  
 sincerity of intention, ought to be ascribed to  
 the imperceptible impulse of cooperating grace,  
 by uncovenanted favour dispensed; (which  
 points, on former occasions, I myself †,

† See *Rational Inquiry* p. 162 &c. 168 &c. 185 &c.

among

among others, have endeavoured to make good upon Christian principles, and on the authority of scripture;) it will then follow, that, though a man cannot be saved *by* the law or sect which he professeth, yet he may be saved *under* it, provided he live conscientiously, and have no opportunity of becoming acquainted with the gospel of Christ; and that the severest expressions in these articles do not so properly contain a declaration of incapacity and disqualification, as a confutation of presumption and spiritual pride. The only remaining articles which have an aspect to the present subject are those of *freewil, the justification of man, and good works*. But the two latter came under consideration in a former discourse on this argument; and the consonancy of the other with the doctrine I have been inculcating will appear upon a very little examination. Upon the whole, if there be any seeming repugnancy between some of our articles, it may indeed give us cause to wish, that certain passages had been expressed in terms less liable to misapplication; but, at the same time, it will be but reasonable to understand such passages in the sense which is most agreeable to the language and sentiment

D

of

of the Church in general, as well as to the deductions of reason, and the tenour of the holy scriptures.

I have taken the present opportunity to supply what may have been thought defective in the discourse just alluded to; and though the argument hath been here conducted on a different plan, yet we are led, I trust, to the same obvious conclusions; and it appears, that the several parties in this matter concerned, by what appellations soever they may be distinguished, can no more fairly avail themselves of Church-authority, than of that of the sacred writings.

I shall therefore conclude all in the words of one of our collects, which import the necessity of divine grace, and the certainty of it's being bestowed, upon our earnest and devout application for it:

*Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be right-ful; that we who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

T H E E N D.