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*Advice to Christians, to contend for the FAITH
once delivered to the Saints.*

A
DISCOURSE
TO A
SOCIETY of Young Men
IN
JEWEN - STREET;
ON
Easter-Monday, 1719.

Publis'd at their Request.

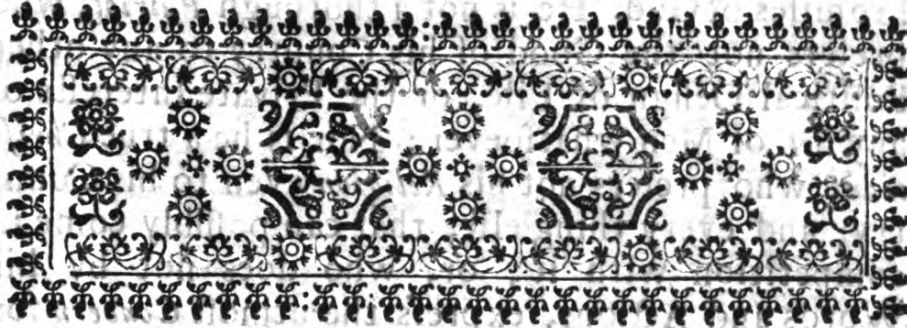
With MARGINAL STRICTURES: Shewing,
I. That the *Triumphs* of the ARIANS, on the
Head of the GENERATION of the SON, are
groundless. II. That the *Characters* of SUPRE-
MACY are applied to our LORD in Scripture
III. That plain Scripture-CONSEQUENCES are
to be regarded as Matters of REVELATION, &c.

By JOHN CUMMING, M. A. Minister of
the Scots Church in London.

The SECOND EDITION.

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JUDE, Ver. 3.

— It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.



HERE is nothing more reproachful to the human Understanding, nothing more mischievous in its Effects, than a blind, intemperate Zeal in Matters of Religion. *Envy and Strife, Confusion and every evil Work* *, are its constant Attendants. But that compound *Affection*, which seems to be a Mixture of *Love and Resentment*, when duly plac'd, and govern'd by Reason, is of excellent use both to discover and improve the *Virtues* of the Mind. And nothing more becomes us as Men, and Christians, than to be zealously affected, according to Knowledge †, in those great and necessary Things that are Essen-

* Jam. 3. 16.

† Gal. 4. 18.

tial to our common Christianity, and on the *Reception* of which, depends our Interest in the *Revealed Promises* of God. He is not a thorough *Patriot*, who prefers not the Good of his Country to any other Political Design of Life, or the Private Interests of any *Set* of Men whatsoever: Nor is he a true *Christian*, who prefers not his *Religion* even to his Country, and every thing else, that can possibly come in competition with it; or, who does not by his Words and Actions, express the utmost *Concern* for it, as the Foundation of all his Happiness, in Time, and to Eternity; especially, when he apprehends any Methods are used, under whatever Forms they appear, to corrupt and undermine *It*.

THIS just Regard to the Sacred Truths of the Gospel, our inspired Author endeavours to excite in the Breasts of those primitive Christians, to whom he addresses this short, but pathetick, *Epistle*. It agrees in the main with *2 Pet. ch. 2.* That blessed Apostle had foretold, there should arise *False Teachers* among Christians, who should privily, by slow Steps, and under deceitful Colours, bring in *damnable Heresies*, even denying the Lord that bought them; and that many should follow their pernicious Ways, by reason of whom the Way of Truth should be evil spoken of*. The too early Accomplishment of this Prediction, gave occasion to *St. Jude* to write this *Preservative* to the Christian *Jews*, (among whom the *Heresies* of those Times chiefly prevail'd) against the Principles and Practices of those *Seducers*, who, by perverting the *Liberty* of the Gospel, had overthrown the Faith of many. The Stile in which he writes, shews how deeply he laid their Danger to heart; and how necessary it was for them to be thus arm'd against so threatenng an Evil.

* 2 Pet. 2. 1, 2.

BELoved, when I gave all Diligence to write unto you, of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints. For there are certain Men crept in unawares, — Ungodly Men, turning the Grace of our God into Lasciviousness; [turning the merciful Liberty of the Gospel into an Encouragement of Pride, and Wantonness, as those who promised themselves Impunity, whatever their Principles or Practices were] denying the only Lord God, and [or even] our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHENCE it follows:

THAT it is the unquestionable Duty of every Christian, in his Place, and according to his Capacities and Opportunities, to contend by all lawful and proper Means, for the Defence and Preservation of the Faith once delivered to the Saints

A DISCOURSE on such a Subject as this, cannot be unseasonable at any time, and may seem necessary at a time, when the Foundations of our Religion are openly attack'd, a *New Faith* is imposed upon Christians, and when the Revivers of an exploded *Heresy* impudently boast of Numbers and Authorities. It is enough to strike a serious Christian with Horror, to consider the present State of Revealed Religion among us, and the Insolence with which some dare to treat the most tremendous *Mysteries*. Men know not where to fix as to Points of Faith, or rather seem unhing'd, and loosen'd from any Principles built on mere Scripture-Evidence. The most famous *Boundaries* of Truth and Error are demolished, and all Distinction between *Heresy* and *Sound Doctrine*, is laugh'd at as ridiculous,

lous, and banter'd out of the World, under the Name of *Orthodoxy*. This is what I am very unwilling to mention; but if all should be silent, the Matter proclaims itself, nor can it any longer be palliated. Things are come to a *Crisis*, and the common Vaunt is, That it will be the Glory of this Inquisitive Age, to end in *Arianism*. Tho' this Boast be as *vain*, as it is *presumptuous*, (for, *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Truths of God* ||; and, *greater is he that is in Believers, than he that is in the World* *) yet it is the Concern and Duty of every pious Man to resent such Opposition to the Gospel, and Indignities offered to its Blessed Author. Our Life, as Christians, in this World, is represented under the Image of a Warfare, to keep us in mind, that we are engaged, by our *Baptismal Vow*, to fight under the Banner of Christ, (with Weapons appointed by Him) against all the Enemies of our Saviour. And tho' I would not rashly charge such an Impiety on particular Persons, who may not be aware of the Nature and Tendency of their *Heterodox Schemes*; yet I doubt not to affirm, that the Opinions now propagated among us, by the Disciples of *Arius*, (tho' they repudiate that *Name*) are not an indirect, but an open Hostility to the *Divinity and Cross* of Christ. A Complication of Errors, that strike immediately at the Vitals of Christianity, and involve every thing Erroneous in the *Pelagian* and *Arminian* Tenets.

○ WHEN such a dreadful Scene opens to our view, when there is a manifest *Conspiracy* carried on against the Fundamentals of our Religion; as it ought to affect us with a just Sense of so gross a Defection, it should animate the *Zeal* of Christians, and provoke them, according to their Capacities and

|| Matth. 16. 18.

* 1 Joh. 4. 4.

Opportunities, to shew themselves Advocates for the Truth. Divers † excellent Treatises have of late Years been publish'd in opposition to those growing Errors, and more may be expected, by God's Assistance, in due time, from several Hands. My present Aim is, (as one who believes himself accountable to his *Supreme Lord and Master Jesus Christ*) with all Humility and Tenderness, to warn my Christian Brethren of their * Danger, to guard them against *seducing Spirits*, and poisonous Errors, and prompt them to a *regular contending for THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.*

IN order hereunto, I shall consider, *First*, The *Object* of this *Contest*, or *what that Faith is* we are exhorted to contend for. *Secondly*, I shall offer some *general Observations* relating to the *Manner* in which Christians are to contend for the Faith. *Thirdly*, I shall more particularly consider the *Duty* here recommended in its *Extent*, as it respects *Ministers* and *private Christians*. And, *Fourthly*, Propose some *Instructions* and *Directions* about It.

I. AS to the *First*, the Apostle determines in a few Words *what that Faith is* we are to contend for, *The Faith once delivered to the Saints*; as one Uniform Doctrine, to remain for ever the Rule of our Faith and Practice, and the Measure of our Hopes. It was not any *Novel Opinion*, or any Doctrine invented by Men, but *the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, the Doctrines of Christianity, delivered first to the

† Since these Papers were sent to the Press, there is published a Book in Defence of the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, by four of our most Eminent Ministers; the Reverend Mr. Robinson, Mr. Tong, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Reynolds.

* Ezek. 33. 6, 7, &c.

Apostles, and by them committed to others of the *Faithful*, that this Inspired Writer esteem'd a *Prize* worthy of the most earnest Contention. This Revelation is Full and Perfect; a Compleat, Immutable Rule, that shall never be cancelled, or succeeded by any other Divine Revelation: The only Rule ordained of God for governing the Faith and Life of a Christian, and obtaining Eternal Salvation. It is elsewhere called *the Faith of the Gospel* *; and an *Anathema* is threaten'd against any who shall pervert it, or preach any other, or shall presume to add to it, or diminish from it. It was delivered to the *Saints* and first Churches in writing (as the *Oracles of God*, under the Old Testament, were delivered to the *Israelites*) as an Inviolable *Trust*, not only for their own Use, but to be preserv'd, and transmitted by them to Posterity, under the Conduct of that unerring *Providence* which hath handed down Those precious Records of *Divine Truths* unto us.

THIS brief Account of the *Faith* we are to contend for, excludes from our Regards all unwritten *Traditions*, all Precepts and Doctrines of Men, all Decrees of Councils, all Ecclesiastical Laws, all Canons, and Customs, that are not contain'd in, that cannot be proved by express *Testimonies* of Scripture, or by natural Consequences deduced from *Them*. It is so far from being our Duty to contend for the *Innovations* of Men in Matters of Religion, or the *Additions* they have made to the *Worship* or *Faith* of the Gospel, that it is our Duty expressly to declare against them.

THE *Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*, may be also distinguish'd from the Doctrines of *Natural Religion*.

* Phil. i. 27. Gal. i. 6 — 9. Rev. 22. 18, 19.

These are in a great measure discernible by the Light of Reason, and deduced by Rational Arguing, from Principles universally acknowledged. A Man must offer the greatest Violence to the Natural Powers and Faculties of his own Soul, but he will confess *there is a GOD*, who made and governs the Universe; and that he is to be worshipp'd by all Reasonable Creatures as the Author of their *Being*, upon whom they depend for all the Blessings they enjoy, or are capable of. This is one of the most * obvious Dictates of Natural Reason: This is the *Creed* of all Mankind, of *Jews* and *Turks*, as well as of *Christians*; † *That God is, and that he is a Rewarder, &c.* That He is the Inspector and Judge of Mens Actions, to reward the Good, and punish the Evil. And tho Men may disagree in some particular Deductions from the general Principles of *Morality*, relating to the Rules of Self-government, or the Respects we owe to one another, in the several Relations and Circumstances of Human Life; yet there are some first *Maxims*, some common Notions of *Moral Good* and *Evil*, in which Mankind generally unite. There is a || *Natural Law* engraven on the Hearts of Men, whence proceed those unavoidable Reflections they make on their Actions, as they are good or bad. This the *Stoicks*, who were the best of the *Gentile* Moralists, called the *common Law*, [ὁ νόμος ὁ κοινός,] the *common Nature*, [ἡ κοινή φύσις,] and the *Sparks and Seeds of Virtue* [*Virtutum Igniculi & Semina*] which they held were in all Men by Nature.

W H E T H E R these Apprehensions of God and of Moral Duty, are strictly *innate* and *congenite* with our Souls, or flow from a free *Operation* of

* Rom. 1. 19, 20. † Heb. 11. 6. || Rom. 2. 14, 15.

God upon the Minds of *all Men* duly qualified to receive such Impressions of Light and Knowledge, are disputable Questions: I cannot persuade myself that they wholly depend upon *outward* Intelligence; and I think they may be justly stiled *Natural*, as they are common to Mankind in all Ages, and so unavoidable to every Individual exercising his Reason, that they cannot be razed out, without an extraordinary Violence offered to the Rational Soul. And seeing Man's natural *Similitude* unto God, of which the *Heathens* were not ignorant when they call'd themselves * *his Offspring*, must refer to the *Intellectual* Powers and Gifts of the Mind, we may justly say, that this Knowledge of God, what He is in Himself, and what Relative to us, is an essential part of his *Image* in Man. For it seems absurd to say, that the Mind of Man bears a Resemblance of God, as to its *Intellectual* Nature and Properties, and yet has no Notion of God naturally impress'd upon it. They do therefore a great Disservice to the Cause even of *Natural Religion*, who deny those connatural Principles. If Men cannot come to the Knowledge of the Supreme Being, by the use of their own Reason, without any *Adventitious* Helps; if all the Knowledge we have of God, depends on Revelation only, (which seems to have been † *Socinus's* Opinion) it must follow, that there is no Obligation of Natural Religion, on those who never had such a Revelation. Which is not only contrary to the common Sense of Mankind, but to the Discoveries made in the sacred Writings themselves; nor can any thing be well imagin'd more destructive to all Religion.

* Act. 17. 28.

† *Prælect.* cap. 2.

BUT

BUT *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, tho' it supposes the Acknowledgment of a **G O D**, the Maker and Governor of the World, to whom we are accountable, yet ought not to be confounded with it. He that believes the Existence of *one God*, and assents to the Goodness and Equity of all the Precepts in the *Decalogue*, may be an *Infidel* with respect to the *Faith of the Gospel*, which is conveyed to us by a pure Vein of Supernatural Revelation.

T H E Doctrine concerning the *Person and Death* of Christ, and our *Redemption* by him from *Sin and Wrath*, which are the main Objects of our Religion, are things that have no dependance upon, no necessary Connection with our Existence: Nor can the Light of Nature give us any Intimations about them. Whereas the Duties of Natural Religion, depending upon the Nature and Respects of things, are found out by human Means. Tho' the Scriptures therefore contain the *Natural Law* in all its parts, and determine those Qualifications and Ends which will render our Conformity to it acceptable unto God, and profitable unto our selves; yet being in a great measure suited to our own natural Notions, it does not properly come under the Character of that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*. The Apostle must be understood as meaning chiefly by this *Faith*, those Doctrines that are purely *Supernatural* in their Discovery. Of this sort are the most substantial Doctrines of the Gospel, especially that great *Mystery of Godliness*, *God was manifested in the Flesh*, &c. which is the *Foundation* of every thing else that is Fundamental in Christianity, as distinguish'd from other Religions. The Belief and Reception of these Doctrines is what denominates us Christians. These we are to regard,

regard, not only as having a *Tendency to promote Religion*, but as the very *Standard of that Religion* by which we must be saved, and without which, there neither is, nor can be any such thing as true Religion among Men. The Revealed Doctrines of Christianity, and the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, are Terms reciprocal. This is the *Faith* we are most concerned to acquaint ourselves with, and to contend for, in opposition to every thing that would seduce us from it. Without this, the highest Attainments in *Moral Virtue*, that we lapsed Creatures can boast of, are not sufficient to lead us to Happiness, nor can give * *Rest to our Souls*. *Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ* †. We are not otherwise sav'd by *Grace*, than by the Belief and Impression of those *Truths* he hath revealed. And the most desperate Violation of the Law of Nature, is not more criminal in itself, or more injurious to God, than the obstinate Infidelity of those who resist the *Evidences* which recommend those sacred *Verities* to our Acceptance. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a Lyar, because he believeth not the Record that God hath given of his Son* ||. So that it infinitely concerns us, to be stedfast and unmov'd in that *Faith*, which is founded on this *Divine Testimony*; and with a manly Zeal to withstand every thing that is contrary to it, or has a Tendency to make us *indifferent* towards it.

BUT tho all the Doctrines of the Gospel are to be deem'd Sacred, and every Truth reveal'd from Heaven commands our religious Observance, and must not be parted with on any Terms; yet our *Zeal* should rise in proportion to the Weight

* Matth. 11. 29.

† *Supernatural Grace and Truth*, Joh. 1. 17. Eph. 2. 8.

|| 1 Joh. 5. 10.

and *Importance* of the Truths so revealed. There is nothing superfluous, nothing unnecessary in the *inspired* Volumes; but some Doctrines are *Fundamental* and *Essential* to the Christian Faith. Not only the obstinate Denial of them, or *Apostacy* from them, is extremely hazardous; but a total Ignorance of them is a State of Darkness, of Horror, and of Misery, in which Men *have no Hope*, and are *without God and without Christ in the World* *.

WHAT those *Fundamentals* are, must be gathered, not only from particular *Texts*, declaring them to be *Necessary*, but from the whole Tenor of Scripture, from the *Explicitness* of the Revelation concerning them, from the *Nature and Quality* of the Doctrines themselves, and that *Influence* they have upon the whole of the Christian Life. It is not *necessary* our Faith should be made up of every Proposition that may be contain'd in the *Bible*, (tho' it be necessary to believe whatever we know to be a Truth revealed of God; otherwise we disown him who is the Fountain of Intellectual Light) but those Doctrines which ascertain the *Object of our Worship*, and our *Dependance*; those which declare the *Grounds and Reasons* of our *Hope* of Pardon and Salvation, which are made the great *Endearments* to our Duty, and on which God himself hath founded that *Holiness without which no Man shall see the Lord*; must be look'd upon as *Essential* to our Religion, without which it cannot subsist.

AND here, I think, I may venture to affirm, Those who have not gone too far in putting *all Religions* upon a *Level*, that agree in the same *Maxims of Moral Virtue*, and the *Unity of God*, (which last,

* 2 Ep. Joh. v. 9. with Eph. 2. 12.

tho contended for on every side, as the Foundation of all true Religion, is really overturned by the captivating Errors of *our Day*, which make *Three Gods*, as truly and properly, as they allow Divinity to the *Word* and *Spirit*) will confess the Doctrines concerning the *Person* and *Sufferings* of Christ to be main Articles of *Faith*, and of absolute necessity to be believed by Christians, who expect to be saved in no *other Way*, or by *no Other*, than the *Name of Jesus*; and agree, that those Doctrines cannot be received, as they are revealed in Scripture, or with that Faith which is *necessary to Salvation*, unless we acknowledge Him to be GOD, without a Metaphor, in the strict and common Sense of that Word; and regard Salvation by Him, as having by his Death and Sufferings made a full and perfect *Atonement* for our Sins.

TO express this in fuller Terms. The Acknowledgment of a *Deity* is no more necessary to Religion, than it is to believe there is but *one God*. The Scripture-Revelation, by ascribing the *Characters*, *Powers*, and *Glories* of the Eternal Godhead, to the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Holy Ghost*, assures us, that *these Three* are this one GOD. Concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, who is sometimes called the *Son of God*, sometimes the *Son of Man*, and more abstractedly the *Word*, or *Logos* *, it declares, *That being in the Form of God*, (naturally, and necessarily possessed of the same Infinite and Adorable Perfections with the Father) *he took upon him the Form of Man,*

* I say, more abstractedly, the Word, or Logos. 'Tis well known that one of the main Arguments by which the Arians think they disprove the Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, is drawn from that natural Priority and Dependance which we see in temporary Generations. The perpetual Clamour is, That there must be a necessary Subordination

Man. That He, who in the beginning laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Work of whose Hands the Heavens are, disdain'd not the Womb of the Virgin, but took our Nature upon him, and therein became our Priest, and Sacrifice. That He became obedient unto the Death, even the Death of the Cross; not merely to confirm the Truths he had taught, which he had done effectually by his wonderful Works, or to convince the World that he believed his own Doctrine; not merely to set us an Example of the most amiable enduring Graces, and give Proof of a Resurrection, but chiefly to expiate our Sins, and make a proper Satisfaction to Divine Justice, by undergoing, as our Sponsor or Surety, the Curse of the Law upon its Transgressors.

THESE

tion between Father and Son. This argues the Grossness of their Conceptions, when they pretend to measure GOD by what is really an Imperfection in his Creature. And if their Notions on this Head were but nicely scann'd, or if they would but tell us what they mean by the Generation of the Son, when they apply it to his Divine Nature, I am of opinion, if they intend any thing else by it but a proper Creation, their Doctrine would exactly agree with the antient Heresy of the Valentinians; some of which Sect conceiv'd of such a *προβολή*, or Emission, as I am unwilling to express in plainer Terms. But their Triumphs here are vain and presumptuous, unless they could prove, First, That an eternal necessary Generation involves a manifest Contradiction; which they are never able to do. Dr. Clark acknowledges, in a Letter to one of his Side, That the Son's being eternally begotten by absolute Necessity of Nature, would infer his Self-existence and Independency. In opposition to which, (for he will by no means allow that our Blessed Saviour is in any respect Self-existent or Independent) he asserts that he was begotten not by absolute Necessity of Nature, but by the Will and Power of the Father. And tho, in his Paper laid before the Bishops, July 2. 1714. (which his Learned Friend says look'd very like a Retraction, but was not really such) he uses the Words eternally begotten; yet when taxed by the same Gentleman with Inconsistency, and giving up the whole Cause, if he meant them in an unlimited Sense, he explains away that Eternity into a *πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων*, and will not be thought to intend the absolute Eternity of a Self-existent, Necessary Being,

THESE Points, the *Divinity* and *Satisfaction* of Christ, *viz.* His being *one God* with the Father, and his having made, by the *Sacrifice of himself*, a true and proper *Atonement* and *Propitiation* for all our Sins, are the very *Basis* and *Foundation* of the *Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*. It is therefore of the last Importance to Christians, to be firmly established in the Belief of those Truths. I might mention other Principles in revealed Religion, which have a necessary Connexion with the former, and which are esteem'd Fundamental, by the unanimous Suffrages

Being, or a Being without Original. So that by eternally begotten, he meant no such thing as eternally begotten. Such Advantage have they, who can reconcile the declaring their Faith in Words of a double Entendre, that is, in deceitful Words, with the utmost Simplicity and Sincerity! But be this as it will, to say that the Son was begotten by the mere Will and Power of the Father, so that the Father alone is the Eternal Necessary Being, is a Position without any Proof, and absolutely inconsistent with the Son's being GOD, in any other than a Figurative Sense. And therefore those who assert the eternal Generation of the Son, as God, in the highest and most proper Sense of the Words, mean by it such an Emanation as is by absolute Necessity of Nature, and proves the Son to be of the same Essence, and equally self-existent with the Father. And unless the Adversaries can evince such a Necessary Generation to be impossible, (which is absolutely impossible for them to do) nothing can be objected from this Topick to disprove the Independency and Self-existence of the Son.

But then, Secondly, their Boasts on this Head are vain, unless they could undeniably prove that the Generation of Christ mentioned in Scripture, or those Texts in which he is stiled the Son of God, are, in strictness of Speech, to be understood of his Divine Pre-existent Nature, without any respect to his being the Messiah. If those Places which call him the Son of God, or the only-begotten Son, are meant of Him, not as Theos or Logos, considered absolutely, but as Theanthropos or Loganthropos, invested with the Office of Mediator, then all their Sophistical Reasonings for a Subordination of the Son to the Father are cut off at once, since no sober Christian ever denied a Subordination in respect of Office and Humanity, but only in respect of the Divine Nature and Essence. The Son, as the Messiah,

frages of all the Reform'd Churches, (if it be lawful to mention such Authorities.) But the Instances already given are, in my Judgment, like the two great Commandments of the Law, the Pillars on which all the Credenda in Christianity do depend. Take away these, and the whole Fabrick is ruin'd at once; the Gospel becomes entirely another Thing. This is that admirable *Mystery of Godliness*, the Truth of which ought not to be controverted among Christians. Upon This the *New Covenant* is founded, in all its Parts: Cut off its Re-
lation

is subordinate; but the Word, or Logos, is GOD, Equal with the Father. I know our Adversaries will here insist on the Concessions of the Orthodox: But that is a poor way of Reasoning, if they build upon it, and comes with a very ill Grace from Those who declaim so much against all Human Authorities and Interpretations. If any should venture to illustrate the Argument by other Proofs, without urging that of a Generation, and should put it upon them to prove that the Divinity ascribed to our Blessed Lord in Scripture, is founded in his Sonship, or his being called $\delta \muονογενής υἱος$, it would indeed entangle them in their Reasonings, and perhaps beat them out of their main Fort; but I see not that it would weaken the Argument on the Side of those who maintain the Equality of the Son (the Divine Person so called) with the Father. I doubt not but the Principle of the Son's being eternally begotten of the Father by absolute Necessity of Nature, (which Dr. Clark denies, because, as he acknowledges, it would infer Self-existence and Independency, and substitutes in the room of it a precarious Arbitrary Generation) is Proof against all their Cavils. But if one should express himself otherwise, and say, It is essential to the Eternal Godhead, that in the Unity of the Divine Nature there should be Three Persons, or Subsistencies, of one Substance, Power, and Glory, who in Scripture are distinguish'd by the Names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as well as by other Relative Properties; and should prove this from those Texts which assert the Oneness or Unity of GOD, and from Those which, without any Qualification or Restriction, ascribe all the Characters of Divinity, the Incommunicable Perfections of the Eternal Godhead, to These Sacred Three, (who are distinguish'd by Personal Properties and Actions, not by any Diversity of Nature, or absolute Perfection of Being :) If any, I say, should take this Way of managing the Argument, he might very easily refel the most plausible

lation to God manifested in the Flesh, and purchasing the Church with his own Blood, the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and nothing remains whereon to build our Confidence; we have no Hope left us but what is common to Infidels and absolute Aliens. If we recede from this great and necessary Truth, if we suffer our Minds to be perverted with any diminutive Thoughts of this glorious *Mystery*; if we look upon him as a Being of an inferior Nature or Degree, who was thus manifested in the Flesh, and delivered up to be the Propitiation for our Sins; what the Scriptures declare of the inexpressible

Objections of our Adversaries, without being obliged to dive into the inexplicable Theories of an Eternal Generation and Procession. The Reasons why I offer this Hint at present, may, God willing, appear more fully hereafter. But this I would have the Reader carry along with him, That we must distinguish between the Article it self, as it is a necessary Part of Faith, and the different Ways of proving the same Doctrine, (for a proper adequate Explanation of what is so far above all natural Discoveries, would be a vain Attempt, and is barr'd by the Apostle's Words, Without Controversy, great, even inexplicable and incomprehensible, is the Mystery of Godliness, &c.) The Article it self, as revealed in Scripture, cannot be better express'd than in the Words of our shorter Catechism, viz. "There is but One only, the Living and True God: There are Three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in Substance, equal in Power and Glory." This is the Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity. These Propositions are not remote Consequences drawn from the Words of Revelation, but the natural and necessary Meaning of those innumerable Texts of Scripture that relate to this Matter, considered in one View. Whosoever denies these Positions, or advances any Explication manifestly inconsistent with them; whoever derogates from the Unity of God, (Unity of Nature and Essence) or from the True Eternal Godhead of the Word and Spirit, viz. That they are one God with the Father, or overthrows the Scriptural Distinction between these Blessed Three, may be justly charged with denying the Faith once delivered to the Saints, in this great and fundamental Article of our Religion. But different Methods of Illustration, consistent with holding the Article it self, as above express'd, can infer no Disadvantage to the Truth, or the Cause of Revealed Religion.

and

and incomprehensible Love of the Father and Son towards us, will appear too excessive and *Hyperbolic* to make any Impression upon us; and those active and generous Affections of Love and Gratitude, which the Prospect the Gospel gives of this Matter, engenerates in the Breasts of *Believers*, and which are the noble Springs of Obedience, the most inviolable Constraints to every Part of Duty, must feel a sensible Decay, and lose all their Life and Vigour. We can no longer trust in such a *Mediator*, or regard his *Interposition* as the ground of our Acceptance with God. Nor can we ever *look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto Eternal Life*, Jude ver. 21. or *worship* him with a good Conscience, if we degrade him in our Thoughts from the Majesty of the Eternal Godhead.

I CONCLUDE therefore, that it is a necessary Part of Faith, a Fundamental in our Religion, to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, in the native and literal Sense of that Word, as it signifies a Being of infinite Perfections, of absolute Eternity, and necessary Existence, the Creator and End of all Things: That He is, together with the Father and Blessed Spirit, the One only Living and True God: That to redeem Mankind he assum'd our Nature, and therein sustain'd the Offices with which he is declared to be invested in the Holy Scriptures, particularly *that he died for our Sins, and rose again, and lives for ever to make Intercession for us*; and that his Death was truly and really a Propitiatory Sacrifice.

THIS is that Faith we must live and die in, if we will be Christians. If we suffer our selves to grow cold or indifferent towards it, it will be an easy matter for the Adversaries of the Truth, first to make us *Scepticks*, and then to over-throw our

Faith entirely in those Points of Revealed Religion, that are apprehended to be of less moment, or in which a Difference in Opinion may be thought less hazardous.

AND that St. Jude referred particularly to this Article of Faith, (*viz.* the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour) is evident from the Antithesis between it and the Principles of those Seducers, who denied the only Lord God, even our † Lord Jesus Christ. Their Errors were opposed to those Truths that

† The common Reading is, Τὸν μόνον Θεοῦ τῶ Θεῶν καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ which, considering the disposition of the Greek Article, might be render'd, The only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Some Copies omit Θεός, and read thus, τὸν μόνον Θεοῦ τῶν καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, our only Sovereign and Lord Jesus Christ. Others place Θεῶν before Θεοῦ τῶν; and then the Version must be, Our only God, and supreme Governor, or Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. So that here is no Distinction of Persons, but all these Epithets, govern'd by one Article, belong to one and the same Person, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Against this, Dr. Clark (in his Commentary on the Place) alleges, "That the word μόνος, only, can by no means be ascribed to Christ; and that the word [Θεοῦ τῶν, Supreme LORD] is never applied to Him in the New Testament." To the First I answer, I. If Christ be God at all, in a true and proper Sense, he must be the only God, otherwise there are more Gods than one. II. When the Father himself is stiled the one or only God, the Word and Spirit are not thereby excluded from being God, but the Opposition is to false Gods, such as the subordinate Deities among the Heathen; as when Jesus Christ is stiled the one Lord, it is not in exclusion to the Father, who is also Lord. III. Divers Instances might be given to prove that the Greek Word μόνος [only] is not absolutely exclusive of other Things or Persons. IV. Our Lord Jesus Christ is in this very Chapter stiled the only wise God, our Saviour, Jude ult. As to the Second, nothing can be more confidently asserted, or more weakly supported; for the Character of Supreme Lord is most emphatically given to Christ, 2 Pet. 2. 1. Denying the Lord [Θεοῦ τῶν] that bought them; and 2 Tim. 2. 21. Both which Places are understood by Grotius, and many other Learned Interpreters, to be meant of Christ. Grotius, in particular, appropriates that in 2 Pet.

that are conveyed to our Understandings, only by Supernatural Means: for, as has been observ'd above, *the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, is not, strictly speaking, the Existence of one God, the Author and Owner of all Things; for there was no necessity of a *Divine Revelation* or *Tradition*, to establish a Truth demonstrable upon common Principles: nor does it appear that those *false Teachers*, who were Christians in Profession, denied that grand Truth. But *no Man* can say, that *Jesus is*
LORD,

to him who bought us, by dying for us. But to his Authority, Dr. Clark opposes the Learned Whitby's Comment on the Place, viz. "Christ being never stiled *δεσπότης* in the New Testament, and St. Jude (v. 4.) distinguishing this *δεσπότης*, or Master, from our Lord, it seems most reasonable to interpret This of God the Father, who is said to have bought the Jews, Deut. 32. 6. Is he not thy Father, who has bought thee? And the Christians, 1 Cor. 6. 20. Ye are bought with a Price, &c." I wonder not that Dr. Clark should say this Comment is very remarkable; but if he thinks it is much to the purpose, he is greatly mistaken: For, I. St. Jude is so far from distinguishing this *δεσπότης*, or Master, from our Lord, that taking the Words as they are now in the common Text, without regard to the Copies that read it otherwise, the Order in which the Greek Article is plac'd bars any such Distinction, and naturally leads us to understand the Particle *ο* in an exegetical Sense: It signifies here the same as even; and so Dr. Clark renders it in other Places. II. That Christ is never stiled *δεσπότης* in the New Testament, is the Thing in question, and a bare Negation is no Proof: We contend that he is so called in this and other Places. III. It is uncertain whether the Place referred to in Deut. 32. 6. is meant of God the Father personally. Old Jacob ascribes his Redemption to the Angel of the Covenant, (the Messiah), whom he also calls the God before whom his Father walked, Gen. 48. 15, 16. And it appears from the whole Tenour of divine Revelation, that it was the same Divine Person who is sometimes called an Angel, and sometimes Jehovah, that saved the People out of the Land of Egypt, &c. And there is no Impropriety in stiling him the Father of his People, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, who is the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. IV. Were it past all dispute that Moses speaks there of
God.

LORD, but by the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12. 3. that is, upon his Testimony. It was this Testimony of the Spirit concerning the *Lordship* or *Sovereignty* of Jesus Christ, that was struck at by these Corrupters of the Evangelical Faith, who were for subjecting the Church, and the World, to False Lords and Governors, under Barbarous Names and Anti-christian Titles, not unlike those of *Dependent* and *Inferior* Gods. That this was their Crime, that it was the Supreme Authority of our Lord Jesus Christ

God the Father, yet as the Buying there mentioned is not the same with what is attributed to the Blood of Christ, it is more natural to understand the Apostle according to the Phraseology of the New Testament. When we are said to be bought with a Price, this Price is declared to be the precious Blood of Christ. He that bought us, therefore, is he that died for us, whose Life is the Ransom of our Souls, and who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, thereby acquiring a new Power or Dominion over us, besides what is founded in Creation. We pass into his Possession, and he is our proper Master by Right of Purchase; and there was no other divine Person who had Blood to shed, or a Life to lay down for us, but Jesus Christ. ——— To confirm this, let us consider whether St. Paul also does not give this Character of Supremacy to our Blessed Lord, 2 Tim. 2. 21. If a Man purge himself from these, he shall be a Vessel of Honour, sanctified, and meet for the MASTER's Use. The Word in the Original is Δεσπότης, which Dr. Clark renders the Supreme Governor. That 'tis here meant of Christ, I offer the following Arguments to prove: I. He is the Person immediately spoken of in the Words that go before, and that follow after. II. The Figure made use of in the Context, of a great House or Family, exactly agrees to the Representations given of the Church of Christ elsewhere, in which he himself is the Master, and of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named. III. It is the same Person who is here stiled MASTER, who, v. 22, & 24. is called LORD: Follow Righteousness — with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart. This is confessedly spoken of Christ: (See Dr. Clark's Script. Doct. ch. 2. sect. 4. p. 133.) The Servant of the LORD must not strive. This also must be understood of him, according to an acknowledg'd Rule of Criticism: (See the same Author's Commentary on 2 Pet. 1. 1. p. 86.) IV. The Scope of the Discourse proves it: It relates chiefly to the Mini-

to contend for the Faith, &c. 23

Christ those *Herefiarchs* contemn'd, seems evident from hence, that their Punishment is peculiarly referred to *Him*, ver. 14, 15. and from the Instances of his avenging Justice, mention'd in the *Verses* immediately following my Text, viz.

How that the LORD [ὁ κύριος] having saved the People out of the Land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the Angels which kept not their first estate — he hath reserv'd in everlasting Chains, &c. Even as Sodom and

Ministers of Christ, who are employed to teach others, as will appear to any who considers the whole Chapter. Of some who bore that Character [Hymeneus and Philetus] he observes, That they erred from the Truth, saying that the RESURRECTION was past already, by which they over-threw the Faith of some, v. 18. But lest this should be an occasion of Offence or Doubt to other Christians, (as the Apostacy of great Names from any Fundamental Article of Faith seldom fails to prove) he immediately adds, as a Preservative; Nevertheless, the Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the Name of CHRIST depart from Iniquity, (that is, such dangerous Errors as he had charged on Hymeneus and Philetus, who by denying the Resurrection were guilty of a complicated Injustice [ἀδικία] towards God, and towards Men.) Then follows, But in a great House, such as the Church of Christ is, there are not only Vessels of Gold and Silver, but also of Wood and of Earth, and some to Honour, and some to Dishonour: If a Man therefore purge himself from these, [if a Minister of Christ, for so the whole Context leads us to understand it, shall keep himself pure from such destructive Errors, as were those of Hymeneus and Philetus, Iniquities to be avoided by all Christians] he shall be a Vessel unto Honour, consecrated for the MASTER's [CHRIST's] Use, &c. So that from the Connexion and Order of the Words, the Scope of the Discourse, and all other Circumstances that can illustrate the Meaning of any Text, it manifestly appears that Christ is the Δεσπότης, the SUPREME LORD, or Governor, here spoken of. —

I may now appeal to the unprejudic'd Reader, whether Dr. Clark had Reason to say, that 'the Word [Δεσπότης, Supreme Lord] is never applied to Christ in the New Testament.' With the like Confidence he affirms that παντοκράτωρ, which he renders Supreme over all, "is in Scripture appropriated

and Gomorrhah, and the Cities about them—are set forth for an Example, &c. That the Infliction of these Judgments is ascribed to Christ, is undeniable, from the constant use of the word κύριος, Lord, in the New Testament, when used absolutely, and

to the Person of the Father only," (Script. Doct. p. 431, 432.) Tho' it be as clear as the Words of Revelation can make it, that He who cometh with Clouds, whom every Eye shall see, and they also who pierce him, saith of himself, I am Alpha and Omega, — the Almighty, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, Rev. 1. 7, 8. It is remarkable that the Epithets of Alpha and Omega, here join'd with Pantocrator, the Almighty, or Supreme over all, are for the most part, if not always, given to the Son. See Ch. 1. 11. Ch. 21. 6. Ch. 22. 13. Besides, that there are other Places in which it is most natural to understand Pantocrator as meant of him, Rev. 15. 3. Ch. 16. 14, 15. where he who is stiled God Almighty saith, Behold, I come as a Thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, &c. Compare this with Matt. 24. 42. 2 Pet. 3. 10. See also Rev. 19. 6, 7. ——— The Reader will forgive my insisting so much on an Argument of this Importance. The great Truth now controverted is the Supremacy of our Lord. I have endeavour'd to evince that the Characters which, according to the learnedest of our Adversaries, are most expressive of the Divine Supremacy, are ascribed to Him. And upon the whole I must say, it is truly surprizing that any Christian should deny the absolute Supremacy of Him who is God over all, Rom. 9. 5. and Lord over all, Rom. 10. 12. who is so often invested with the Title of Lord of Hosts, and of Glory, Isa. 6. 1, 2. Ch. 8. 13, 14, &c. whose exalted Name is KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, Rev. 19. 16. and to whom the Mysterious Tetragrammaton, the incommunicable Title of the Supreme God, is frequently applied, Gen. 19. 24. Exod. 3. 2, to 16. Jer. 23. 6. Zach. 2. 10, 11, &c. And Persons of an ordinary Penetration may wonder that a very Learned Divine, from whom one would not expect apparent Contradictions, should in the same Sentence own Him to be παντοδύναμος, that is, Omnipotent, whom he denies to be παντοκράτωρ, Supreme over all: Tho' the former be a more absolute Perfection, as noting infinite or unlimited Strength and Power, whereby he is able to do all things according to the Perfection of his own Understanding and Will; whereas the latter, as the Doctor renders it, is a more Relative Character, and manifestly included in the former. He who is omnipotent in his Operation, must be absolutely supreme in his Dominion. See Dr. Clark's Script. Doct. p. 431, &c.

with

with the Article prefix'd. All the Latin Copies read *Jesus* instead of *† Vid. Est. in loc. Lord †*, so did *Ferom*; and according to *Grotius* himself, it is uncertain whether those Greek Compends, that use the Abbreviations of *̄c̄*, do not authorize that Reading, tho he grounds it on a Mistake. But the Authority of *St. Paul* is without Exception; *1 Cor. 10. 9. with Numb. 21. 5, 6.* CHRIST, who was tempted by the *Israelites*, when they tempted *Jehovah*: and who knows not but that *He* who was tempted, was the same who destroyed the *Rebellious*, by sending *Plagues*, and *fiery Serpents* among them? The Destruction of *Sodom*, and the *Cities of the Plain*, is expressly ascribed to him; and, there being no change of Persons in the *Context*, the Punishment of the *Fallen Angels* is another remarkable Instance of his *Judiciary Power*.

THESE Considerations naturally lead us to conclude, that the *Errors* and *Impieties* here condemn'd, were an immediate and direct Opposition to our *Blessed Lord*, his *Supreme Dignity* and *Authority* *: and consequently, that those Words, *denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*, (or as it stands now in the *vulgar Latin, Solum Dominatorem, & Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum negantes*) are meant of no other Person. Especially, seeing the Construction of the Words, according to all the Rules of Grammar, will admit of this

* *Hoc primum in istis damnat, quod ex Dei gratia captarent lasciviendi pretextum: quod fieri non potest, quin Christo summum imperium abrogetur; quum ejusmodi homines Satanae sese addicant, ut hodie facit Anabaptistarum Secta, quos Libertinos vocant. Bez. in loc.*

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Interpretation, and the Disposition of the *Greek* Article leads to it, and that nothing can be alledg'd, of any weight, to the contrary, as appears by our *Marginal Note*. I may add, that this is agreeable to all the other Accounts, the Scripture, or the most antient Writers give of those Seducers here referred to, and their Principles. And were it true, that the former part of the Sentence referr'd to *God the Father*, that he were the ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΣ, the *Master* here spoken of, which can never be proved, and against which there are unanswerable Presumptions; it would nevertheless be true, that *our Lord Jesus Christ* is here put in an Equality with him; and that to deny Jesus Christ, is as great a Contradiction to the Faith, as to deny God the Father. And seeing throughout the whole *Bible*, Jesus Christ is *definitively* and *absolutely* declared to be *God* and *Lord*, and the *Titles* and *Attributes* of the only Lord God are, without Limitation, ascribed to him; those who deny him to be Lord and God in this *strict* Sense, cannot be vindicated from that very Error, in opposition to which we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the *Saints*.

THE Dignity and Importance of the Subject, will, I doubt not, be a sufficient Apology for my being so long on this first general *Head*. I judg'd necessary, not only to declare in general, that we must contend for the Faith, *as delivered in the Holy Scriptures*, in contradistinction to the Precepts and Doctrines of fallible Men; but to point distinctly at some of those Doctrines that are Essential to it. It is an *Axiom* founded on common Observation, *Dolus versatur in universalibus*: Let those who think it proper to *skreen* their real Sentiments, make use of Terms ambiguous and equivocal; it becomes the *Ministers* of CHRIST to be *free, open, and explicite,*

to contend for the Faith, &c.

explicite, in declaring What they believe, *What that Faith is* which they preach to others; and in detecting the *Errors* that are opposed to it. We had much better be altogether silent, than perplex Mens Minds, and ensnare their Consciences, by giving an uncertain Sound, or making use only of Words that have no *determinate* Meaning, or which the greatest Corrupters of the Faith wrest to a *contrary* one.

THUS I have consider'd *What that Faith is* we are exhorted, in our *Text*, to contend for.

II. *SECONDLY*, I shall offer some *general* Observations relating to the *Manner* in which Christians are to contend for the Faith.

THE *Word* in the Original is of *Ἐπιγωνίζεσθε* a vehement Signification, which our *Translators* conceiv'd no single Word in our Language could sufficiently answer, and therefore render'd it, *to contend earnestly*. It alludes to the *Olympick Games*, in which they *wrestled*, or *fought*, or otherwise *strove* for the *Mastery*. Thus we are exhorted, elsewhere, *to strive together for the Faith of the Gospel, being in nothing terrified by our Adversaries; and to take unto us the whole Armour of God, that we may be able to resist in the evil day, or adverse time; and having overcome all, to stand* *. And it cannot be denied, but such Exhortations have been alledged to very ill Purposes, even to colour the most intolerable Cruelties and Oppressions. Not only the *Papists* have tortur'd such Texts of Scripture, as a Vindication of their

Phil. 1. 27, 28.

Eph. 6. 13.

* ἵνα δυνήθητε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ, καὶ ἀπαντὰ κατεργασάμενοι ᾄναται.

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violent ways of making *Profelytes* to their Superstition, and punishing whom they thought fit to condemn as *Hereticks*; but some *Protestants* have been too forward to imitate their Example.

'TIS true, they plead the *Words of Revelation* to justify the *Weapons of their Warfare*, and prove, that Threatnings and Tortures, and other temporal Penalties, are proper Means of Conviction. *I think not, saith Christ, that I am come to send Peace on Earth; I came not to send Peace, but a Sword: For I am come to set a Man at variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother, and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law. And a Man's Foes shall be they of his own Houshold. And compel them to come in, that my House may be filled.* Upon a like Abuse of Scripture-Phrase, the *Romish Church* has founded the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, tho it involves a thousand Contradictions, is in the nature of the thing impossible, and destroys the End and Essence of all *Miracles* themselves.

BUT it derogates not from the Perfection of the Scriptures, that ignorant or designing Men wrest them to their own, or the Destruction of others. If all the *Erring Sects* in the World pretend to Scripture on their side, and boast of their *Allegiance to its Divine Authority*, (and that such Pretences are often made a *Cloak to Error*, none can with Truth or Modesty deny) must we therefore impeach the Scriptures of Imperfection, or Contradiction? By no means. Our Duty is plain, with humble and teachable Minds to compare *Spiritual Things with Spiritual*. And as on the one hand, the manifest and necessary *Consequences* of plain Scriptural Propositions are as much a Divine Revelation, and so to be

be regarded, * as the Principles from which they naturally and necessarily flow, (a *Rule* to be admitted of, in judging even of *Moral* Duties, as well as *Doctrinal* Truths) so, on the other hand, what may appear at first sight to be the *Literal* Sense of some single Texts, must not be urged in opposition to the general Tenor of the Sacred Writings, the Nature and Respects of Things, or the Duties of Mora-

* It is commonly objected against this, That Scripture-Consequences, how natural and necessary soever they are supposed to be, are Matters of Revelation only to those who see them; but that others who see them not, are under no Obligation as to these Consequences. It might seem to some invidious, if I should say that Jesuits and Socinians, how widely soever they differ in other Things, are agreed in the Main of what is here objected, tho they sometimes contradict themselves. As to the Socinians in particular, their grand Position is, That nothing ought to be insisted on as a Matter of Faith, that is not *πρωτῶς*, and syllabically contained in Scripture. Upon this Principle they think to justify all their peculiar Doctrines, especially in relation to the TRINITY: And they improve it so far, as to make but one Article of Faith necessary, viz. That we believe the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Which indeed lays a Foundation for very peaceful Maxims, even to stupidity. But, alas! if we pursue this Principle through all its necessary Implications and Deductions, we shall soon lose sight even of that one Article that's left us: For if our not seeing the plain and necessary Consequences of Scriptural Propositions, discharges us from any Obligation to believe them, it will follow that our not seeing the Evidence of a Divine Revelation, discharges us from any Obligation to believe the Scriptures themselves to be the Word of God. The Jews saw not that Jesus was the Messias, tho they imagined themselves clear-sighted, and took it very ill when it was insinuated they were blind. The Sadduces saw not the RESURRECTION in the Writings of Moses, nor is it literally contain'd in the Pentateuch. Our modern Arians, call them by what Name you will, see not that CHRIST is ONE GOD with the Father, One in Nature and Essence, equal in Power and Glory; tho it be demonstrable that either He is One God with the Father, or is not God at all, or that there are more Gods than One. But the Jews were condemn'd for their Unbelief, for not seeing what they did not see, because that was owing to their
 their

Morality; but are to be interpreted by those more plain and numerous Places that treat of the same Thing.

IN this Light it will appear that all Methods of Terror and Compulsion, under pretence of defending or propagating the Faith, are as repugnant to the Nature and Tendency of *Christianity*, to the most exprefs Declarations of its great *Author*, and the *Manner* in which it was recommended to the World by Those whom he inspir'd and commission'd to publish his Gospel, as *Transubstantiation*, or any other the greatest Absurdity, is ridiculous to Reason. We must contend
 2 Cor. 10. 4. *for the Faith, and that earnestly; but the Weapons of this Contest are not carnal.* It excludes all manner of Violence, Coercive Power, and Force, against the Bodies, Estates, or *Civil Rights* of Men: Which tho necessary in the

their own Prejudices; They would not repent, that they might believe. The Sadduces erred, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God. Nor will it justify an Arian to say he sees not that these Three are One God, if that is necessarily included in the Scriptural Revelation concerning the Divine Persons: As I doubt not but the Scripture-Evidence of that Doctrine is as clear and full as any Argument of what kind soever, that can be brought to prove the Divine Authority of the Scriptures. So that the question is not what a Man sees, or does not see; but what he ought to see, what he might see, if his Mind were not inlaid with Prejudice or Passion, and he humbly resign'd his Understanding unto God. An Atheist may not see that the World had a Beginning: He may not for the want of him know how to resolve that Question, Quæ Machinæ, qui Vectes? What Engines were used in erecting this stupendous Fabrick? And he may by degrees become such a Master of his own Reason, as to be fully persuaded in his Mind there is no other God, no other Nature or Substance than the Universe; which was the Doctrine of Spinoza. Is he therefore justified because he is blind? Let us therefore beware of a Principle which is capable of being improv'd to sap the Foundations of Natural, as well as Revealed Religion.

hands

hands of Civil Magistrates, to secure the publick Peace and Tranquillity, and answer the End of human Governments, are utterly unlawful and abominable when used as Engines to propagate Religion, whether True or False. It excludes all Imposition upon Conscience, either of the Words of God, or the Words of Men: I mean, Imposition animated by Temporal Penalties. For it is neither Imposition nor Persecution, but a Necessary Duty, to exclude Infidels, vicious Persons, or such as deny what we apprehend to be an Essential Part of Faith, from the Communion of the Church in Things Sacred. It is not a pious Zeal, (for that means no Injury to any, deprives no Man of his Rights) but Covetousness or Ambition, varnish'd over with feign'd Pretences, or a downright Fury and Madness, that inspires Those who are for imposing Religion, or any part of it, upon Mankind, with Imprisonments, Banishments, Forfeitures, or any other Instruments of human Terror. These may be proper to propagate a Mahometan Gospel, but are most abhorrent to all the Maxims upon which the Blessed Jesus founded his Religion. He owns none but voluntary Subjects; nor has appointed any other Force to make them such, but that of constraining Love, instructing Reasons, and gentle Entreaties, join'd with an inward Efficacy, that by the Conviction of the Mind disarm the most implacable Heart, casting down false Reasonings, and bringing every Thought into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ. Briefly, there is not a more sensible Evidence of the Weakness of any Cause under the Umbrage of Religion than This, that it needs to be supported by Human Force, or any Infringements of the Natural Rights and Properties of Men. So that if we would successfully contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, if we would effectually recommend it to others, we must not increase their

Prejudices by any *Inhuman Resentments*: We must restrain the implacable Heart, and the violent Hand, suppress all boisterous and revengeful Passions, and utterly detest in our selves, as well as in others, every thing that can truly be called Persecution or Imposition upon Conscience.

BUT tho we assert the *just Liberties* of Mankind, against the Encroachments, whether of a *Civil* or *Religious Tyranny*; it follows not that we must therefore *slacken* our Zeal, or the *Earnestness* of a *lawful Contention* for the *Truths* of God. On the contrary, we lay claim to this *Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*, from the Influence of *Human Power* and *Authority*, in *Matters of Religion*; that, *exempt from those Terrors*, we may with a more generous *Courage* baffle the Cause of *Error*, *Blasphemy*, and *Irreligion*, and vindicate the *Truth* against all that oppose, or betray it. In this we must be bold and resolute: Nor must

Gal. 2. 5. we give place for a *Moment*; or count
Act. 20. 24. any *Things* or *Persons* dear unto us, when called to testify the *Gospel of the Grace of God*.

IT is not enough that we ourselves be inwardly persuaded of the Truth. The *Faith* of the *Heart*, and the *Confession of the Mouth*, are enjoin'd together, as of equal Necessity. And our Lord hath expressly declared, *Whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I deny before my Father which is in Heaven. And whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own Glory, and in his Father's, and of the Holy Angels.* We must therefore hold fast the *Confession* [ὁμολογῶν] of our *Faith* without *wavering*, for he is faithful that *promised*.

Rom. 10. 10.
Matt. 10. 33.
Luke 9. 26.
Heb. 10. 23.

promised. We must openly, and without *Prevarication*, declare our Sentiments, especially in Matters that are confessedly * of the greatest Importance in Religion. A secure or fearful Silence, or an artful Concealment of our Faith, argue a mean and carnal Spirit. Sanctify the Lord in your Hearts, and be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you, with Meekness and Fear. 1 Pet. 3. 15.

IN this open Profession and Acknowledgment of what we believe, we must be fearless of the Resentments of Men, or any Reproaches we may sustain for a stedfast Adherence to the Truth. We are to contend for the Faith with a Spirit of Meekness, but that Meekness must be back'd with an invincible Fortitude, and spirited with an ardent Zeal for God. A fordid degenerated Complaisance to the Errors and Crimes of Men, by whatever Names they may be dignified, enters not into the Composition of that humble and forbearing Temper, which is so much recommended in Scripture as the great Ornament of a Christian's Life.

NOR must we desert this Contest, or be Neuter in it, from any Worldly or Political Views. This would be to barter the Gospel, to cauponate the most Sacred Things, profanely to sell the Truth, and expose ourselves and our Profession to the Contempt of Infidels and profane Libertines; who when they have serv'd their own Turn, will leave us to that Shame and Confusion which would be the just Recompence of so servile a Compliance, so mischie-

* Vid. Dr. Clark's Preface to his Script. Doct. of the Trinity.

vous an Indifferency towards the Cause of God. Those who suffer themselves to be swayed, *in the Things of God*, by the *Fear* or *Favour* of Men, can never be uniformly true to God or Man. Nor can any

Conduct expose us more to the *Jealousies of the Son of God, who hath Eyes*

Rev. 2. 18. like unto a Flame of Fire, that penetrate thro universal Nature; who hath declared, in the

most solemn manner, *All the Churches*

Ver. 23. shall know, that I am He who searcheth the Reins and Hearts; so that no *frau-*

*dule*nt Words can elude his *Omniscience*: who is more dishonoured by the *Perfidy* of those that call

him *Lord*, than the *open Hostilities* of his avowed *E-*

nemies; and detests nothing more than a cold *Neu-*

trality, in things that immediately affect his *Ho-*

nour and *Glory*. *I know thy Works,*

Rev. 3. 15, 16. that thou art neither hot nor cold, I would

thou wert cold or hot; so then, because

thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew

thee out of my Mouth.

THUS we are to contend for the Faith once deli-

vered to the Saints; with a manly Zeal, an intrepid

Resolution, and a hearty Disdain of all base Com-

pliances with the *Heresies* of some, or the *Lusts* of

others: Yet free from *Rancor*, *Hatred*, *Wrath*, or

any other *evil* Passion; and discovering by our Words

and Actions, that we look upon a flaming persecu-

ting Zeal, as one of the most malignant Dispositions

that Human Nature, in its utmost degenerate State,

can be capable of.

I PROMISED,

III. *THIRDLY*, More particularly to consider the *Duty* here recommended in its *Extent*, as it respects *Ministers* and *private* Christians.

THO

THO some are more capable than others, or by the nature of their Office *set for the Defence of the Gospel*; yet there is an *Phil. 1. 17.* indispensable Obligation on all the Disciples of Christ, whatever Character they sustain, to contend for the Faith, and promote the Interests of true Religion, in that Way which suits their Condition. And,

1. THIS is the proper Work, and should be the principal Care of the *Ministers* of the Gospel, in all their Labours and Ministrations. They have no more *Dominion* than others, over the Faith of their Brethren; and it becomes them to avoid all *needless Controversies, and Strifes about Words to no profit*: but they are under all possible Engagements to guard the *Foundations* of Christianity against every thing that might sap or undermine them. They are not only inwardly to *resent* any Defection which they behold from the *Truth and Purity* of the Gospel, but to set themselves in *open Defiance* to all *Heretical Opinions*, to all *Errors* contrary to the *Rule of Faith*. When *false Teachers and Seducers* are bold and impudent, in spreading the Poison of their Doctrines all around them; when they maintain the *Innocency of Error*, tho' *Idols be the Work of Errors*, and *Unbelief the Root* Jer. 10. 15. of all *Disobedience*, a *Complication* of Errors: when, in consequence of this, they blaspheme the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, deny his *Eternal Godhead*, profane his *Blood*, the Price of our Redemption, as accidentally shed; and turn into *Burlesque and Ridicule*, the *Unity* of the *Sacred Three*: When such *Blasphemies*, I say, appear without disguise, and are vended without controul; it is high time for the *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, (unless that Character is to be given up in compliment

to the *Tribe of Libertines*) to bestir themselves, in Vindication of those *Truths* that are in a particular manner committed to their Trust.

AS their own Salvation depends upon it, that they *hold the Mystery of the Faith in pure Consciences*; as all the Tyes of Honour, Gratitude and Faithfulness, oblige them to satisfy their People, that they do so, when called to it; so it is their obvious Duty to declare against, and oppose those Errors, that are most encroaching, and warn the People whence their present Dangers are to be apprehended.

IN this we shall follow the Example of the Apostles, and first Preachers, who in their Sermons and *Epistles* took special care to accommodate their Instructions to the most *urgent Occasions* of the Church. It was the Denial of the *Resurrection* gave occasion to that Noble and Eloquent Discourse, in *1 Cor. ch. 15.* It was the Opposition the *Jews* made to the Gospel-way of *Justification*, that obliged the Apostle of the *Gentiles* to be so copious on that Subject; as their Vanity, in supposing themselves to be the sole Favourites of Heaven, administer'd occasion to some other very important Points of *Revelation*. And their tenacious Adherence to the Discipline of *Moses*, especially *the Service of the Tabernacle*, gave the same inspir'd Author an opportunity to insist so largely on the *Priesthood* and *Satisfaction* of Christ, to which all their *Sacrifices* referred. Thus the *Epistle of James* had its rise from the perverse Construction Men of vitious Lives put upon the Doctrine of *Justification by Faith*: For being willing to reconcile the retaining of their unmortified Lusts with a State of Acceptance with God, they endeavoured to persuade themselves, that a Profession of Christianity was sufficient to entitle them to the
Mer-

Mercies of the Gospel, without a suitable Conversation. Which was a vile Corruption of the whole Doctrine of Faith; for whatever some *Socinians* have said to the contrary, it is impossible there can be any such thing as true Evangelical Faith, without Repentance, without Charity, and Obedience.

IN like manner, the Writings of the other Apostles were, a considerable part of them, levell'd against the Errors of those Times in which they lived. It is affirm'd of St. *John* in particular, that he wrote his Gospel on this very Design, to vindicate the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, in opposition to *Cerintbus*, and the other *Gnosticks*, the Offspring of *Simon Magus*; who, by their false and impious Glosses, had corrupted the whole Doctrine concerning the Person and Offices of JESUS CHRIST. The same Heresies are condemn'd in the Epistles of *Peter* and *Jude*. And if those inspired Guides applied their Labours in defence of those Truths that were most struck at by *Satan* and his *Ministers*, in their Day; such as succeed them in their ordinary Work of Preaching, and transmitting uncorrupted to Posterity the Doctrines of Faith, should be ambitious of copying after so honourable and so safe a Pattern.

VAIN were it for a Man to guard his Friend against the Preparations of a distant Enemy, if without giving an Alarm he saw his next Neighbour meditating a present Ruin. To what purpose is it to dispute the Evidences of Revealed Religion against the *Deists*, if we suffer it to be betrayed into their hands, or corrupted by others? For my own part, I cannot conceive how those who depart from the Common Faith of the Reform'd Churches, in the Doctrine of the Ever-blessed and Undivided Trinity, who oppugn the True Deity of our

our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, his being one God with the Father, of the same Adorable Nature; who regard his Death as an *accidental* Thing, or deny it to be a proper *Atonement* for Sin, a compleat *Satisfaction* to divine Justice; can any longer retain a due Esteem for the Scriptures, as given *by Inspiration of God*. For these Doctrines (which I willingly own are sacred *Mysteries*, above our shallow Capacities to comprehend) are so fully contain'd in them, that, taking all the Scriptures relating to them in one View, it is not easy to express any thing with a greater Clearness, or a greater Emphasis. And those who have labour'd on the other side of the Question, know by Experience how difficult it is, without a direct Violation, to work them to a contrary Sense by all the Arts of nicest *Criticism*, tho' join'd with their *Novel* and *Ambiguous* Terms, invented to disguise their Errors, and confound their Readers. We cannot therefore consistently maintain the divine Authority of the Scriptures, or satisfy those who resolve their Faith into them, that we are in earnest in so doing, unless at the same time we do most *firmly believe* and *heartily contend* for those Truths which are so great and essential a Part of them.

2. *PRIVATE Christians* are not to look upon themselves as unconcern'd in *this Contest*. They also are to *abet* the Truth by their Suffrages, and their most active Endeavours to preserve it inviolable. *Ministers* and *People* ought to pour out their unanimous Requests unto God, that he would espouse the Cause that is his own; that he would *preserve those from falling* who have hitherto kept the Faith, *confirm the Doubtful* and *Wavering*, *reclaim those* who have *wandered* into the Labyrinths of Error, and prevent the lamentable Influences, which, without the powerful Interposition of his Grace, the *Defection*
of

of the present Times is like to have on the *Rising Generation*. They ought to have a quick Resentment, and a *Mournful Sense* of the Affronts offered to our great God and *Saviour Jesus Christ* by Men of proud and *reprobate Minds*, who employ their impious Labours to obscure the Majesty of his Godhead; and by thrusting him down into the Rank of *Inferior Beings*, not only arraign the *Divinity of his Person*, but annul the *Authority and Efficacy of his Doctrine*. *I beheld the Transgressors*, (or, as some render it, the *Prevaricators*) and was grieved because they kept not thy Oracles. This is a Frame of Spirit that well becomes the *Genius* of the Gospel, which takes away the *hard and stony Heart*. Nor was there ever greater Reason to exercise it than now: The Apostacy of our Times is so notorious, that it needs no aggravating Colours to render it *lamentable*, but the bare View of that Scene which unavoidably presents it self to our Observation.

IT belongs particularly to the *People*, not only to *edify every Man his Neighbour*, and exhort one another to *stand fast in the Lord*; but it is their Interest and Duty to strengthen the Hands of their *Ministers*, to *encourage their Labours*, to pray for them, and prompt them to *take heed to the Ministry, which they have received in the Lord*; that Religion may not suffer thro their *Fearfulness, Indifferency, or Neglects*. Thus they become *συνεργοί, Fellow-Labourers, or Fellow-Helpers to the Truth*; and *partake in the Defence and Confirmation of the Gospel*.

Col. 4. 17.

3 Joh. ver. 8.

Phil. 1. 7.

IT greatly concerns them to watch against the *cunning Artifices* of those who lie in wait to deceive, and to keep at a distance from them, when there is danger of receiving Impressions from their artful Insinuations. The Apostle's Direction is 2 Joh. ver. 10. *strict and peremptory; If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, (the Doctrine of Christ) receive him not into your House, neither bid him God-speed.* We must not encourage his Errors, lest we partake in his Guilt. This is neither *Ill-nature*, nor *Persecution*, but a necessary and prudent Care of a Man's own Preservation. Good Principles, as well as good Manners, may be corrupted. As no *Virtue* is so establish'd, but it may be in danger of being supplanted by strong and violent Temptations to its *contrary*, if not presently resisted with a resolv'd Tendency of Soul; so the *Faith* of a Christian may be endanger'd by an unguarded *Communication* with crafty Deceivers.

THE Apostle gives not this Caution with respect to all who may differ from us in Matters of *Opinion*, but he expressly telleth who are thus to be discountenanc'd; viz. Those who abide Ver. 7, 8. *not in the Doctrine of Christ, or who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh:* that is, as he explains it in his *Gospel*, who deny that the W O R D, or *Logos*, who was God from Everlasting, by whom all *Made Things* [all Things that had an *Original* or *Beginning*] were made, who is the *Creator* of all *Creatures*, was made *Flesh*, became Man, like unto us in all Things, Sin only excepted; or assum'd, dwelt in, and was inwardly united unto the human Nature; by virtue of which Union, *God and Man were truly one Person.* He that denieth this, *abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ, but is a Deceiver;*

ceiver; and if he attempts to seduce you, you must have nothing to do with him.

IF this *receiving into the House* relates to Christian Communion, which is the Opinion of Grotius, it is plain we can have no *such Fellowship* with any who openly deny what we believe to be an *Essential Part of the Christian Faith*. Mr. Whiston, in his late Letter to Dr. Humphreys, declares, "That he is
" far from the Ebionite or Socinian Doctrine, that
" in his own private Opinion he is no way satisfied,
" so much as to Baptize any that openly profess it. *"

If

* I confess I was surprized at the reading of this Passage; for I verily thought that the Arian and Socinian Schemes were near a-kin. Nor do I see any thing in Mr. Whiston's Articles and Catalogue of Fundamentals, to make me alter that Opinion: I doubt not but upon a nice Comparison it will appear that the greatest Difference between them consists in this, That the Socinians (absit Blasphemia!) make Christ to be a younger God than the Arians do. Both agree in this, That he is truly God and Lord by the Appointment of the Father, as having received from him a supereminent Dominion: That he is far above all subordinate Creatures, and peculiarly Near and Dear to the supreme God the Father. And neither will allow him to be an eternal necessary Being, or a Being without Beginning; or that he is God absolutely supreme over all. And both equally contend that he owes his Being and Divinity (that is, as they explain it, his Authority) to the mere Will and Power of the Father; that he is every way inferior and subordinate to Him; a derivative Dependent Being, who has nothing but what he received. They also agree in their Notions about Inferior Worship, as due unto him; and have much the same Sentiments concerning the End and Efficacy of his Death and Mediation. And as for the Difference of Age or Duration, whether he was created or begotten before all (other) subordinate Creatures, or about 1700 Years ago, it is not, I think, very material; since both agree that He is an Arbitrary Production, deriving his Essence from the Will of the Father, as from the supreme Cause. At least, the Difference is not so fundamental, as to cause a Breach of Communion between Brethren, "who appear to agree
" in the Main, tho they may not chuse to express themselves in the
" same Terms;" especially since it may be easily adjusted, and both

If this be the Opinion of *his Party*, they can never expect that Those who believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be *one God with the Father, the Supreme, Eternal, Infinite God*, and who utterly detest the Notion of his being a *Made* or a *Created* God, or even of his being begotten before all Ages by the Arbitrary Will and Power of the Father, (which kind of *Generation* differs not formally from a proper *Creation*) as that is opposed to his being eternally begotten of the Father by *absolute Necessity of Nature*; can with a good Conscience hold Christian Communion with *Them* who openly deny him to be one God with the Father, who ascribe to him but a delegated Inferior Divinity, and refuse to acknowledge Him as the supreme ultimate Object of divine Worship; or that Those who *worship Him, because* they believe him to be *one God with the Father*, the same in all Divine Perfections of Power, Glory, &c. can with Judgment join in the Solemn Offices of Religion with Those who profess to worship him by *proper Adoration*, and yet at the same time deny him to be God in the highest, strict, and most proper Sense.

AND truly it is hard to conceive what *Religious Motives* can induce Those who are fond of *this Gentleman's*, or *Dr. Clark's* Scheme, so much as to allow of Communion with those Churches and Christians who adhere to the *Catholick Faith*, con-

Parties perfectly reconciled, by declaring themselves in the Words of Revelation only, without an Over-fondness for their Sense and Meaning, lest by insisting on the Mind and Will of God in his Word, the Foundations of Christian Communion be too much straiten'd! But what a vile Abuse of Words this is, what a horrid Imposition upon the Sense and Reason of Mankind, I leave to the Consideration of every judicious Christian, who is not willing to renounce both his Bible and his Understanding, and suffer himself to be led he knows not whither by a mere Sound of Words, without regarding what is signified or intended by them.

cerning

cerning the Doctrine of the *Trinity*! They regard Jesus Christ as an Inferior God, and of a Nature diverse from *the Supreme God the Father*, (as they chuse to express themselves:) Tho if we consider the Term SUPREME, as abstracted from the Creatures, it is purely *Pagan* in its Original, and ought to have no place in the Christian *Theology*, as applied to the *Divine Persons* in the Ever-blessed *Trinity*, among whom there is neither *Supreme* nor *Subordinate*. The Heathens had a *Plurality* of Gods, over whom they acknowledged *one Supreme*; to whom the rest, tho they ascrib'd a *Divinity* to them, were but *Servants* or *Ministers*. But we know there is but *one God*; and when in Scripture he is stiled *The Most High*, it is not in distinction from any other *True God* or *Gods*, who are not *Most High*; but that descriptive Character, so far as it has any thing *respective* in it, distinguishes him only from the *Creatures* or *False Gods*; from whom he is equally *distinguish'd* by all the *Essential Properties* of his Nature, as *Eternity*, *Omniscience*, *Omnipotence*, &c. But to call the Father the *Supreme God* in contradistinction to any *other* who is *Truly God*, but not *Supreme*, is the very *Polytheism* of the Heathens; to be had in Abhorrence of all true Christians, who are taught to acknowledge but *One*, only *Living*, and *True God*. To return: They, I say, *viz.* the Followers of *Dr. Clark*, regard Jesus Christ as an Inferior God, of a *Nature* diverse from the Father; we adore and worship him as *one God with the Father*, absolutely *Supreme* over all: How then can we possibly be *Unanimous* in the same *Religious Offices*, who differ so widely as to the very *Object* of *Worship*? The Thing is impossible!

AND therefore it is amazing to consider any *Plans* should be contrived on either side towards

such an *Heterogeneous* Mixture, as can never take place but upon the *Ruins* even of common SINCERITY!

BUT so it is: If Christian Churches will not admit of a *Promiscuous* Communion with all who pretend a Reverence for the Scriptures, whatever *Errors* they hold inconsistent with the *Faith*; They must be content to bear their *Reproach*, and be mark'd out as *Inquisitors*, and Invaders of the *Rights* of Mankind. But their Consolation is, this very *Reproach* is an invaluable Treasure, the World cannot rob them of. *If ye be reproach'd*
 1 Pet. 4. 14. *for the Name of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the Spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon you: On their Part he is evil spoken of, but on your Part he is glorified.*

THE great Characters of our Religion are *Truth* and *Love*: These can never accord with *Persecution* or *Prevarication*, with a *Forcible* Imposition upon Mens *Consciences*, or a *Fraudulent* Imposition upon their *Understandings*: And the strictest Regards to *Truth* are consistent with that Benevolent Love we owe our Fellow-Creatures, or Fellow-Citizens, whatever *Persuasion* they are of. A *Turk* or *Jew* has as natural a Right to the Freedom of his Person, and the Enjoyment of his Estate, as a Christian; an *Arian* or *Socinian* as the most *Orthodox*. But if either of the latter should pretend to the *Offices* or *Privileges* that relate to Spiritual Communion in a Church, the Members whereof think themselves obliged in *Conscience*
 John 5. 23. *to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; with the same Divine Worship, the same Resignation of their Understandings, Wills, and Affections, to his Supreme Authority, and the same Trust and Confidence in his Mercy;*
 and

to contend for the Faith, &c. 45

and that because they believe Him to be One God with the Father: In such a Case it would be no *Injustice*, no Invasion of any *Rights* that *either* could claim, to debar or exclude Them from such *Offices* or *Privileges*. On the contrary, it would be the greatest *Imposition* in the World, a *Persecution* of the worst sort, to oblige *such Churches* to admit or continue in their Communion Those who maintain what they take to be a *dangerous Error*, or deny what they believe a *Fundamental Truth*; or who upon a *Suspicion* that they do so, refuse to give a *reasonable Satisfaction*. But we have plain Rules in the Gospel to govern us in all Cases of this nature: Rules that are spirited with the *Authority* of God, and may be practis'd without the least Encroachment upon the *Civil* or *Religious Liberties* of Men.

IT is the Glory of a Christian People to stand by those Laws which direct 'em *how they ought to behave themselves in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth*; which command them to mark those that cause *Divisions and OFFENCES, contrary to the sound Doctrine which they have received, and avoid them*: And to withdraw from those arrogant and haughty Spirits, (for such the Apostle calls them) who foment Error in the Church, and consent not to wholesome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine which is according to Godliness. For, without Controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness; God was manifested in the Flesh, &c. To break in upon those sacred Orders, is to invade the Authority of Christ, and violate the Liberties of his People.

TO

TO conclude this *Head*. It is acknowledg'd on all hands, "That there are Errors in Doctrine, of such a nature, as will not only warrant, but oblige Christians to withdraw from the Communion of those who maintain or hold them: And that the People have a Right to judge, what those Errors are, and when they are so maintain'd, &c." Tho' some seem very unwilling they should pursue this their undoubted Right, and would particularly guard against their applying it to the present Differences concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, and the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if a *Dependent Inferior God*, who exists not by *Necessity of Nature*, who might not have been, who was produced by the mere *Will and Power* of another, and may by the same Power be annihilated, (and such a GOD even the new-modell'd *Arianism* makes our Lord Jesus Christ to be) if such a God, I say, be no other than an *Idol of Jealousy*, set up in opposition to the One only True God, Father, Son, and Spirit; and if any Divine Worship paid to him, is no other than *Idolatry, a worshipping the Creature, besides the Creator*; if those who adhere to the *common Faith of the Reformed Churches*, cannot think otherwise: it necessarily follows, according to the Principle abovemention'd, That there can be no *Spiritual Communion* between them and those who are for imposing upon Christians such an *Inferior Deity*, as the Object of their Faith and Worship; or who openly deny our Lord Jesus Christ to be One God with the Father.

2 Cor. 6. *What Communion hath Light with Darkness? and what Concord hath Christ with Belial? or what Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* To withdraw from those who so grossly corrupt the *Doctrine of Christ*, in an Article of this Importance, is not to impose our Opinions upon them, but to prevent their imposing their Errors upon

to contend for the Faith, &c. 47

upon us; and TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, by standing fast in that Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free: Using our LIBERTY neither as a Cloak of Maliciousness, nor as a Pander to HERESIES, but as the Servants of GOD.

IT only remains,

IV. *FOURTHLY*, That I propose some Instructions and Directions, that may be of Use to Christians towards a regular and successful contending for the Faith once delivered to the Saints. And,

I. IT is obvious to every one's Reason, that those who contend for the Faith, should themselves most firmly believe the Principles they contend for, and be able to account for the Grounds of their Persuasion. Faith is a Divine Light, that improves the Understanding with a spiritual Perception of things above the Discoveries of Human Reason. I know, saith the Apostle, whom I have believed; my Faith is not a blind Opinion, an extravagant Fancy, or a groundless Conceit; I know whom I have believed, and upon what Reason and Evidence. And in the Parable of the Sower, he who receiveth the Seed into good Ground, is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth it. He exerciseth his Reason about it, and endeavours to discern the Meaning and Evidence thereof.

BUT here a Fallacy is to be guarded against, viz. That we must not make our own Understandings or Reasonings, the Standard of our Faith. We are often put in mind, by some sort of Men, "That our Religion is a Reasonable Religion; that that Belief of the Articles of our Creed, which will be acceptable to God, is a Rational Persuasion; that

“ that it cannot be our Duty to believe Contra-
 “ dictions; and that we must make use of our Rea-
 “ son, in judging about Articles of Faith, &c.”
 What wonderful Discoveries are here! Who say not
 the same things? But we say farther: That tho
 we readily own our Religion is a *Reasonable Religion*,
 yet it is not founded upon the Principles of *Human*
Reason, but is *Supernatural* in its Discovery. And
 tho it contains nothing *contradictory*, or absolutely
unintelligible, yet it consists of many *sublime Myste-*
ries, that are above our shallow Comprehension,
 and which in this imperfect State *we know but in*
part. These Divine *Mysteries* are in themselves
 most perfect Objects of Knowledge; and we are
 capable, by the Assistance of the Blessed Spirit, of
 knowing them truly, and exercising our Thoughts
 about them, tho we cannot adequately know or
 comprehend them. It is also true, that Faith which
 God requires of us, is a Rational Persuasion. But
 in what respects? Not as it is the effect of our own
 Ratiocinations, or to be govern'd by them, but as it
 is founded on the Word of God. We cannot give
 our Consent to confound *Articles of Faith*, that are
 to be believed on the Authority and Veracity of
 God, and *Objects of Science*, that fall under the Dis-
 quisition of our own Faculties, or human Observa-
 tions: and therefore we cannot confound *Faith* and
Reason so as to place no *specifical* difference between
 them. And tho we freely own, that *our Reason* is
 not useless in judging about *Articles of Faith*, (that
 is, in *discerning* the Evidence of a Divine Revela-
 tion, what Propositions are contain'd in it, and in
distinguishing things of a *Divine Original* from what
 are spurious and counterfeit) yet we dare not lay
 such a *stress* upon it, as to make it the *Sovereign*
Judge of Supernatural Verities: But when a Doc-
 trine appears to be from God, we judge it our Duty
 to

to acquiesce in it, without pretending to a *curious Explication* of things above our measure. So that tho we cannot comprehend the *Mysteries* of our Religion, we can give a very just Account why we embrace them, as *worthy of all Acceptation*; and our *Belief* of them is a *Rational Persuasion*, as it is founded upon a Declaration of God, who is infinite in Knowledge, who cannot possibly deceive us, and whose *sole Word* is a more infallible Ground of *Certainty*, than all the *Maxims* upon which human Sciences are built.

BUT there is something strange, I had almost said *mysterious*, in the Complexion of those among us, who are for Levelling all *Articles of Faith* to their own Capacities: They will not believe, *e. g.* that *There are three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, of one Substance, Power, and Eternity*, because they look upon it as an Imposition upon human Nature, to be obliged to believe a Doctrine so far above their common Notions; and yet with respect to this very Doctrine, they embrace *Theories* that are more unconceivable. Such is the Absurdity of a *Dependant God*, who neither *was made out of Nothing*, nor is the *Self-existent Substance*; but a *middle Nature* between *created* and *uncreated*! who is not *absolutely Eternal*, and yet always *was*! who is indeed ΠΑΥΤΟΔΪ-
 νΑΜΩ, *Omnipotent*, or may be so called, but is not ΠΑΥΤΟΚΕΑΤΩ, *Supreme over all*! who is *God over all*, *Blessed for ever*, and yet a *Precarious Inferior Being*, as much depending upon the Supreme Cause, as those *vain Men* who form to themselves such a *Chimerical Divinity*, &c! Are these very intelligible Notions? How easy were it here to retort the Charge of *Nonsense* and *Contradiction*, with which these Men so often defame the Truths of God? But the Subject is too *solemn*, and strikes rather with

G

Horror

Horror and Indignation than any other *Resentment*. We may justly say, there is a *Mystery of Iniquity* in the present Defection from the *Mystery of Godliness*.

II. IF we would *contend for the Faith*, it is necessary we put a due *Valuation* upon the *Principles* we contend for. You may observe, in our *Jude, ver. 4. Context*, a *Connexion* between the *common Salvation*, and the *Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*. So that some *Doctrines* are to be contended for, not only as *True*, but as *Essential* to the *Christian Hope*. We may meet with some who will tell us, that they believe the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, and the *Divinity* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, as we do. But then they let us know that they look upon the *Difference* between us, and those who believe otherwise, to be rather *Notional* than of any great *Importance*: That Men may be very good Christians, and challenge all the *Privileges* of *Christian Communion* with us, tho they do not believe, for instance, that Jesus CHRIST, the *Word*, or *Logos*, is one God with the Father, the *True, Eternal, and Supreme* God, and refuse to *worship* Him as *such*: That if Men will own the *Scriptures* for the *Rule of Faith*, and govern their *Manners* by the *Moral Precepts* of the *Gospel*; their *Sentiments* about the *DOCTRINE* of the *TRINITY*, the *Person of Christ*, the *Design* and *Efficacy* of his *Death*, and the like, enter not into the *Essence* of *Religion*. But such *Principles* are as dangerous to the *Faith*, as the most undisguised *Opposition*, and of a more malignant *Influence* upon others. There is not a more effectual way to *ruin any Cause*, than by *betraying* it. Christians will be upon their guard against those who *openly deny* the *Faith*; but every one is not so easily aware of the *Poison* that lurks under

under these New Notions of *Indifferency*. When *Articles of Faith* are put into the same Catalogue with *Things indifferent*, the Transition is easy and natural, from that detestable *Indifference* to downright *Infidelity*. Beware therefore of this (latent) *Snare*. It is not enough that we believe the Truths of the Christian Revelation, but we must put a due *Estimate* upon the Doctrines of Christianity, according to their *Importance*: without this we shall be an open Prey to every *cunning* Seducer, and by degrees brought to such a *Neutrality* in Matters of Faith, that we shall regard no difference between Truth and Error.

III. BEWARE of being led away by the *Sound of Words*, without attending to their *true Sense*, and the *Respects* they may bear in the Application of them, to very *different Objects*. “*Nothing* (as Bishop *Stillingfleet* observes *) *hath been a more fruitful Mother of Errors, than when under the SAME NAME, something far different from what was primarily intended by the use of the Word, is set forth to us.*” And the Bishop of *Bangor* begins his late famous Sermon, with the like Observation of the Abuse of certain Words and Sounds; which he ascribes to the *Ignorance* and *Weakness* of some, and the *Passions* and *bad Designs* of others. The most sacred *Name* of GOD has not escap'd this Abuse. Who would suspect their *Orthodoxy*, who declare, That they believe the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, and the *proper Divinity* of our Lord Jesus CHRIST, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures? Yet there is not an *Arian* or *Socinian* in the World, but will *freely* make that *Declaration!* whilst in the mean time, the *Socinian* disclaims *Arianism*, and the *Arian* dis-

* *Iren.* Part 2. ch. 6. Edit. 2. p. 237.

owns *Socinianism*. Yea farther, they will pronounce Him to be *truly and properly* God, whom with the same Breath they reduce to a *Non-Entity*!

BUT *CHARITY* is the *charming Sound*. This in Scripture signifies the Love of God, and of our Neighbour: But if we were to take our Notion of *Charity*, from a very common Abuse of that *Word*, we should define it to be an *Unconcernedness for the Truths of Religion*. Far be it from me to suggest any thing *diminutive* of that noble and heavenly *Grace, which is the Bond of Perfection*. But I know no *Charity* that is separated from a sacred inviolable Regard to the *Glory of GOD, his Ways, his Truth*. And tho I very much dislike that *Narrowness of Spirit* by which some are too apt to *damn* all that are not of their Opinion; I can by no means approve of that *false Catholicism*, which inclines others to sacrifice the *main and distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity*, to an *Over-complaisance to Men of all*

1 Tim. 2. 4. *Persuasions in Religion. God will have all Men to be saved, [Men of all Ranks and Conditions] and to come unto the*

Knowledge of the Truth. But whether he *wills* the Salvation of any without that *Knowledge*, who can affirm? And as for those who hear the Gospel, the

Joh. 3. 18. *Case is plain: He that believeth not, is condemn'd, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God. And, He that believeth not the*

Ver. ult. *Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him*. It is not left *free* to them *whether* they will believe, or *what* they will believe; but they are determin'd as to *both*, by the exprefs Declarations of Him, whose Will commands a present Obedience. And the *Evidences* he hath given of the *Truth and Certainty* of the Christian Doctrine

to contend for the Faith, &c. 53

in general, and of the *main Articles* of the *Evangelical Faith* in particular, are such as will leave all *Unbelievers* without Excuse; whatever vain Pretences they make to *Sincerity* in their Enquiries, or want of *Evidence* in the Doctrines themselves.

MEN may boast of *extensive Charity*, magnify a *Freedom* and *Latitude* of Opinions, declaim against *Creeds* and *Confessions*, as magisterial *Impositions* upon Conscience; and recommend themselves to the World, under the Name of *Universalists*, *Peacemakers*, and *Reconcilers*: but these are *swelling Words of Vanity*, out of the Mouths of those who in the mean time forget there is any such Thing as *Truth to be contended for*. And however *friendly* they may suppose themselves to be to Mankind, yet in reality their Principles are most destructive and pernicious, as having a direct *tendency* to promote *Infidelity*, and thereby hazard the Salvation of Mens Souls.

LET us be for *Charity* in its utmost *due Extent*, and *as much as in us lieth*, as far as is possible and *lawful*, follow *Peace with all Men*; but let us not, under that Pretence, abandon our Religion, or give up any *necessary* part of Faith. If we will indeed shew our *Charity*, let us do it, not by *flattering* some in their Infidelity, or *tempting* others, by any *Conduct* of ours, to sit loose from the most *considerable Doctrines* of the Gospel; but by declaring freely against all *pernicious Errors*, whoever propagate or abet them; and by endeavouring, *in the Spirit of Meekness*, to convince those 2Tim.2.25,26. that oppose themselves, if God will peradventure give them *Repentance*, to the acknowledgment of the *Truth*, that they may recover themselves out of the *Snare of the Devil*.

I SHALL only add, that we must not make our own *Wills* the Standard of Charity, no more than our Reason the Standard of Theological Truths. The Word of God is the Rule of *Christian Charity*. It determines its *Nature* and *Objects*. It commands us to follow *Righteousness*,
 2 Tim. 2. 22. *Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart*. It distinguishes the *common Respects* we owe to one another as Men, from that *fervent Love to the Brethren*, which is the Evidence of a spiritual Life. And if we suffer any *Passion*, under the Name of Charity, to break in upon this Rule; if we separate *Righteousness* and *Faith* from *Charity*; if under a shew of being favourable to all Men, we betray the Truth, enervate the Gospel, and introduce *Scepticism* or *Indifference* into Religion; we impose upon ourselves, and the World too, if we call this *Charity*, which in reality is but a *vitious Affection*. I should rather call it *Cruelty* than *Charity*; because under the colour of Good-Nature and Beneficence to others, it nourishes the *worst of Errors*, and insensibly betrays the Simple and Unwary, to look upon them as *harmless things*.

IV. THERE is no *contending for the Faith once delivered to the Saints* without a *Fixedness* of Mind, an *unshaken Stedfastness* and *Resolution* to adhere to it, against all *Temptations* to the contrary. There is an *Inconstancy* of Spirit, which betrays
 Jam. 1. 6. Men into Error: *For he that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea, driven with the Wind, and tossed*; or, as St. Paul expresses it, *Tossed to and fro, and carried about with every*
 Eph. 4. 14. *Wind of Doctrine, by the Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness of those who lie in wait*

wait to deceive. For this Reason, there is nothing more frequently recommended to us than a *Stedfastness* of Faith in Christ, a being *rooted, and built up, and stablished in the Faith, as we HAVE BEEN TAUGHT*; in opposition to New Doctrines, and the vain Deceits of a *False Philosophy*, those Tools of *Imposture*, that dazle the Eyes of the *Ignorant* and *Unstable*. It is not necessary that every Christian be able to detect the *Sophistry*, and answer all the *subtile Reasonings* of those who oppose the Gospel: It is an undoubted Principle with a Believer, *Let God be true, and every Man a Lyar.* But without the *Firmness* of a well-*assured Mind*, there is no standing against * Gal. 3. 1. the * *Magick* of Error, especially when set off with bold Pretences to *Reason* and *Knowledge*, the constant *Guise* of *Hereticks*.

A *FLUCTUATING* Disposition is easily captivated by surprizing Novelties, that have a *Shew* of Wisdom. And when this *Humour* takes, when Men are possessed with a *Spirit of Giddiness*, they are never easy but when they are changing their Principles, and shifting from one side of a Question to the other: They look upon it as *Mean* and *Abject* to pay any Regard to "*Doctrines that have been generally accounted the Standard of Orthodoxy,*" how long or universally soever they may have been received; I may add, tho' back'd with the clearest Evidence of Scripture. This would be an unreasonable Restraint! Their Thoughts are their own! They are resolved to assert a Boundless Liberty! Thus *inuring* themselves to a Looseness of Thought, they come at last to question *which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God*: They discard the *Primitive Doctrines*, as too common for Men of refined Understandings: Their *New Notions* cannot please them long;

long; even *These* become burdensome when they curb the Luxuriant Fancy, and the Affectation of *Novelty*. And where can Men of this *Complexion* centre but in Scepticism, which knows no *settled Principle*, and is indifferent to all Persuasions?

I FREELY grant, it is no good Reason why we should “*hold fast an Opinion, merely because generally received, and long entertain’d.*” It becomes us to be always open to Conviction from Scripture or Reason. But the *Novelty* of an Opinion, especially in *Matters of Faith*, is no Argument in its favour, but rather a Prejudice against it: Nor must we condemn the substantial Doctrines of Christianity, because of their *Currency* or *Antiquity*. The *Faith of the Gospel* has been settled long ago: The Church has been in possession of *that Faith* from the *Beginning*; and from the Beginning took the Words of Scripture in a *certain determinate Sense*, without which there could be no *Certainty* of Faith among Christians. This Faith is handed down to us; and we have as clear Proof as can be reasonably insisted on, what has been the Sense of the Church, in all Ages, concerning the main *Articles* of Faith, especially those now controverted; and *that* before any Doctrines were agreed upon by *General Councils*, or Christianity itself had the Sanction of Human Authority. And tho no Christian ought to ground his Faith on any other Testimony than that of Scripture, yet it should be no small Satisfaction to all good Men, that the great Truths they contend for have been always *held* and *maintain’d* by the Christian Church. This we are sure of, That the Scriptures contain the same Doctrines now which they did 1600 Years ago; that these Doctrines were as well understood in the earliest Ages, as in any since; and that what

is

is commonly taught in the *Reformed Churches*, in their *Confessions* and *Articles*, concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, and the *Person* of *CHRIST*, is the very same with what was believed and taught in the *Christian Church* from the *Beginning*, tho not without *Opposition* from *Satan* and his *Emis- saries*. But some are *given to change*, and will bear no *Controul*: They are ready to remove the most *antient Land-Marks*: All their *Motions* are un- *steddy*. This *Tribe of Seekers*, like *filly Women*, are *ever learning*, and *never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*. Hence they are *carried about with divers and strange Doctrines*, and know not what it is to be *confirm'd* in any *Principle* but the *Notion of Free-Thinking*, or an *unconscionable Liberty* of be- *lieving* as they will.

IT is therefore absolutely necessary that we be well assur'd of the *Truth*; that our *Minds* be *compo- sed* and *steddy*; that we be *grounded and settled in the Faith*, and *unmov'd from the Hope of the Gospel*, which we have heard. Col. 1. 23. This is what the great *Apostle of the Gentiles* wish- ed for the *Colossians*, *That they might at- tain to the full Assurance of Understand- ing in the Knowledge of the Mystery of God, even of the Father, and of CHRIST*. As without which, considering the *Imbecillity* and *Fickleness* of *Humane Nature*, and the *Glozing Ar- tifices* of *Seducers*, they might be in *danger* of being carried aside with *enticing Words* of *worldly Wis- dom*. In like manner he expresses his *vehement Concern* for the *Corinthians*, *Lest by any Means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve thro his Sub- tility, their Minds should be corrupted from the the Simplicity that is in Christ*, 2Cor. 11. 3, 4.

*to that degree, as to bear with them who should preach
Another Jesus, Another Spirit, and Another Gospel.*

V. THERE is no holding the *Mystery of the Faith* but in a pure Conscience, no contending for it without a *Conversation* becoming the Gospel. 'Tis a leading Rule, that those who have believed in God, and trust to be saved by the *Merits* of a Redeemer, should be careful to maintain good Works. This very Faith engages them to keep at the greatest distance from Sin, and practise universal Obedience to the Holy Law of God. The *Mysteries* of our Religion are *Mysteries of Godliness*, design'd to enlarge our Understandings, purify and warm our Hearts, sublimiate our Affections, enliven and extend our Hopes, the Springs of Action, and command a correspondent Life and Practice. They are ignorant of these *Mysteries*, who regard them as mere Speculations. This is an extreme Error of Mind, which renders so many indifferent about them. But if we view them in that Light in which the Gospel places them, if we exercise our Faith upon them, we shall discover such Beauties and Excellencies in them, as will captivate our Understandings, and engage our choicest Affections; whilst with open Face, beholding
2 Cor. 3. ult. *as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

THE Faith of the Gospel is so far from vacating the *Moral Duties* of Religion, that without Faith it is impossible to please God, or practise those Duties in a manner agreeable to his Will. The Faith he requires of us, is an active persevering Principle of a spiritual Life; and living by Faith is opposed to Disobedience. It has the same Signification with
walking

walking by Faith; which, what is it but to order our *Conversation* according to our Faith, or according to that Evidence it gives of the Reality and Importance of those eternal glorious Things it is conversant about? They are therefore equally deceived, who imagine there can be any *Practice of Virtue* approv'd of God, that is not supported and influenc'd by a Principle of Faith, (as that implies a firm *Affent of Mind* to the great Truths of the Gospel, a hearty *Approbation* of them, and a *Fiducial* *Regard* to the *Merits* of Christ, without which we cannot act Faith on him as our *Priest* and *Sacrifice*;) or who, on the other hand, flatter themselves that just Notions of Religion will avail them in the sight of God, without Obedience to the Moral Laws of the Gospel. *Faith* and *Holiness* are inseparably connected by a Moral Efficiency, and a Divine Command. All Pretences to *Sanctity of Manners*, and *Probity of Life*, without *Faith*, are vain and deceitful; and *Faith without Works is dead*. The *Faith of God's Elect*, is an *Acknowledgement of the Truth which is after* Tit. 1. 1. *Godliness*. And wherever this Truth is received in its Love and Power, it irradiates the Intellectual Faculties with the *Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of JESUS CHRIST*; it subdues all predominant Lusts, and vitious Affections; it restores the just *Freedom* of the Will, that is naturally a *Slave* to the *inferior Appetites*, a *Servant of Corruption*; and imparts a *Divine Sense* and *Vigour* to the Rational Soul in the Pursuit of *Heavenly Things*; with a just *Disdain* of all base Desires and Practices. *Let us therefore take heed lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the Living God; or lest we disgrace the Faith, and invert the Spring of all our Mercies, by turning the Grace of God into an In-*

couragement to Vice. Let none upbraid us with an *Orthodox Creed*, and an *Heretical Practice*; but let us *shew our Faith by our Works*, and manifest that the *Grace and Truth we contend for* are the *Life and Soul* of all True Religion, the most powerful and the most abiding Principle of an Holy Life. And,

VI. SEEING our *first and chiefest* Regards are due to God, *let us be constant and importunate in Prayer*, that he would guide us into all necessary Truth: *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* We ought particularly to pray with *great Fervency* to the *Father of Lights*, that he would stop the Progress of Error, and pour forth a *Spirit of Love, and Power, and of a sound Mind*, in opposition to that *Spirit of Delusion* which is so rampant among us. Those who fall into Error destructive of the *Faith*, are said to be 2Tim. 2.18. *captivated by the Snare of the Devil.* The same Apostle tells us, *It is the God of 25. 26. this World that blinds the Minds of them which believe not*; so that the *Light of the Gospel*, tho ever so *Glorious* in itself, cannot *shine into them*. He casts a *Mist* before their Eyes, that renders them impenetrable to all the Evidences of Truth. He corrupts their Understandings, and perverts their Judgments, by strong Delusions of Pride and Self-Conceit. And the greatest Judgment God inflicts in this World upon obstinate Sinners that refuse to acknowledge the Truth, is to leave them to his fatal Influences. We have too great reason to apprehend such a *Spiritual Desertion*. Would to God, we were all more sensible of this, and of the *Desolation* it threatens to the *Churches of Christ*. We should need no other Motive to put us upon the most earnest

to contend for the Faith, &c. 61

nest wrestling with God, *with all Prayer Eph. 6.18. and Supplication*, that he would chain up the *Adversary* of the Truth, prevent the spreading of perverse and damnable Doctrines, and diffuse those *Supernatural Influences* which are necessary to preserve and restore the *Purity of Faith, and Power of Godliness.*

TO conclude: Let us, as becomes Christians, express in our whole Deportment, a deep Sense of God, an hearty Concern for his Glory, and the Advancement of his Kingdom in the World; that the Name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in us; and we may honour him in every Capacity, who is exalted above every Name. Let our Practice bear witness, that tho we think it our indispensable Duty to declare our Abhorrence of all *false Doctrines*, and to contend for the Faith, against the *Depravers and Corrupters* of our Holy Religion; we are far from giving the least Countenance to any Methods of *Violence, Injustice, or Inhumanity*, or to any Invasions of the Natural or Religious Rights even of those with whom we cannot have any Christian Communion: And that with respect to others who may differ from us in smaller Matters, we are ready, notwithstanding such Diversity of Opinion, to treat them with all the Regards of *Brotherly Kindness and Charity* due to those who are Members of the same *Mystical Body* with our selves, and agree with us in all the Essentials of Christianity.

TWO *Extremes* are to be avoided: We must not under pretence of asserting *Liberty of Conscience*, abdicate, or disavow any part of the Faith once delivered to the Saints; nor give place, by way of Connivance, Approbation, or *Subjection*, to those who would bring us in Bondage unto Error; no, not for an Hour,

62 *An Advice to Christians, &c.*

Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel may continue with us: for that would be to give up the very Liberty we pretend to vindicate. On the other hand, we must carefully avoid giving up any Branch of Christian Liberty, in our Contests for the Faith. And since this Middle-way may in all probability expose us to the Resentments of those who either are indifferent as to all Principles of Revealed Religion, or for imposing them upon others, by any Methods inconsistent with the Peace and Prosperity of Human Societies; it is necessary we be armed with Resolution, and habitually prepared to deny our selves, and take up our Cross; that we may be valiant for the Truth, despite the Reproach of Libertines, and be unmov'd by the Rage of Persecutors.

NOW unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, now and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 21. Marginal Note, Line 8. from the Bottom, for *Father* read *Fathers*. P. 26. L. 11. from the Bottom, read *I judged it necessary*. P. 41. L. 8. read *that he is so far from, &c.*



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