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A
SECOND LETTER,
Containing
REMARKS
On a Late
PAMPHLET

ENTITLED,

Christianity not founded on Argument.



By JOHN LELAND, D. D.
AUTHOR of *An Answer to Christianity as Old
as the Creation*, by Dr. Tindal :
AND
*The Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament
Asserted, &c. against The Moral Philosopher.*

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REMARKS on a late Pamphlet, entitled, Christianity not founded on Argument, &c.

L E T T E R II.

S I R,

IT is a satisfaction to me, that my former Letter was not displeasing to you; in which, in obedience to your Commands, I communicated to you some Remarks that occurred to me upon the Pamphlet that has made so much noise, *Christianity not founded on Argument.*

In that Letter, after having made some general Remarks on the Nature and Tendency of this Pamphlet, I applied my self particularly to consider the first Part of it; in which the Author proposes to shew, that “Reason or the Intellectual Faculty could not possibly, both from its own Nature and that of Religion, be the Principle intended by God to lead us into a true Faith.” Or, in other Words, for this is evidently his Meaning, that God never intended we should make use of our Reason or Intellectual Faculty in believing, or that our Faith should be founded upon any Evidence that might convince the Understanding.

Lett. II.

B

In

2 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*

In the succeeding Parts of his Pamphlet, he proposes to prove the same thing from Scripture, and to shew what is the true Principle of Faith that is there assigned.

The first thing he offers from Scripture to shew that Faith has nothing to do with the Understanding, or as he expresses it, *p. 35.* that *no Appeal to the Understanding was ever made or intended*, is drawn from those Expressions, “left they should understand with their Hearts——their foolish Heart was darkned——Purified their Hearts by Faith——” which Expressions, he observes, *are applicable with no Propriety to the Intellectual Faculty, but are evidently descriptive of the Will only* *. But a very moderate Acquaintance with the sacred Writings may satisfy any Man, that the Heart is in Scripture-Language often put for the Understanding or Intellectual Faculty †. And as to the particular Passages referred to by this Writer, that Phrase of *understanding with the Heart* cannot be understood so as to exclude the intellectual Faculty, but necessarily supposes it. And when it is said of the *Heathens*, that their *foolish Heart was darkned*, it is plain this is designed to signify, that their Understanding was darkned, and had not a just Knowledge and Discernment of Things; tho’ it is there also supposed, that the Depravity of their Will and moral Dispositions had a great Influence in corrupting their Judgment. And that Expression of *purifying the Heart by Faith* shews indeed that Faith where it is sincere and of the right kind has a purifying Influence on the Temper and

* P. 36. † 2 Chron. i. 10, 12. Job xxxviii. 36. Ecclef. viii. 5.

and Disposition of the Soul ; but how it can be concluded from thence, that Faith is not a rational Thing, or has nothing to do with the Understanding, I cannot see.

But our Author chuses rather to *enlarge upon a Particular, which appears to him entirely uncontroversible, and that is, the plain narrative Part of the History, as far as it relates to the Business of planting the Gospel, and the Manner by which it was attempted**.

Some things that he observes upon this Narrative will be easily granted him, as, That *Christ taught* his Disciples and the People *as one having Authority*, and that he *considered himself as the Person he was, or one who derived from Heaven the Instructions he was communicating*. That he did not deal with his Disciples in a way of *Sophistry and Syllogism*. That neither he nor his Apostles attempted to prove every single Doctrine they taught, or Precept they delivered, by entering into a tedious Discussion, or by a long Train of laborious Reasonings, after the manner of the Schools. But it by no means follows, that because *Christ* and his Apostles did not convert Men by arguing with them in a philosophical way, which would have made but little Impression on the Generality of Mankind, who either have not capacity to understand, or leisure to attend to a Course of nice and subtil Argumentation, that therefore they expected or required Men to believe without any Reason or Evidence at all, which is the Representation this Gentleman is pleased to make of it. On

* P. 36.

4 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*

the contrary, it is manifest from the Account given us in Scripture, that as they proposed the Doctrines and Laws they delivered to Mankind, in the Name and as by the Authority of God himself, which gave them another kind of Force than the mere Reasonings of Philosophers would have done; so they gave the World the most convincing Proofs that they were indeed sent of God, and that they received the Doctrines and Laws they delivered, by Revelation from him. In which case Reason and common Sense directed Men to believe those Doctrines and submit to those Laws. For it is the Voice of Nature and Reason, that if God gives a Revelation to Mankind, what is there taught and enjoined, ought to be believed and received upon his Authority, provided we have sufficient Proofs to convince us that such a Revelation came from God.

But to return to our Author's Account of the Gospel-Narrative, the Sum of it is this; That *Christ* and his Apostles required Men to believe at once without Reason or Evidence, and pronounced Damnation against them if they did not. That *Christ* did not *lay the Proofs of his Mission frankly before his Disciples, nor give them time calmly to consider them*; and that he refused to *explain himself* to them when they wanted it, and discouraged their *Enquiries*. That he required those that came to him to be healed, to believe before he healed them, which plainly shews, that *the Conviction was to precede the Evidence, as the Terms of the Favour to be consequently conferred* *. That he
ever

* P. 36, 37.

Christianity not founded on Argument. 5

ever disclaimed with the utmost Resentment such Followers as were desirous to canvass the Evidence, and discouraged no Temper with so constant an Aversion, as that of seeking a Sign *. And whereas it might be alledged, that he produced his Miracles as Evidences of his divine Mission, our Author affirms and endeavours after his Manner to shew, that he had no Intention to prove his Truth and Character by those Works †. That he both expected and accepted the sudden Conversion of many upon little or no seeming Evidence; and nothing was of greater Merit than an extempore Subscription. And that he rejected some Persons immediately when they had not Minds prepared to believe at once, and gave them up instantly to the Hardness of their Hearts without Remedy ‖. That the Apostles did all along tread punctually in their Master's Steps, insisting constantly on the ready Acknowledgement of their Doctrines, without any Concessions of Time for Doubt or Deliberation. And that of the Terms of the Covenant one Declaration was often thought sufficient, and the least standing off gave up the Unbeliever to Reprobation ‡. That it was required of those to whom the Gospel was preached, that they should not one Moment withhold their Assent, and that the Apostles very justly expected to make their Converts with a Word's speaking **. That their Office was only to circulate their Creeds; they were not sent to dispute, but to preach. And that in like manner the Directions they gave to their deputed Successors was not
to

* P. 38, 49. † P. 48—50. ‖ P. 37, 65, 66, 67. ‡ P. 38. ** P. 42

6 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*

to *confute* or *argue* with those whom they were to receive to the Faith*.

Such is the Representation this Gentleman is pleased to make, and which he pretends is plain from the sacred History, of the Method made use of by our Saviour and his Apostles in *planting the Gospel*. Let us now see from *Christ's* own Declarations, and from the History of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, whether this Account be true. After which I shall take notice, as far as it may be necessary, of the Instances produced by this Writer to support the Account he gives.

With regard to our Saviour himself, he was so far from requiring Men to believe on his bare Word without Proof, that he declared, *if I bear witness of my self, that is, if I have no other Evidence but my bare Word, my Witness is not true* †. He encouraged Examination and Enquiry, *Search the Scriptures, said he to the Jews, for they are they which testify of me* ||. Instead of forbidding them to judge fairly and impartially, and to use their Understandings, he expostulates with them for not doing so. *Why even of your selves judge ye not that which is right? Judge not according to Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment* **. The Faith he approves is founded in the Understanding. He describes the good Hearer of the Word to be one that *beareth the Word and understandeth it, which also beareth Fruit* ‡. In his Discourse to the *Jews*, he frequently appeals to the illustrious Attestations that were given him, and the

* P. 39, 40. † John v. 31. ‡ Matt. xiii. 23. || John v. 39. ** Luke xii. 54—57.

the manifest Proofs he exhibited of his divine *Mission*. Thus, after having spoken of the remarkable Testimony given him by *John* the Baptist, he adds, *but I have a greater Witness than that of John: for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me* *. And again, *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him* †. And, speaking of the *Jews* and *Pharisees* that did not believe in him, he saith, *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloke for their Sin; and then adds, If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin* ||. Where he evidently supposes, that his Works bore Testimony to his Doctrine and divine Mission; and that they were Proofs so strong and convincing, as left them utterly without Excuse in their Unbelief. And this may help us to judge of the Sincerity and Candour of this Writer, who confidently affirms, in exprefs Contradiction to our Saviour's own Declarations, that he had not *any such Meaning or Intention to convince Persons, or to prove his own Truth and Character by his Works; and insinuates, that he was not solicitous to gain Profelytes by such Means, and was conscious he had nothing of that kind to produce.* P. 49, 50.

What

* John v. 36, 37.
|| John xv. 22, 24.

† John x. 24, 37, 38. xiv. 10, 11.

What the Method was that was taken after our Lord's Ascension to propagate the Christian Faith, we have a full Account in the Acts of the Apostles. That Book opens with an admirable Discourse of the Apostle *Peter* to the *Jews* on the Day of Pentecost, in which he reasons strongly from the holy Scriptures, and from the extraordinary divine Attestations given from Heaven, to convince the *Jews*, that *Jesus*, whom they had crucified, was Lord and Christ. And we have an Account of several other excellent Discourses of his in that sacred Book. Concerning *Stephen* the first Martyr, we are told, that as he *did great Wonders and Miracles among the People*, so when several of the *Jews* disputed with him, they were not able to resist the Spirit and Wisdom, with which he spake*. He was therefore able to give good Reasons for the Faith, and such as they could not confute. St. *Paul* laboured more abundantly than any of the other Apostles in spreading the Faith of the Gospel, and what his usual manner was we are informed *Acts xvii. 2, 3.* where we are told, that at *Thessalonica*, *Paul, as his manner was, went into the Synagogue of the Jews, and three Sabbath-days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the Dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ.* Here it is plain, quite contrary to the Representation made by our Author, that his manner of making Converts was not to urge them to believe without a Reason for it, but strongly to reason with them,
in

* *Acts vi. 9, 10.*

Christianity not founded on Argument. 9

in order to convince them. The Account that is there given of the *Beræans* is very remarkable. *Paul* and *Silas* went into the Synagogue to preach to them, and reason with them, as they had done at *Theſſalonica*. And it is observed by the sacred Historian, that *they were more noble than thoſe at Theſſalonica, in that they received the Word with all Readineſs of Mind*; that is, without Prejudice, and with Minds open to Conviction, and ſearched the *Scriptures daily, whether thoſe Things were ſo*. And what was the Conſequence? *Therefore many of them believed* *. Here it appears, that the Apoſtles were far from being Enemies to a free and fair Enquiry. The *Beræans* are commended for taking pains to examine, and the reſult of their impartial Examination was their embracing the *Chriſtian Faith*. In the ſame Chapter we find *St. Paul* at *Athens* diſputing and reaſoning with the *Athenians* in an excellent manner. At *Corinth* he reaſoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath, and perſuaded the *Jews and the Greeks*; and he continued there a Year and ſix Months, teaching the *Word of God among them* †. What needed he have ſtaid ſo long there, if, according to this Gentleman's Representation, the Apoſtles expected to make their Converts with a Word's ſpeaking, and never allowed *Time* for examining or deliberating concerning the Evidences of *Chriſtianity*? And it was in conſequence of his taking ſo much time in teaching and inſtructing them in the Faith, that he erected that flouriſhing Church of the *Corinthians*. And before this we are told,

Lett. II. C that

* Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12. † Acts xviii. 4, 11.

that *Paul and Barnabas abode a long time at Iconium, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their hands**. At *Ephesus* he went into the Synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three Months, disputing and persuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God. And afterwards, he disputed daily in the School of one Tyrannus; and thus continued by the space of two Years; so that all they which dwelt in *Asia*, heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And how assiduous he was all that time in instructing them, appears from his Appeal to the Elders of *Ephesus* in his admirable Speech to them. And in consequence of all this, of such assiduous teaching, and reasoning, accompanied with the most glorious miraculous Attestations, it is observed there were great Numbers brought to the Christian Faith. *So mightily, says the sacred Historian, grew the Word of God, and prevailed †*. That these were the Methods made use of for spreading the Faith of Christ, farther appears from the Epistles St. *Paul* writ to the Churches he had planted. Those Epistles are every where full of Reasonings, and his manner of addressing the Christian Converts on many occasions, sufficiently shews how far he was from desiring a blind Faith without Understanding: *In Malice be ye Children, but in Understanding be ye Men. Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is. I speak as to wise Men, judge ye what I say. Prove or try all things, hold*

* Acts xiv. 1, 2.

† Acts xix. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 20.

bold fast that which is good *. Is this the Language of a Man that thought believing the Gospel was inconsistent with Examination and Enquiry, and had nothing to do with the Understanding? and that Persons were not to know why they believed, and upon what Grounds? When the Apostle *Peter* urges the Believers to whom he writes, to be *ready always to give an Answer to every Man that should ask them a Reason of the Hope that is in them, with Meekness and Fear* †, *i. e.* with Modesty and Gravity; this certainly supposes, that they themselves had reason for believing, and that they were able to give an Account of it to others too. And whereas this Writer insinuates, that as the Apostles never argued themselves, so they left Instructions to their Successors never to dispute or argue; this is so far from being true, that the Apostle insists upon it as a proper Qualification of a Teacher of the Gospel, that he should be *able by sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainfayers* †. Nor were they to give them up at once to immediate Reprobation, but to reason with them with Meekness and Temper. *The Servant of the Lord must be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves* ‡. The same Apostle speaking of the false Teachers, represents them as *understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm; and as knowing nothing* **. Where it is plainly intimated, that the Faith of the true Christian Teachers and Apostles

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was

* 1 Cor. x. 15. xiv. 20. Eph. v. 17. 1 Theff. v. 21.

† 1 Pet. iii. 15. † Tit. i. 9. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

** 1 Tim. i. 7. vi. 4.

was joined with Understanding; they understood what they believed and what they taught; and the contrary was the Reproach of the false Teachers, whereby they were to be distinguished from the true,

And now I think, upon an impartial View of these several Passages, to which many others might be added, if it were necessary, it appears with the greatest Evidence, that the Method the Apostles made use of, as their Lord and Master had done before them, to bring Persons to the Faith of the Gospel, was by assiduous Instruction, at the same time producing the most illustrious Credentials of their Divine Mission. Neither Christ nor his Apostles ever required Persons to believe without Evidence sufficient to make their Assent rational. Nor is it true, as this Writer represents it, that the first Publishers of Christianity never *disputed* or *reasoned* with those whom they expected to convert to the Faith of Christ; on the contrary it appears with the clearest Evidence from the Passages already produced, that it was their usual way to reason with Men, in order to convert them to the Faith. If they did not dispute according to the artificial Method of the Schools, yet they always used Arguments sufficient to induce a reasonable Assent; and to convince those whom they required to believe. They reasoned with the Heathens concerning the Absurdity of their Idolatry, *Acts* xiv. 15—18. xvii. 22—31. With the *Jews* and Profelytes of the Gate they reasoned out of the Holy Scriptures; and both before *Jews* and *Gentiles* they laid the strongest Evidence to engage

engage them to believe, arising from what Christ himself had done, his holy Life, his illustrious Miracles, and especially his Resurrection from the Dead, and the extraordinary Effusion of the Holy Ghost, of which they were Witnesses. And God confirmed their Testimony by the many glorious Miracles they performed in the Name of a risen *Jesus*, and by the Gifts of the Spirit with which they were endued. And these together formed an Evidence strong and convincing, an Evidence perfectly agreeable to Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind, and which was much quicker in its Operations than a tedious Process of abstracted Reasonings could have been. Upon the whole it is manifest, that the Apostles had no worldly Advantages of any kind to recommend them. It was by force of Evidence, the Purity and Excellency of their Doctrine, the Holiness of their Lives, their unshaken Constancy and Zeal in professing the Truth, and the many illustrious Proofs they gave of their Divine Mission, that they prevailed with those who were willing impartially to consider their Doctrine, and the Proofs whereby it was attested. It was by Argument, and the glorious convincing Evidence with which it was accompanied, that Christianity made such an amazing Progress; to which the *Jews* at first, and the Heathens afterwards, had little to oppose besides bitter Calumnies, Reproaches, and Persecutions.

And now it may be safely left to any Man of common Understanding to compare this Account with that given by this Writer, and see which of them is most agreeable to Truth and Candour, and
to

to the sacred Records. But tho' this general Answer might be sufficient, it will be proper to enter into a particular Discussion of the several Things produced by him to shew that our Saviour and his Apostles never appealed to the Understandings of Men, and that they required them to believe without Reason or Evidence. I am apprehensive this Part of my Remarks will prove tedious to you, as it has been to myself. For to be obliged to detect a Succession of gross Misrepresentations, and to consider a great Variety of Passages, which have little Connexion with one another, leads one into a Detail that yields little Entertainment, either to the Writer or to the Reader.

He first asks, " Did our Saviour lay the Arguments and Proofs of his Mission frankly before his Disciples, and then give them time to consider calmly of their Force, and Liberty to determine thereon as their Reason should direct them?" If his Meaning be, that our Saviour, after laying the Proofs of his Mission before his Disciples, should have left them entirely at liberty to receive or reject him as they thought fit; I readily own, that he did not do this. For what could be more absurd, than first to lay before them the evident Proofs that he was sent from God for the most important Purposes, and then let them know that they might with equal Innocence receive or reject him? But the Method he took was the wisest and properest that could be, and such as left room for Deliberation and thorough Conviction. He gave his Disciples many Opportunities of conversing with him, and hearing his admirable

rable Discourses, and of observing the Holiness of his Life, the Excellency of his Doctrine, and the many wonderful Works he performed, Works far transcending all human Power. And it was not till above a Year after their first coming to him, and after they had all the Opportunities that could be desired of being instructed, and fully satisfied of his divine Mission, that he solemnly called the twelve to be his Apostles. And it was again a considerable time after this, that he sent them forth to preach in his Name; and the Powers he then gave them of performing the most illustrious Miracles, must needs have been an additional mighty Confirmation of their Faith in him. And after this his Resurrection from the Dead, of which they were convinced by *many infallible Proofs*, and the farther Instructions he then gave them; his Ascension into Heaven, of which they were Eye-Witnesses; the extraordinary Effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous Powers and spiritual Gifts with which they were endued, according to his own Prediction and Promise; all this taken together, rendered the Evidence complete, and fully convinced them that *Christ* was the divine Person he professed himself to be, and that the Religion he taught was from God. And this Evidence they laid before others, as sufficient to convince them too.

But our Author farther urges, that *Christ* “ did
“ but ill approve the being called on upon any Oc-
“ casion to explain himself, and therefore his Dis-
“ ciples were fearful at every turn of giving of-
“ fence, and incurring Reproof by any farther
“ Enquiry,

“ Enquiry, even at times when they did not really apprehend his Meaning *.” This is so far from being true, that on the contrary, it is manifest from the Accounts given by the Evangelists, that he encouraged them to ask him for Information, and shewed himself well pleased when they did so. And so forward was he to inform them, that he took occasion to explain Things to them even without their asking †. The only Passage that seems to give the least countenance to this Pretence is, that when he *taught his Disciples, and said, that the Son of Man is to be delivered into the Hands of Men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third Day;* we are told, *they understood not that Saying, and were afraid to ask him* ||. But all that can be gather’d from this is, not that *Christ* was unwilling to inform them; for the Instructions he then gave them were as plain as Words could be, that he was to suffer, and die, and rise again; or that they were in general afraid to apply to him for explaining himself; but that with regard to that particular Subject, the Sufferings of the Messiah, they were under the Power of the strongest Prejudices; and that it was a thing so contrary to their Notions and Expectations, that they were loth to believe and hear of it. And accordingly, *St. Matthew* speaking of the same thing, tells us, they were *exceeding sorry* **. They would all have been willing to explain themselves, as *Peter* had done on a former occasion, who understood what our Lord had

* P. 37. † Matt. xiii. 18, 36, 37, 51. Mark iv. 34. Mat. xvi. 6—12. John xvi. 18, 19, &c. || Mark ix. 31, 32. Luke ix. 45.
** Matt. xvii. 23.

had said well enough, which was exceeding plain, but could not reconcile it to his own Notions, *Far be it from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.* But as they knew the Rebuke that had been given to *Peter*, they were afraid of making any farther Enquiries on a Subject so ungrateful to them.

As our Author thinks proper to represent our Saviour as unwilling to inform his own Disciples, when they desired it, so he observes, "That he sighed deeply at the Perverseness of the *Pbarisees* in asking a *Sign*, i. e. some Testimonial of the Truth of his declared Mission, and stiled them a foolish and perverse Generation for their Presumption; tho' if he had appealed to their Understanding, it had been so far from being criminal, that it had been their indispensable Duty *." And he is so fond of this Instance, that he has it over again, *p.* 49. But our Saviour well knew that their demanding a Sign did not proceed from a teachable Disposition, or an honest Openness to Conviction, (in which case he would certainly have encouraged it) but from a petulant cavilling Temper of Mind, which therefore he justly reprov'd. And what sufficiently shew'd this was, that they called for a Sign from him, after he had for a considerable time wrought, and was then working a great number of illustrious Miracles, of many of which the *Pbarisees* themselves had been Eye-Witnesses, and had most

- Lett. II., D. perversely

* P. 38.

perversely attributed them to the Assistance of *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils: and when after all this they came and asked of him a Sign, as if he had not wrought any Miracles among them before, justly did he shew a Resentment of such Perverseness. But tho' he did not think fit at that time to gratify their peevish Demands, or to humour a Temper that is never satisfied with present Evidence, but is always unreasonably demanding more; yet after this he still continued in the most open manner, and in the view of his Enemies themselves, to perform the most stupendous Miracles, and which were really as great as they themselves could have desired; and at that very time he referred them to that which was to be the ultimate confirming Evidence of his divine Mission, his own Resurrection from the Dead; which was attended and followed with such Circumstances, as rendered it in the properest sense what the *Pharisees* demanded, *a Sign from Heaven*.

It is with the same Candour, that this Gentleman represents our Saviour as *rejecting some Persons immediately*, because they did not believe at once, and as *giving them up instantly to the Hardness of their Hearts without remedy, depriving them judicially even of the most common Advantages*——— *He did not many mighty Works there, because of their Unbelief, which rather should have been the reason of his multiplying them.* The Instance he here refers to, is our Saviour's Conduct towards his own Country-
men

men of *Nazareth*. And on this occasion he gives out some *Infinuations* against the *long-suffering Character* of the blessed *Jesus*, as if it were very *severe to reprobate by so short a Process for Hesitation, those whom perhaps some additional Circumstance of Power had brought to a proper Temper and Obedience* *. It appears from the whole of *Christ's* Behaviour during the Course of his personal Ministry, how patient and long-suffering he was. He went about teaching and preaching the Things of the Kingdom of God, notwithstanding the Opposition and ill Treatment he met with, still repeating his excellent Instructions and beneficent Miracles, and with great *Tenderness* bearing with their *Obstinacy* and *Perverseness*. How admirably does he express this Temper, in those *pathetical Words, Ob Jerusalem, Jerusalem,—how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as a Hen doth gather her Brood under her Wings, but ye would not!* † We may be sure therefore, that his Conduct towards the People of *Nazareth* was not owing to any want of *Long-suffering*; and that if a *tardy Genius* and *innocent Scruples*, as this Writer phrases it, had been the only Impediments, our Lord would have continued to indulge a *patient Attendance*. But it must be considered, that the first time he went to preach among them, which was after his Fame had spread throughout all *Galilee*, they attempted to murder him †. Notwithstanding which, he

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went

* P. 66, 67. † Luke xiii. 34. † Luke iv. 14, 16, 29.

went again a considerable time after, when the Fame of his great Wisdom and Miracles was still better established, and he did then perform some mighty Works among them. But instead of being duly affected with his excellent Discourses and with his Miracles, they only reflected on the Meanness of his Parentage and worldly Circumstances*. And therefore his not performing many mighty Works among them was owing to the just Knowledge he had of their irreclaimable Obstinacy, which both might be gathered from their Conduct, and which he was well assured of, as he had the power of discerning the Spirits of Men. For, as the Evangelist observes, *he needed not that any should testify of Man: for he knew what was in Man* †.

If *Christ* ordered his Disciples to *shake off the Dust of their Feet, as a Testimony* against a City that would not *receive* them, or *hearken to* them (which is another thing our Author refers to ||,) it was not his intention they should do it, till after having tried all proper Methods, and till it appeared they were plainly incorrigible. So the Apostles understood and practised his Directions. *Paul and Barnabas shook off the Dust of their Feet* against the *Jews* at *Antioch in Pisidia*; but it was not till after they not only *contradicted* and *blasphemed*, but *stirred up the chief Men of the City, and raised Persecution* against *Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their Coasts* **.

Another

* Matt. xiii. 54—58. Mark vi. 2, 3. † Joh. ii. 25. || P. 39.
** Acts xiii. 45, 50, 51.

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Another Instance we have with regard to the Jews at Corinth: Paul shook his Raiment, and said unto them, your Blood be upon your own Heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. But this was not, till after he had for a considerable time together *reasoned in the Synagogue every Sabbath*; and they not only *opposed themselves*, but *blasphemed*, i. e. manifested such a malicious and spiteful Opposition, breaking forth into Reproaches and Blasphemies against the Name of *Jesus*, that it plainly appeared, it was in vain to strive with them any longer. He therefore chose that way of testifying that he had discharged his Duty, and that the Guilt would be chargeable only upon themselves*.

But what this Gentleman seems to lay the principal stress upon is, that our Saviour required Persons to believe in an Instant, before any Evidence given. To this purpose he observes, that it was his Language before he wrought his Miracles, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* “The Conviction was to precede the Evidence, as the Terms of the Favour to be consequently conferred †.” The Case where our Lord used these Expressions, is that of the two blind Men that came to him, saying, *Thou Son of David* (a Character by which the Messiah was then usually distinguished) *have mercy upon us*. This Confession they made voluntarily without his requiring it, and it was undoubtedly founded upon

* Acts xviii. 4, 5, 6. † P. 37, 49, 50.

upon what they had heard of his illustrious Miracles and wise Discourses, the Fame of which had spread abroad through all *Judea* and *Galilee*. It was therefore with great Propriety that our Saviour put that Question to them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* And upon their declaring they did, *touched their Eyes and said, According to your Faith be it unto you* *. This was not a requiring those to believe who did not believe before, and that in an Instant and without Evidence, as this Writer is pleased to represent it; but it was an approving the Faith they already had, and a giving farther Evidence to confirm and establish it. And in general, it holds true with regard to every Case recorded in the Gospel, in which *Christ* required those that came to him to be healed, to declare their Belief in him, that they were Persons that had some Faith in him before. And the Design of his requiring them to believe was in effect no more than this, to engage them to make a Profession of their Faith before others, or to encourage them to persist in believing, when he saw their Faith began to stagger thro' extraordinary Difficulties and Trials; as in the case of *Jairus*, and the Father of the young Man whom the Disciples could not relieve †. And then upon their declaring they believed, he wrought his Miracles upon them, the more significantly to shew, what this Gentleman thinks fit to deny, that his Miracles were designed and wrought as Proofs of

* *Matt.* ix. 27, 28, 29. † *Mark* v. 36. ix. 23, 24.

of his divine Mission. And this also is the design of those Expressions he sometimes makes use of, after he had wrought the miraculous Cure; *Thy Faith hath saved thee; thy Faith hath made thee whole.* He hereby signified his Approbation of the Faith they had shewn, and directed their Views to that which was the main Design of his Miracles, *viz.* to confirm their Faith in him, and bear testimony to his Mission. And yet it is far from being true, what this Gentleman expressly affirms, that our Saviour *constantly stipulated for no ordinary degree of Persuasion beforehand*; from whence he infers, that they owed the whole Efficacy of their Cure to their Faith. For nothing is more certain than that with regard to the far greater part of the Miracles he wrought he did not stipulate for Faith beforehand. Instances of which see referred to in the Margin, to which many more might easily be added*. This shews how little credit is due to a Writer that is capable of endeavouring to impose so palpable a Falshood upon his Reader, even when he pretends to give an exact and faithful Narrative of our Saviour's Proceedings.

The Instance he mentions, p. 65. of our Saviour's Command to *Matthew* to follow him, is not an Instance of a Command to a Man that did not believe before, to believe in an Instant, and without Evidence; but of a Command to a
Man

* John v. 12, 13, 14. John ix. 6, 7, 11. Matt. xii. 13. Luke vii. 13, 14. xiv. 2, 4. xxii. 5.

Man that already believed, to follow him as one of his immediate Disciples and Attendants. Nor is it true, that *Matthew precipitately deserted a beneficial Employment for he knew not whom.* For he well knew who *Jesus* was, as he lived at *Capernaum*, where *Christ* chiefly had his Residence, and performed many of his mighty Works, and delivered many of his excellent Discourses. Our Author seems aware of this, and therefore urges, "That it is likely, if what he had seen before had disposed him to Discipleship, he would have had the Merit of engaging voluntarily in the Service, without waiting for a particular Address." But this does not follow. Supposing him ever so well disposed, he might question, whether, as he was a Publican, *Christ* would take him among the number of those Disciples that were constantly to attend him, considering the common Prejudices against Persons of that Character. But when he heard *Christ* himself particularly calling him to follow him, he gladly accepted the Invitation, and preferred the being his constant Attendant to his gainful Employment. There is nothing in all this but what may reasonably be accounted for.

As to the Instance of the *Samaritans*, who it seems had never heard of *Christ* before, and yet believed on him readily for the Saying of the Woman: *A notable Foundation truly for Confidence and Conviction, and perhaps for Martyrdom!*

*tyrdom!** In this case, there is no Command of our Saviour enjoining the *Samaritans* to believe. The Fact only is related, that they did believe. Nor is this their believing to be understood of a complete and perfect Faith, as our Author is pleas'd to represent it in this, and all the other Cases he mentions. It is evident to any one that is acquainted with the Language of the New Testament, that Believing is there frequently to be understood of a Faith but just begun, and which was as yet very imperfect, and far from being well established †. So it is to be understood, when it is said of some of the *Samaritans*, that they *believed on him for the Saying of the Woman*. The Account she gave them of his having discovered to her the most secret Transactions of her Life, as well as of his wise and excellent Discourse, inclined them to believe in him. This was the first occasion, or beginning of their believing. But their Faith was afterwards mightily confirmed, and received great Accessions from their personal Conversation with him, and the admirable Instructions he gave them in a manner far exceeding whatever they had heard before. This added to the Proof he had given of a wonderful and supernatural Knowledge, led them to conclude, that he was the Christ, whom they, as well as the *Jews*, were then in strong Expectation of. And they seem to have had juster Notions of the

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* P. 66.
viii. 13.

† John ii. 23, 24. vi. 66. vii. 31. Acts

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Design of the Messiah's coming than the *Jews* themselves, and not to have been so intoxicated with the Notions of his temporal Glory and Grandeur, as appears from their calling him the *Saviour of the World*; and from the Declaration made by the Woman, *I know that Messiah cometh, when he is come, he will tell us all Things.*

But if our Saviour had not required Men to believe instantly, and without giving them time for Deliberation, would he have called his Disciples *Fools, and slow of heart to believe!* because a Narrative of four Hours had not wrought a thorough Conviction *? The Passage here referred to is in *Luke xxiv. 25.* with regard to which it must be considered, that the Persons our Saviour here reproves were of the number of those Disciples that constantly attended him. And what he reproves them for, was their not understanding that Christ *ought to suffer* before he *entred into his Glory.* This was not the first time he had proposed these sacred Truths to them; he had done it at several times before in the plainest manner †. He had just reason therefore to reproach them for their *Foolishness* or *Inconsideration*, for that is the proper Signification of the Word there used, and their *Slowness*; which was not owing to a natural Defect in their Understanding, but to their culpable Prejudices, and to a Neglect of improving the Instructions that had been given them.

* P. 66. † Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 22, 23. xx. 17, 18, 19.

them. And now again after his Resurrection he took pains to *open* to them *the Scriptures*, and make them *understand* them, ver. 27, 32. which would have been needless, if, as this Gentleman insinuates, Believing had nothing to do with the Understanding.

Our Author mentions some other Instances of sudden Conversions, which relate not directly to the time of our Saviour, but of his Apostles, to shew that they also required Men to believe in an instant, without any *Concessions of Time for Deliberation*. Thus he observes, that the “ Eunuch was the Profelyte of a short Stage, “ instructed in one Hour, and baptized the “ next.” p. 39. But supposing what is very probable, that the Eunuch had heard a great deal at *Jerusalem*, from whence he was then returning, concerning *Jesus*, and the Miracles wrought by him; and after his Death by his Disciples, who testified that he was risen from the dead, and confirmed their Testimony by the most illustrious Attestations, he might be well prepared for Instruction. And when things were more distinctly explained to him by *Philip*, and the Eunuch’s Prejudices were removed, by convincing him from that Prophecy in *Isaiab*, that the Messiah was to undergo many and grievous Sufferings; the Suddenness of his Conversion is very consistent with his having a rational Conviction of the Truth of our Saviour’s Mission. It was to his Understanding that *Philip* address’d himself, *Understandest thou*

what thou readest? Nor did he, after instructing him, require him to believe without delay; but the Eunuch himself made the Proposal to be baptized, and voluntarily declared his Belief, that *Jesus Christ was the Son of God.*

But perhaps it is more to the Author's purpose, what he observes, that "whole Congregations were often gained over at a hearing, and Thousands at a time actually convinced by a single Lecture." I suppose, he particularly refers to the three thousand that were converted at *St. Peter's* first Sermon on the Day of Pentecost. And it must be acknowledg'd, that this is very remarkable; but no Proof that their Faith was not reasonable, or without sufficient convincing Evidence. Let us take the case as it really was in all its Circumstances. It was well known to the *Jews* that *Jesus* had performed among them for some Years together the most astonishing Miracles; for the Truth of which *St. Peter* here appeals to themselves, as Facts that could not be contested. They knew his holy Life, and had heard his wise and excellent Discourses, and a considerable number of them had from time to time been brought to believe*, tho' their Faith was far from being well established. And after he had been seized and condemned by the Authority of their great Council, many of them were prevailed upon by the chief Priests, Rulers, and Pharisees, to consent

* See to this purpose John ii. 23. vii. 31, 40, 41. x. 41. 42. xi. 45. Luke vii. 16. Matt. xxi. 46.

sent to his being crucified, which *St. Peter* therefore charges home upon them as their Guilt. They had afterwards been Witnesses to the preternatural Darkness, the Earthquake, and other extraordinary things that happened at his Crucifixion, and which made a mighty Impression on many of the People *. They knew that his Disciples testified that he was risen again from the dead, and they themselves were now Witnesses of the wonderful Effusion of the Holy Ghost upon his Disciples, and were convinced, by what they heard and saw, of the Truth and Reality of it, and that it was a thing which far exceeded all human Power, and carried in it the strongest Evidences of a divine Interposition. This satisfied them, that the Testimony the Apostles gave of Christ's Resurrection and Exaltation was true, and that therefore he was the promised Saviour; especially as the Apostle *Peter* shewed that all this was perfectly agreeable to the Predictions of the Prophets concerning him. In such an extraordinary Concurrence of Circumstances the Conviction wrought upon them was speedy, but very reasonable, and founded upon sufficient Evidence. The same Observation may be made with regard to the Numbers that were converted afterwards on occasion of another Discourse of *St. Peter*. They had just seen a most astonishing Miracle performed by *Peter* and *John* in restoring a Man whom they all knew to have been lame from his Mother's Womb,

* Luke xxiii. 47, 48.

Womb, by only bidding him in the Name of *Jesus* rise up and walk: No wonder that this, together with the Apostle's excellent Discourse, added to what had so lately happened at the day of Pentecost, which was then fresh in memory, and to what they observ'd concerning the exemplary Lives, the Piety and Charity of the first Believers, brought over to the Faith many that probably were very favourably disposed before; but were now, by this additional Evidence, fully convinced. Besides all which, we may well suppose there was an extraordinary Presence and Influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Minds of Men, communicated for the more speedy and effectual spreading of the Gospel at its first Publication; and which was a farther illustrious Proof of its divine Original, and of the Approbation of Heaven. Upon the whole, all that can be justly concluded from the numerous and sudden Conversions at the first Publication of the Gospel, is not that Christianity is not founded on Argument, or that the first Believers had no Reason or Evidence for their believing; but that the Evidence was so strong and convincing, and came upon them with such an over-powering Light and Force, as made a much quicker Progress than mere abstracted subtil Reasonings would have done. For it proceeded upon Facts of the most extraordinary nature, obvious and convincing, even to the meanest Capacities; and from whence the Inference was easy and natural, that *Jesus* and the
Apostles

Apostles were sent from God, and that God bare witness to their Doctrine. But then it must be considered, that tho' the Gospel continued to make a wonderful Progress throughout the World by the force of the Evidence with which it was accompanied, yet it was principally at first, and in *Jerusalem*, that we read of such numbers converted in so short a time to the Christian Faith. For there were many Circumstances there concurring to it, which did not meet to such advantage in other places. It had been the Scene of Christ's Miracles, Sufferings, Resurrection, and the extraordinary Effusion of the Holy Ghost; and there were many there that had been Witnesses to what Christ had said and done, and who had been in his Life-time well-disposed to believe in him, tho' afterwards scandalized by his Sufferings; and therefore were the more easily wrought upon by the manifest Demonstrations of his Divine Power and Glory after his Ascension. And certainly the Evidence must have been very strong, which could engage such numbers in *Jerusalem* itself to acknowledge him for the Messiah, who had been but a little before so ignominiously crucified there, after having been condemned as an Impostor by the chief Men of their Nation, and by their great Sanhedrim, for whose Decisions they had all had the profoundest Veneration.

I have now considered the account this Gentleman is pleas'd to give us of the *Proceedings*
of.

of our blessed Lord and his Apostles in *planting the Gospel*, and from which he pretends to prove, that there was *no Appeal to the Understanding ever made or intended*; and that they commanded Men to believe at once, without offering any Reason or Evidence to engage them to believe. He himself is sensible, that there is one obvious Objection lies against his Account, and that is, that the Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles were designed as Evidence to engage Men to believe; and to take away the force of this he endeavours to shew,

- That it was not the Meaning or Intention of Christ himself to prove his own divine Mission by his Miracles; and that they were in themselves no way fitted to be such Proofs and Evidences.

As to the first of these, it is certainly a very extraordinary Attempt to undertake to shew from the Gospel-History, that Christ had no Intention to prove his divine Mission by his Miracles, when he himself in the most express terms imaginable declares, that this was one principal Intention of them, and refers both the Jews and his own Disciples to those Miracles, as the strongest Attestations to the Divinity of his Mission, sufficient to convince them that he came from God, and to render them inexcusable if they did not believe in him; concerning which see above, *p. 7.*

- Part of what our Author here urges, is what he had said before, and which has been already considered,

Considered, concerning our Saviour's reprov- ing the Pharisees for asking a Sign, and concerning his previously requiring Faith from those upon whom he wrought his Miracles.

Other things that he offers here are so weak, that it would be honouring them too far to enter into a laborious Confutation of them. Thus he argues, that our Saviour did not intend his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Mission, because he did not gratify *Herod* in working a Miracle before him at the time of his Passion; as if a Man of *Herod's* Character were disposed in those Circumstances to become his Disciple, though not long before, upon being assured of the Miracles Christ wrought in *Galilee*, he designed to have murdered him *. He argues the same thing from our Saviour's refusing to suffer the evil Spirits whom he ejected to bear witness to him as the Christ; and if he had readily accepted their Testimony, his Adversaries would probably have improved it to give countenance to that blasphemous Calumny they had raised against him, that he was in confederacy with those evil Spirits.

It would be something more to his purpose, if it were true, that Christ *was remarkably upon the Reserve, whenever he happened to be among unbelieving Company, and that he was particularly sparing of those supposed Arguments, viz. his Miracles, amongst the very Persons who seemed most to want them.* I know no instance

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* See Luke xi. 7. xiii. 31, 32.

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in the Gospel-History that gives the least Countenance to this Surmize, but our Saviour's Conduct towards the Men of *Nazareth*, which has been already accounted for. But if he would insinuate, that our Lord never wrought his Miracles before Unbelievers, nothing can be more false. It may be said of his Miracles in general, that they were wrought in the sight of Persons who at first did not believe in him, but many of whom were brought to believe by those Miracles *. The Scribes and Pharisees were his bitterest Enemies, and these were often present when he performed his mighty Works, nor did he decline working his Miracles before them, even when he knew they had a Design to observe and intrap him. Instances of which see *Matt.* xii. 10, 14. *Mark* xi. 5—12. ix. 14—27. We are expressly told, speaking of the unbelieving Jews, that Jesus *did many Miracles* before them; *John* xii. 37. And he himself frequently in his Discourses with his Enemies appeals to his wonderful Works, as things which they all knew and could not possibly deny, and insists upon them as uncontested Proofs of his divine Mission.

Our Author further argues from Christ's enjoining those on whom he wrought his Miracles not to divulge them. *See thou tell no Man* (says he) *was generally the Charge*. But this also is very unfairly represented. With regard to the far greater part of his Miracles, no such Injunction

* See particularly *John* ii. 18, 23, 24. iii. 2.

tion was given. It was only on some particular Occasions, for which no doubt there were special Reasons. It is easy to enumerate all the Instances of this kind recorded in the Evangelists. Such was the Case of the Leper mentioned *Matt.* viii. 2, 4. The two blind Men that address'd to him as *the Son of David*, i. e. the Messiah, *Matt.* ix. 27—30. The dumb and deaf Man, *Mark* vii. 36. And the Case of *Jairus's* Daughter, who was raised from the dead. In these Cases all the Evangelists that relate the Miracles observe, that Christ forbid the Persons to divulge them. And there is another Instance of this kind, *Matt.* xii. 16. where, after Christ had restored the Man that had the withered Hand in the sight of the Pharisees, we are told, he *withdrew himself from thence*, and *healed those* that came to him, and *charged them that they should not make him known*. With regard to the Case last mentioned, the Reason of the Injunction is plain; it was because the Pharisees were at that time *taking counsel with the Herodians* how they might *destroy him*, as appears from Ver. 14. As to the Case of the Leper whom he had cleansed, it is to be observed, that the divulging of the Miracle brought such Multitudes together, that *Jesus could no more openly enter into the City, but was without in desert Places* for a while. And it was probably because our Saviour foresaw this Inconvenience, that he forbid him to publish it abroad. To which it may be added, that as the People

had on some Occasions shewn a forwardness to make him a King, he sometimes found it necessary to withdraw, that he might give no occasion to Tumult or Sedition; and when he knew any particular Miracle he wrought was likely to have that Effect, he forbad it to be divulged. And this also probably might be one Reason why he charged his Disciples not to make known his Transfiguration, and sometimes forbad them to publish that he was the Christ, the full Notification of which was reserved till after his Sufferings and Resurrection, when there was no longer any Danger of it's producing that Effect. But though we could not at this Distance assign the precise Reasons why our Lord at some particular times enjoined them not to divulge what he had done; yet this we are sure of, that the Reason could not be that he did not intend his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Mission, since he frequently in the most solemn manner appealed to them as Proofs.

But what this Writer seems to lay a particular Stress upon, is that which our Saviour said, when applied to for his extraordinary Assistance in favour of the Nobleman's Child, *Unless you see Signs and Wonders, you will not believe.* But what is this designed to prove? Is it to prove, that Christ in working his Miracles had no Intention that his Miracles should be regarded as Proofs of his divine Mission? This indeed is what this Gentleman produces it for; but the
contrary

contrary rather follows from it. For if he knew the Jews would not believe without Miracles, and if it was his Desire and Design that they should believe in him, which will scarce be denied, this made it necessary for him to work Miracles before them with this very View, that they might be thereby brought to believe in him. But it will be said, that our Saviour here reproves the Jews for not believing in him without Miracles. But neither could this be his Intention; since he himself declares, that if he had not done *Works among them which no other Man did, they had not had Sin.* But what he designs here to reprove is the Temper of those, who though they had sufficient Evidence of his Miracles from Testimony that might be safely depended on, yet would not believe in him, except they themselves saw them with their own Eyes. This seems to have been the Case of this Nobleman. We are told *John iv. 45.* that the *Galileans* who had been at the Feast at *Jerusalem* and had *seen* the Miracles Christ had done there, *received* him upon his Return into *Galilee.* This Nobleman had not been there, but had been informed of all this; and when he heard that *Jesus was come into Galilee, he went and besought him that he would come down and heal his Son.* He was in hope that Christ might heal his Son, if he *came down* and touched him, but not otherwise. His Faith seems to have been very imperfect, probably because he
himself

himself had not seen any of the mighty Works Christ had wrought, though he had sufficient Reason to be assured of the Truth of them. Then said Jesus unto him, *Except ye see Signs and Wonders, ye will not believe.* And he did not go down to his House, as he desired, to heal his Son, but said, *Go thy way, thy Son liveth.* The Nobleman seems to have been sensible of the Reproof, and *he believed the Word that Jesus had spoken, and went his way.* And upon finding that his Son began to recover *the very Hour that Jesus said unto him, thy Son liveth, he himself believed, with his whole House.* He then fully believed Christ's divine Mission, of which he had doubted before.

As this Gentleman does what he can to make it appear, that Christ himself never intended his Miracles as Proofs of his divine Mission, so he endeavours to shew, that in themselves they are no way fitted to be such Proofs or Evidences.

And first, he thinks he may “not unplaussibly
“ suggest, what has been so often urged upon
“ this occasion, that Miracles have, time out of
“ mind, been undoubtedly performed, as well
“ in favour of false Doctrines, and therefore they
“ can never be singly, and of themselves alone,
“ any certain Marks of a true, *p. 46.*” He speaks of it here as past all doubt, that Miracles have been done in favour of false Doctrines, tho’ very probably he believes nothing of the matter. For he scruples not to call the Popish Miracles, which he afterwards mentions, *false and*

and fictitious, tho' these are as much to be depended on as other Miracles pretended to be wrought in favour of false Doctrines. But if he would offer any thing to the purpose, in order to run a Parallel between the Attestations pretended to be given to any false Doctrines, and those given to the Christian Dispensation, let him shew,

1. That the Miracles wrought or pretended to be wrought in favour of false Doctrines, or of Impostors, were Works plainly above all the Power or Art of Man to perform. For many wonderful things may be done by human Art or Skill, and a dextrous Application of natural Causes, which cannot properly be called Miracles.

2. That these things were done, not in a single Instance, or in a very few Instances, in which case there might be some Suspicion of Management; but that there was a Succession of them in many Instances, and for a Course of Years together.

3. That these Miracles were wrought in professed Attestation to the Divine Mission of the Persons by whom, or in favour of whom they were wrought, and to the Truth of the Doctrines they delivered. For strange things have happened from time to time in all Ages and Countries, from which no Consequence can be drawn, as not being wrought in declared Attestation to any Doctrines, or to the Divine Mission of any Persons.

4. That they were wrought not in secret or before a few only, but in an open publick manner; wrought not merely in favour of the reigning Religion, when a very nice Examination would not be very safe; but in favour of a Religion contrary to the most inveterate Prejudices, and in the view of subtil and malicious Enemies, who had the Power in their hands, and who had all the Opportunities that could be desired to have detected the Imposture, if there had been any; and were strongly carried by their Inclinations and Interests to do it. And yet were not able upon the most diligent Examination to detect Fraud or Imposture in any one Instance, in which case it might have induced a Suspicion of the rest, that they were all owing to the same Causes.

5. That the Accounts of these Miracles were delivered by Persons, who themselves saw and knew him, and who by their whole Conduct gave all the Marks of disinterested Probity and Sincerity, and persisted in their Testimony with an unshaken Constancy, without ever falsifying in any one Instance, tho' they thereby exposed themselves to the most grievous Persecutions and Sufferings.

6. That even some of the most obstinate Adversaries that lived nearest those Times did not pretend absolutely to deny the Facts, tho' they endeavoured to attribute them to wrong Causes; and that great Numbers of Persons strongly prejudiced against the Religion thus
attested,

attested, embraced it upon the Credit of those miraculous Attestations, in opposition to their former Prejudices, and to their worldly Interests, as well as to their favourite Appetites and Passions; and this in the very Age in which the Facts were done, and in Places where they had the best Opportunities of enquiring into the Truth of those Facts, and detecting them if they had been false *.

* The *Jewish* Story concerning *Jesus's* performing his wonderful Works by virtue of the ineffable Name which he stole out of the Temple and hid in his Thigh, is well known. And many both of the *Jews* and *Heathens* ascribed his Miracles to his extraordinary Skill in Magick: And among others, *Celsus*, as appears in several Passages of *Origen's* Work against him. All that can be truly gathered from hence is, That the Truth of the miraculous Facts was so evident, that they were not able to deny it. For as to the Charge itself, it is manifestly absurd and ridiculous, whether we consider the Nature and Circumstances of the Works themselves, or the End for which they were wrought, or the Character of *Jesus*, and the Nature and Design of the Religion he published to the World.—*PLINY* observes, that never was any Man fonder of *Magick* than *NERO*, or did more to encourage and countenance it, and that he sent for the ablest Masters of it from all Parts, and yet that never was the Vanity and Falshood of it more plainly discovered than in his Time. *Plin. Hist. Nat. Lib. 30. Cap. 2.*— And if the Favour and Encouragement given to it by a mighty Emperor could not hinder the Fallacy of it from being detected; can it be imagin'd, that if the Things done by our Saviour and his Apostles, who had no Authority to countenance them, and so many watchful Enemies to observe them, had been of no higher kind than *Magical* Operations, the Folly and Imposture would not have been soon detected and exposed?

If this Writer will please to produce any false Religion that had such Testimonials, and to whom all this may be applied, it shall be considered. In the mean time I affirm, that it is absolutely out of his power; and that therefore this Part of the Evidence for Christianity stands upon a firm and immoveable Basis; since it may be clearly shewn, that all the above-mentioned Circumstances concur in it, in which it can never be equal'd by any false Religion. And tho' the Scripture warns us (as he observes) of *lying Wonders and false Christs, and to take the utmost care of what we give credit to of this kind*; yet it certainly never supposes, that any false Christs should arise, who should be able to work such a Succession of glorious Miracles, as were wrought in attestation of Christianity.

The wonderful Works wrought by our Lord *Jesus Christ* in avowed Confirmation of his divine Mission were of such a nature, and so manifestly transcending all the Art and Power of Man, such as the restoring perished Limbs in a Moment, healing the most desperate Diseases by a Word, commanding the Winds and the Seas, and even raising the Dead; that they might be alone sufficient, as they were circumstanced, to give a convincing Proof of his divine Mission: but they received a wonderful Confirmation by his Resurrection from the Dead, which he himself had foretold, and to which he appealed, and of which there was all the Evidence that could

be reasonably desired *. And this was followed and farther confirmed by his Ascension into Heaven in the view of his gazing Disciples ; and both were placed beyond all reasonable doubt, and received a mighty additional Force, by the extraordinary Effusion of the Holy Ghost soon after

* Our Author gives a hint, that if our Saviour had but taken one Turn in the Market-place after his Resurrection, this would have been a more effectual Conviction to the Jews than all the Evidence that was offered, and might have spared both the painful Lives and Labour of so many holy Vouchers, who perished merely by the things being done in a Corner, p. 67. But certainly the Proof already given of Christ's Resurrection was a much stronger Evidence of it, than merely his taking a Turn or two thro' the Market-Place would have been, before a Croud of People, few of whom could be supposed to be so intimately acquainted with him as to be absolutely sure that it was he : or if they had believed that it was like him, they would have been ready to think, as the Disciples at first did, that they had seen a Spirit, or some unaccountable Appearance in his Form and Shape. Whereas, as the Case is now circumstanced, he shewed himself alive after his Resurrection by many infallible Proofs, to Persons to whom he was perfectly known, and who could not be imposed upon in this matter. They themselves were not forward to believe it, till they could no longer doubt of it without renouncing the Testimony of all their Senses. They saw him, they handled him, they eat and drank with him, they conversed familiarly with him on many important Subjects for forty Days together. If it had only been the eleven Apostles that testified this, the Number of the Witnesses would have been very sufficient ; but there were many others that saw him, and conversed with him. And at last he was seen, as St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians affirms, by above five hundred at once, most of whom were alive when he writ that Epistle. It can-

44 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*

after his Ascension, in consequence of his own Prediction and Promise. And this again was proved to the World by the most extraordinary Gifts and Powers abiding with his Disciples, who went thro' all Nations teaching the things which he had commanded them, and were enabled

not without the greatest Absurdity be supposed, that there should have been a Combination among so many Persons to put an Imposture upon the World in that matter; or if there had, it is scarce possible but that it must have been detected, and that among such a Number one or other would have been prevail'd upon by Bribes or Threatnings, to discover and acknowledge the Imposture. Whereas they all persisted uniformly in their Testimony with an unshaken Constancy, and many of them sealed it with their Blood. But that which gave the most remarkable Confirmation to their Testimony, and which was never equal'd in any other Case, was, that God bore them witness by Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, poured forth upon the Disciples in the Name of a risen *Jesus*.

The Story set about by the *Jeus*, that his Disciples stole him by Night whilst the Soldiers slept, was a plain Acknowledgment that his Body was gone out of the Sepulchre; and since it was pretended the Soldiers were asleep, he might have risen of himself for any thing they could tell to the contrary. But if they had really believed that the Disciples stole him, whilst a Guard of Soldiers were purposely set to watch the Body; can it be imagined that they would not have made a strict Enquiry, and have got the Soldiers severely punished for so criminal a Neglect of their Duty, which could scarce be supposed without a Combination between them and the Disciples? Why did they not take pains to search out and seize the Disciples, to confront them with one another, and with the Guards? Why did they not call *Joseph of Arimathea* to an account, to get, if possible, to the bottom of the Imposture, and to stifle all Reports of his

enabled for many Years together in the Name and by the Power of a risen *Jesus*, to perform the most illustrious Miracles, such as he himself had done whilst on Earth; all which came in aid

his Resurrection in the very birth? This is the Method that common Sense would have directed to in this case; and which they would undoubtedly have taken, considering how zealous they were in the Cause, and that they had the power in their hands. But instead of this, all was huddled up; the Centinels were unpunished, their Evidence stifled, no farther Enquiry made. And when the Disciples openly avowed that *Christ* was risen from the Dead, of which they were Witnesses, they durst not enter into a particular Discussion or Examination of that matter, but contented themselves with commanding them not to speak in his Name, who boldly declared to their faces, that they would do it. In a word, it is plain from their whole Management on this occasion, that it was not for want of sufficient Evidence of *Christ's* Resurrection, that the Rulers of the *Jews* did not believe in him; and that as they were disposed, they would not have acknowledged him as the Messiah, whatever other Evidence had been offered; so when they could not deny that *Jesus* had raised *Lazarus* from the Dead, instead of being convinced by it, they only took counsel how they might destroy them both.

But if the Rulers and Body of the *Jewish* Nation had believed in a risen *Jesus*, and embraced his Religion, would those, who now make their not believing an Argument against the Truth of *Christ's* Resurrection, have been convinced? No. It is probable they would have taken still greater advantage of this, and represented it as a national Affair, in which the *Jews* joined out of that Attachment to the Honour and Interest of their Nation, for which they were so remarkable. Such is the true Spirit of Infidelity, always to find fault with the Evidence that is already offered, and to insist upon some other or farther Proof, which if it were granted would be as far from giving satisfaction as before.

aid of their Testimony, and gave it a force which no other Testimony ever had. Here is such a Concurrence of the most extraordinary divine Attestations, such a Concatenation of Evidences, one supporting another, that the Apostle had reason to say to the Christian Converts, that if *an Angel from Heaven* had endeavoured to turn them to *another Gospel*, they were not to regard him. Where he does not put a Case that he supposed might really happen, but uses a strong Manner of Expression to signify, that no Pretence whatsoever should turn them from a steady Adherence to the Gospel of *Christ*. And tho' our Author seems to think that an Angel's appearing from Heaven would have been the highest Evidence possible, *p. 11.* yet I believe any one that impartially considers this matter, will be apt to conclude, that the Appearance of a single Angel would have fallen vastly short in Strength of Evidence, of that amazing Succession of illustrious divine Attestations that were given to Christianity; the like to which never was in proof of any false Religion, nor can be supposed to be in consistency with the Wisdom and Goodness of divine Providence. For this would be to lay too great a Temptation in the way of his frail Creatures; since we cannot conceive, that supposing a Revelation really to have come from God, it could have been attended with more illustrious confirming Evidences of a divine Original, than all these taken together do form. And when to these external Attestations
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is added the exemplary Purity of the great Founder of this Religion, the excellent Character of his Disciples, so remote from that of Impostors, and from all worldly Views and carnal Interests; and the Nature and Tendency of the Religion thus attested, which is designed to reclaim Men from Idolatry, Vice, and Wickedness, to the Love of God, to his pure Worship, to the Practice of universal Holiness and Virtue, and to the heavenly Mind and Life, it carries the Evidence as far as it can go. For this again furnishes a new Proof, that as the Miracles were such as vastly exceeded all human Power, so were they not owing to the Agency of superior evil Beings; since it can never be imagined, that they would contribute their Assistance to the performing such wonderful Things in favour of a Religion so directly opposite to all their Interests, and to the Designs evil Beings must be supposed to have in view. And therefore they must have been wrought by the immediate Assistance and Agency of God himself, or, which comes to the same thing, by the Assistance of good Beings superior to Man, acting under him, and by his Direction, and who would never have thus given their Attestation to Fraud and Imposture.

There is another thing which the Author offers, *p.* 47. and which he seems to design as an Argument. I would answer it if I understood it, but I confess I cannot well make sense of it myself, nor have met with any body that could.

could. But as far as I am able to apprehend it, the Drift of it seems to be this ; that such Miracles as were wrought at the first Establishment of Christianity were to be expected as the natural Effects of such a benevolent Religion as the Christian, and therefore could not be Evidences of its Truth and Divinity: As if the same wonderful Works might not be both Instances of great Benevolence, and the Effects of a divine Power, and consequently Proofs of a divine Interposition. And certainly if any Religion could be supposed to be of such a nature, as necessarily to bring along with it such glorious Effects of a divine Power and Benevolence, this would be a plain Evidence that it came from God.

This Gentleman having made an Attempt to shew that Miracles can in no case be any Proofs at all, afterwards seems willing in his great Liberality to grant, that Miracles might be Evidences to those that actually saw them ; but he denies they could be Evidences to any other Persons. He affirms, that they could not be Proofs *even to the Men of that Generation that were not actually and personally present, when they were done, and that for the same evident Reason they can be none to us now ;* p. 51. He goes on to declaim in many Words after his manner, and all that he urges here depends upon this Principle, that no Accounts of past Facts can at all be safely depended upon, and that no Man is to believe any thing but what he actually sees
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with his own Eyes; That *the Testimony of Sight is by its Nature an Evidence not to be communicated.*—And that *the Light of Conviction which is thus received can extend no farther than to the Eye-witness himself, lost and extinguished the first Moment it is offered to be imparted;* p. 52, 53. A way of talking completely ridiculous, and these Gentlemen themselves would esteem it so, if applied to any other Subject. And the Reason he gives for it is no less ridiculous; that *all the Assurance in the World of another's seeing can never have an equal Effect upon my Senses, or make me see a Thing where I was not actually present.* But tho' no Assurance of another Man's seeing a thing can make me see it, and who ever was so absurd as to pretend it could have that Effect? yet it may lay a just Foundation for my believing it, and in some Cases the Assurance may be so strong, that I can no more reasonably doubt of it than if I had seen it myself.

In opposition to all this loose Harangue, it is sufficient to observe, that if the Miracles originally wrought in Attestation of Christianity were Proofs to those that actually saw them, then they are Proofs to us too, provided we have Evidence reasonably sufficient to convince us, that these extraordinary Facts were really done. So that still the Question returns to this, whether we have sufficient reason to think, that the Accounts given us of those Facts are to be depended upon, and that those Facts were really performed.

formed. For if so, they are as truly Evidences to us of the Truth and Divinity of that Revelation, in Attestation of which they were wrought, as they were to those that saw them, or lived in the Age in which they were performed. If it be said, none that live in succeeding Ages can have the same Evidence that those of the first had; I answer, they cannot have ocular Evidence, and so it must be said of all past Facts, or all Facts done at a distance from us; but yet they may have Evidence sufficient to convince any considering Person that they were done; and an Evidence so strongly circumstanced, that no Man can reasonably deny it, without going upon the above-mentioned Principle, that he cannot safely believe any past Facts at all, or any thing but what he sees with his own Eyes. And the Man that is obliged to take refuge here, is driven to as great an Absurdity as can well be supposed; and plainly shews, that he has nothing reasonable to say against the Credit of those Facts. And yet this is the Shift this Writer is plainly reduced to. And this seems to be the Principle on which his Infidelity rests; a manifest Proof that it is *not founded* on Reason or Argument.

It is on this Principle that he tells us, *p. 52.* That “ that Divine Demonstration to By-standers, the Voice of God himself, *This is my beloved Son*, has been by one intervening Age dwindled long since to human Tradition. God no longer bears witness to his
“ Son,

“Son, but Men only bear witness to God.” This may pass for a pretty Jingle. The Antithesis sounds well enough, between *Men’s bearing witness*, and *God’s bearing witness*; but the Reasoning is poor, and the Sentiment false. For if the wonderful Glory of Christ at his Transfiguration, and the Voice that then came to him was to be regarded as the Testimony of God to his Son in that Age, it is to be regarded as such still, provided we have sufficient Evidence of the Reality of the Fact; and tho’ we ourselves did not see the Glory, nor hear the Voice, yet if we have good reason to believe that the Account of those, who themselves saw and heard it, is to be depended on, it ought in all reason to have an Influence upon us as really as if we had been present ourselves. For the manner in which we come to know a thing does not alter the case; it is sufficient, if we know it in such a way as to have a reasonable Conviction that it is true. And it is certain that in many cases we can no more reasonably doubt of things which we have by Information from others who saw and heard them, than if we saw and heard them ourselves. And particularly it may be shewn, and often has been shewn with great Strength and Clearness, that there never was a Testimony more to be depended on than that of the Apostles, and first Witnesses of Christianity.

I need not take much notice of what he urges, *p.* 52. and which he backs with the Authority of the *Romish* Church, that if Miracles

were necessary at first in *the Infancy of the Gospel, they are so still*, and ought to be continued in the Church. For supposing the Authority of a divine Revelation sufficiently confirmed by a Series of the most extraordinary divine Attestations at its first Establishment, it would be an idle thing to expect that there should be new Attestations and Miracles in every Age. It is sufficient, that the Accounts of those first original Attestations are transmitted to us in a manner that may be safely depended upon. To demand new Signs and Wonders to be continually done before our Eyes, would be perfectly unreasonable. As justly might it be demanded, that all the extraordinary Facts that were done in the first Age, in Attestation of the Gospel, should be done over again in every Age. And as one Man, in one Age, and in one Country, hath as much right to expect and demand it as another, all these things must be repeated in the View, and for the Satisfaction of every single Person in every Age, and in every Country. And what a strange Scene of things this would introduce, how unfit and unbecoming the divine Wisdom, is very evident! At that rate, nothing were to be seen but Signs and Wonders; and, by being so common, they would cease to be extraordinary, and this very thing would hinder the Effect.

Our Author having endeavoured to shew, that our Saviour never appealed to the Understandings of Men, or laid before them any Evidence

dence to convince them of his Divine Mission ; that his Miracles were no Proofs of this at all, nor were ever intended by him as such ; and that the Accounts of them that are transmitted to us are not to be depended upon ; that is, having endeavoured to remove every thing that could be supposed to lay a rational Foundation for believing, proceeds, p. 56, &c. to shew what it is that is designed in the Gospel as the true Principle of our Faith ; and this he resolves entirely into the immediate *Revelation of the Holy Ghost imparted separately and supernaturally to every Individual*, as he expresses it, p. 112. which *irradiates the Souls of Believers at once, with an irresistible Light from Heaven, that flashes Conviction in a Moment ; and thus our Faith is compleated in an instant, and the most perfect and finished Creed produced at once, without any tedious Progress in Deductions of our own ;* p. 59. This he represents as of such a nature, as to render all outward Instructions entirely needless ; so that we must not be left to *take any the least Part of our Instructions from one another.* Nor need we have recourse to the holy Scriptures, which he calls *Manuscript Authorities and Paper Revelations*, or concern our selves at all about the *Credit of ancient Miracles*, or other Facts there recorded *. The Spirit alone is to do all without our own Reason, or
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* See the several Passages relating to this laid together in my former Letter, p. 11, &c. which therefore I need not particularly repeat here.

the Use of any Means on our parts. He asserts, that this Influence of the Spirit is promised to abide with all Christians to the end of the World, to guide them infallibly in all Truth, so that they should not be *left liable one Moment to a Possibility of Error and Imposition*. That it is universal; it is *the Light which enlightneth every Man that cometh into the World*: That it causes Men to *think all alike*; and that on this Scheme alone, Men may be justly punished for Heresy and for Unbelief; since this must be owing to *a rebellious Opposition of the Influence of the Spirit, and a wilful rejecting his Sollicitations, and a Refusal of his offered Grace*.

But I do not see how our Author can consistently talk of Persons resisting the Spirit, or what room there is left upon his Scheme for Unbelief, or for Heresies at all. For since he supposes this Influence to be an *irresistible Light*, instantaneous in its Effects, *infallible* in its Guidance, and the Effect of it to be the completing Faith at once, and infusing the *whole Creed* in an instant, engaging Men to *think all alike*, and freeing them from all *Possibility of Error and Imposition*; and since he at the same time supposes this Influence of the Spirit and infallible Inspiration to be universal, imparted to every Individual, and extending to every Man that cometh into the World; it manifestly follows, that every Christian, yea, every Man that cometh into the World, is irresistibly enlightned, has his Faith absolutely completed, is free from
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all Possibility of Error, and thinks exactly in all Points of Faith the same way with every other Man ; and that therefore there can be no Unbelief, no Error, no Heresy, no Difference of Sentiment among Men or Christians.

Nothing can be more contrary to plain and undeniable Fact, more contradictory in all its Parts, and more evidently subversive of itself, than the Scheme here advanced by this Writer. I am sensible this Gentleman will be ready to sneer at the Charge. For undoubtedly he does not intend that the World should look upon it as a thing which he himself believes. It is the *true scriptural and revealed Account of the Matter*, and the Scripture alone must answer for it. And therefore the more Contradictions are proved upon his Scheme, the better it will answer his Design, which is to expose Christianity to the Derision and Contempt of Mankind.

But if it be made appear, that this is all gross Misrepresentation ; that the Account he is pleased to give us is as contrary to Scripture, as it is to Reason and Common Sense, then the Contradictions and Absurdities are to be charged upon the Author himself, and he is justly accountable for them. And this Attempt of his must only pass for a Proof of his readiness to take any Methods, how unfair or disingenuous soever, to expose the Religion of *Jesus*.

In order to answer his Design, he heaps together a number of Texts, without any regard to their particular Meaning and Intention, as they lie
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in the sacred Writings, and applies them all promiscuously the same way. He every where confounds the extraordinary and ordinary Influence of the Holy Spirit; that which was peculiar to the Apostles, or to the first Age, he applies to Christians in every Age; and if any thing extraordinary was done in some particular Cases, he urges it as if it was designed to be the standing Rule in every Case. Thus, to shew that the Holy Ghost *operates without delay, by an irresistible Light from Heaven, that flashes Conviction in a moment*; he instances in the *happy Metamorphosis of an officious Persecutor into as zealous an Apostle*; p. 58, 59. But tho' the Conversion of St. Paul, taken in all its Circumstances, was a signal Attestation to the Truth of Christianity, it would be very absurd to pretend to draw an Argument from such an extraordinary Instance, to shew what are the ordinary Methods of God's dealings with Men in bringing them to the Faith of Christ. That Apostle declares concerning himself, that he *did not receive the Gospel, which he preached, of Man, neither was he taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal. i. 12.* But can it be concluded from thence, that every Christian receives the Gospel in the same immediate way from Christ himself, without any human Instruction? As well might it be said, that when he declares concerning himself, that he was *an Apostle, not of Man, nor by Man*, his Intention was to signify, that all others were
Apostles

Apostles as well as he. Yet this is the Course of our Author's reasoning, than which nothing can be more absurd and ridiculous. And even with regard to this Case of the Conversion of *St. Paul*, his Faith in Christ though suddenly wrought was not unreasonable, or without Evidence. His Understanding and Reason was fully convinced by what he heard and saw of the divine Power and Glory of a risen Jesus. And the Influence of the Holy Spirit upon his Mind, enduing him with extraordinary Gifts and Powers, was not a blind Impulse to engage him to believe he knew not why (which is the Representation this Gentleman is pleas'd to make of the Influence of the Spirit) but enabling him clearly to discern the Gospel-evidence, and giving him a right Knowledge of the Christian Religion, the whole Scheme of its Doctrines and Laws, its Proofs and Evidences, so that his Faith was in the strictest Sense rational.

It is readily granted, that there was an extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, who were chosen to be the first authorized Witnesses of Christianity, and had an immediate Commission from Christ himself to publish his Religion to the World; I say, there was an extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost upon them, both for enabling them to perform the most illustrious Miracles, and for enduing them with spiritual Gifts, and infallibly guiding them in the Doctrines and Laws they were to deliver to the Church in the Name

of Christ. And there is nothing in this but what is highly reasonable. For supposing God to give an extraordinary Revelation of his Will for the Instruction and Direction of Mankind, it was very proper that those to whom he originally gave that Revelation to be by them published to the World in his Name, should have their Minds extraordinarily illuminated in the Knowledge of the Doctrines and Laws they were to deliver as from him, so as to be kept from Error in delivering them; and that they should also be enabled to produce sufficient Credentials of their divine Mission, to convince Mankind that he sent them. God's doing this in the Case of the Christian Revelation has a manifest Propriety in it, and is an Instance of his great Wisdom and Goodness. And it would be a strange thing to pretend to argue from this that Christianity is not on a rational Foundation, or that the Faith of the Gospel cannot be an Assent founded on rational Conviction; when this very Thing is part of the Evidence on which Christianity is founded, and which makes the Assent to it reasonable. And yet this extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost, promised to and conferred upon the Apostles for these valuable Purposes, is what several of the Texts mentioned by this Writer refer to. Particularly those Texts which he produces with so much Pomp, p. 57. *The Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, he shall testify of me.* And again, *The Spirit whom*

whom I shall send shall lead you into all Truth. The former of these Passages, *The Spirit of Truth shall testify of me*, relates particularly to the Testimony given to Christ by the extraordinary Gifts and Operations of the Holy Spirit in that first Age. And accordingly our Lord after those Words immediately adds, speaking to his Apostles, *And ye also shall bear Witness, because ye have been with me from the Beginning.* John xv. 26, 27. The other Text relates to the infallible Guidance promised to the Apostles to assist them in the executing of their Office. And accordingly, after saying, *The Spirit whom I shall send shall lead you into all Truth*, he adds, *and he will shew you Things to come.* Ch. xvi. 13. And before this, in the same Discourse, he had promised, *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost—shall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* These Texts which plainly relate to the Apostles, and which in that View have nothing in them but what is proper and necessary, and highly for the Honour of Christianity, are applied by this Gentleman, as if they contained a Promise of an infallible Guidance of the Spirit to all Christians in every Age*; that they might not *be left liable one Moment*

* In like manner he endeavours to draw an Argument for that universal Inspiration of all Christians which he contends for, from the Promise made by our Saviour to his Apostles, *Matt. x. 19, 20.* where having told them
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Moment to a Possibility of Error and Imposition, as he expresses it, p. 60. A thing which is evidently absurd and false in Fact. But then this Falshood and Absurdity is not chargeable on the Scripture Scheme, or upon the New Testament, but on our Author himself and his Misrepresentation of it.

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of the Persecutions to which they should be exposed, and that they should be *brought before Governours and Kings for his sake*, he bids them *take no Thought how or what they should speak*; that is, not to be anxiously solicitous about it, which otherwise they might be apt to be; for that it should *be given them in that same Hour what they should speak*; and adds, *For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you*. By which, though our Saviour does not intend to signify, that all use and exercise of their own Reason was to be entirely superseded, as if they were not to have *so much as a single Thought or Suggestion of their own*, as our Author glosses it; yet he certainly designs to signify that on such Occasions they should not be left merely to themselves, and their own Thoughts and Expressions, but that the Spirit should assist them in both in an extraordinary manner: and this was wisely and graciously provided for the Encouragement of the Apostles under the amazing Difficulties they were to encounter with in the first Promulgation of a Religion that was to meet with so much Opposition in the World. Yet from this extraordinary Case our Author seems willing to infer, that the *Spirit dictates Sentiments in secret to the Understandings* of all Christians in every Age, and *miraculously speaks to them for their Instruction*, and *gives them what to think as well as what to say*. p. 108, 109. And with equal Strength and Justice he might argue, that all Christians have the Power of working Miracles, of *healing the Sick, cleansing the Lepers, and raising the Dead*, because our Saviour in that Chapter *commissions and empowers his Apostles to do so*. ver. 8.

Besides the extraordinary Influence of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles to endue them with miraculous Powers, and to guide them infallibly in delivering the Doctrine of Christ; there was also a plentiful Effusion of the Spirit upon the first Christians, though not in the same degree with the Apostles, which contributed mightily to the spreading and propagating the Christian Faith. And considering that the Christian Religion at its first Publication had almost insuperable Obstacles to encounter with in a World sunk in Idolatry, Superstition, and Vice, there was then great need of an extraordinary Measure of divine Influences to accompany the preaching of the Gospel among those to whom it was published. And its making so speedy and wonderful a Progress as it did in face of the greatest Opposition, when it had the inveterate Prejudices, the corrupt Appetites and Passions of Men engaged against it, and no worldly Advantages on its side, furnisheth an additional Proof of its divine Original, and shewed a signal Interposition of Heaven in its favour, and a divine Light and Power accompanying it. And if a Revelation that was at first propagated in a way that bespoke an extraordinary divine Power and Presence, is also of such a nature, that it will bear the coolest Examination; if its Proofs and Evidences approve themselves to our impartial Reason, and its Doctrines and Laws appear to be worthy of God and of the most excellent Tendency, there is every thing that
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can justly be desired to make our Assent to it rational and well-founded. And this is the Case of the Christian Revelation.

I doubt not, that upon a critical Examination of the Texts produced by this Writer, it would appear that several of them, besides those already mentioned, relate to the first Christians, and to the extraordinary Effusion of the Holy Ghost in that Age. Of this kind that Text appears to me to be, which he mentions in the first place, and on which he seems to lay a particular Stress, *No Man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.* It is taken from 1 Cor. xii. 3. where St. Paul is professedly discoursing concerning the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit poured forth in that first Age, and the Persons endued with those Gifts. And after declaring, that *No Man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed,* which relates to those Jewish Teachers that went about anathematizing the Name of Jesus, and at the same time made high Pretensions to the Holy Ghost, which they would not allow any Gentiles could be Partakers of; he adds, *No Man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,* where he probably refers to those who in that first Age preached the Gospel, and confirmed it by Miracles, and the extraordinary Gifts conferred upon them; which shewed such Persons were Partakers of the Holy Ghost, though several of them had been originally Gentiles, without whose divine Assistance and Influence they could not

not have done this: This seems to be the proper Intention of this Passage. Though if it were taken in a more general Sense, to signify that the gracious Assistance of God's holy Spirit is necessary to our believing and acknowledging Christ in a right manner, so as heartily to receive and submit to him as our Lord (for nobody can suppose that the bare saying in Words, that *Jesus is the Lord* is all that is intended) there is nothing absurd in such an Interpretation. I freely grant what Christians have generally acknowledged, that there is an Influence of the divine Spirit still communicated for assisting Men of sincere and upright Minds in the Knowledge and Belief of the Christian Religion, and in the Practice of the Duties there required. Nor is there any thing in this, but what is perfectly agreeable to right Reason, and the justest Notions we can form both of Man's present Weakness and Infirmary, and of the divine Wisdom and Goodness; provided we take this along with us, that these gracious Assistances are communicated in a way perfectly agreeable to the just Order of our Faculties, and without offering Violence to the Freedom that belongs to us as reasonable Creatures, moral Agents, and so as not to render our own Endeavours needless, but to assist and animate our Endeavours *. And it is manifest, that such is the
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* That God can communicate his gracious Assistances to the human Mind in a manner perfectly well accommodated

Representation made to us in the sacred Writings of the Influence of the Holy Spirit, ordinarily communicated to Christians.

The Author produces some Passages to shew, that Believers are represented as the *Temples* of God, and as having his Holy Spirit *dwelling* and abiding in them. These are noble Passages, which do honour to the sacred Writings. They are full of Consolation, and capable of being improved to the most excellent Purposes. For what can be a greater Encouragement, or a more powerful Incentive to the Practice of Virtue, than to be assured that God is graciously present with good Men, ever ready to assist, guide, and comfort them by his Spirit? But then it is extremely evident, from the whole Tenour of the Scriptures, that this is supposed to be such

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modated to our Nature, and so as to leave us the just Exercise of our own Reason and Freedom, no Man that has a right Notion either of God or Man can reasonably doubt; and it can as little be doubted that it is agreeable to his Goodness to do so. And if we cannot distinctly explain the manner of this divine Influence, which is chiefly discernible in the Effects, (and I readily grant this Author, that our Saviour seems to intimate this in the Texts produced by him, *p.* 107, 108.) he must be a small Proficient in Philosophy, that would look upon this to be a sufficient Objection against the Reality of it. Since no Man that has searched into the Nature of Things needs be told, that there are many Things the Certainty of which cannot reasonably be doubted, tho' the manner of their Existence and Operations be what we are not able to explain. And this particularly is the Case with regard to God's providential Concourse with his Creatures.

ness in himself; and surely this is perfectly consistent with his having a rational Conviction of the Truth of Christianity.

If Faith is represented, as this Gentleman observes, to be *not of our selves*, but to be *the Gift of God*, this is agreeable to the devout Language of the sacred Writings, which teach us to ascribe every good thing that is in us eminently to God, *from whom every good Gift doth descend*. Thus we are told, that *it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure*: yet it is evident, that this is not to be understood so as to exclude our own Endeavours. For we are at the same time exhorted to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. So we are to apply to God to *make us perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in us that which is well-pleasing and acceptable in his sight*; but it is manifest from the whole Tenour of the New Testament, that we must *give all Diligence* that we may *grow in Grace and Virtue*, and must use our utmost Care and earnest Endeavours, to stir up our own Powers to the Performance of our Duty, and to cultivate and improve good Affections and Dispositions in our Souls. In like manner, with respect to Faith, it is so the Gift of God as not to exclude the Concurrence of our own rational Powers, or the Use of proper Arguments fitted to work a rational Conviction in the Understanding. Christians are exhorted to *build up themselves in their most holy Faith*; and when they

they do not grow in Faith, this is still supposed to be their own fault, and to be owing to the Negligence and Indisposition of their own Minds.

With regard to those Passages, where our Saviour declares, *No Man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and every Man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me*: And again, *No Man can come unto me, except it were given him of my Father*: Not to insist on the different Explications that have been given of them, let us grant that they are designed to signify the Necessity of a divine Assistance in order to a sincere Belief and Acceptance of *Jesus Christ*, issuing in a dutiful Obedience to his Laws, and a hearty Compliance with the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant; yet still it is manifest, that this divine Assistance implies the Use of proper Means and Endeavours on our parts, and the Exercise of our own Reason, and a careful attending to the Evidence that is offered. Our Saviour all along in his Discourses with the *Jews* supposes there was sufficient Evidence to engage Men to believe, and he fairly lays that Evidence before them; appealing to the Scriptures, to the mighty Works which the Father had given him to do, and the excellent Doctrine which he sent him to teach. And those who with teachable Minds received the convincing Evidence and Testimony that God gave to his Son, so as to be thereby effectually engaged to

believe and to obey him, might be properly said to be *drawn and taught of God*, and to have *heard and learned of the Father*. And on the other hand, when our Lord declares concerning the unbelieving *Jews*, that it was not *given to them of the Father to come to him*; his Intention is not to excuse their Infidelity by casting the Cause of it upon God, but rather to aggravate their Guilt, in not receiving and attending to the Evidence and Testimony that the Father had given to him, which was owing to the bad Dispositions of their Minds. For he every where charges their Unbelief upon their own perverse Wills, and corrupt Affections, and their hardning their Hearts and shutting their Eyes against Evidence*. In which case it was just with God to give them up to their own Hardness and Obstinacy.

Upon the whole, allowing all that can be justly demanded, that in the present Darkness and Corruption of Mankind a divine Assistance is necessary the more effectually to recommend Religion, and engage us to believe and embrace it, and give it its due Weight and Influence upon our Minds; which Assistance God is ready to impart to those who humbly apply to him for it, and who are sincerely desirous to know and do his Will; this indeed is a very good Reason for our applying to God by Prayer for his divine Aids, as good Men have always done; but no Argument can be drawn from it
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* See Matt. xiii. 15. John iii. 19, 20. v. 40, 44.

to prove, that it is needless for us to use our own Endeavours; since this divine Assistance is not intended to exclude, but rather to encourage the Use of proper Means and Endeavours on our parts. Nor doth it in any wise follow from it, that Religion is not in it self a reasonable thing. For all the Arguments and Motives of Religion are still maintained in their full Force. And the gracious Provision God hath in his great Goodness made for assisting our present Weakness and Infirmary by the Aids of his Holy Spirit, should make us more diligent to use our best Endeavours to understand Religion and to practise it; in which case this divine Assistance will be an inestimable Advantage to us. But if by our Pride and Obstinacy, and bad Dispositions, we reject the Evidences of Religion, and resist the Methods of his Grace towards us, this must greatly heighten our Guilt, and expose us to a more aggravated Condemnation. This Gentleman himself seems in Words to acknowledge this. How he can do it in consistency with his Scheme, I do not see. But supposing the Account now given of the Nature and Design of this Influence to be true, what he saith on this head is just and reasonable. That “the Tender of this Conviction, “ however potent in its Influence, must yet depend greatly upon the proper Disposition of “ our Minds to give it reception for its Efficacy, and so far will afford ample Matter for “ Trial and Probation.” That “ a rebellious “ Opposition of the gracious Influence of th
“ divine

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“divine Spirit deserves a severe Repentment;”
and that “with all Justice we may in that case
“be call’d to a strict Account for our Obsti-
“nacy, Impiety, and Perverseness.” *p.* 63, 64.
And again he talks of “a severe Reprehension
“justly due to a rebellious Refusal and Disclaim
“of proffered Grace;” *p.* 66. and of “God’s
“withholding Light from such as chuse to sit
“in Darkness, and by their Ingratitude and
“Neglect have rendered themselves unworthy
“of all farther Sollicitations.” These Expres-
sions, tho’ not in the Sense intended by this
Writer, contain awful Truths, which I heartily
wish he would seriously consider, tho’ it is very
likely he will not thank me for any Concern I
can be under on his account.

Thus I have considered the Account this
Gentleman gives of the Influence of the Holy
Ghost, which proves nothing but his own Un-
fairness, and the great Liberties he allows him-
self in misrepresenting the Scriptures, and ridi-
culing the most Sacred Things. For no two
things can be more opposite to one another
than the *true Scriptural Account of this Matter*,
and that which this Writer would put upon us
as such. The Influence of the Spirit, according
to his Representation of it, supersedes the Exer-
cise of our own Reason, and the Use of our
own Endeavours; but it is evident, not merely
from one or two Passages separately considered,
but from the general Course and Tenour of the
New

New Testament, that the divine Assistances there promised are consistent with the Exercise of our own Reason and Understanding, and are designed to take in the Use of all proper Means and Endeavours. The Spirit, as he represents it, renders the Scriptures entirely useless, and leads to a Neglect or Contempt of them *; but it is not the good Spirit of *Christ* that inspires a Contempt of the Scriptures, which are every where referred to by *Christ* and his Apostles, as of great Authority and Use, and are represented as *able to make us wise unto Salvation*, and to make the *Man of God perfect*, &c. According to his Account of the Spirit, it has no regard to the Miracles and other extraordinary Facts and Attestations recorded in the Gospel, as of any Use or Significancy; but it is undeniably evident, that in the New Testament a great stress is laid upon these things, as illustrious Proofs and Evidences of Christianity, and that the Accounts of them were written for this end and purpose, to engage us to believe. The Spirit communicated to all Christians, if we may believe him, excludes all outward Teaching; so that we are not *to receive the least part of our Knowledge or Instruction from one another*; whereas, according to the Gospel, the Influence

* He calls the Scriptures by way of Contempt, *Manuscript Authorities and Paper Revelations*; as if a Revelation lost its Authority and Use by being committed to Writing. He may, if he pleases, call our Laws and publick Records, *Paper-Laws and Authorities*; but I question, whether this would be thought sufficient to destroy their Authority.

fluence of the Spirit does not render outward Teaching needless, which is all along there supposed to be of great use and necessity; and there is Provision made for its standing Continuance in the Church for the Instruction and Edification of Christians in all Ages. The Spirit, according to his Representation, engages Persons to believe at once, by a strong and irresistible Impulse, without Reason or Evidence, so that Faith is completed in an instant. But in the New Testament, the Faith of Christians is not supposed to be ordinarily begun and completed at once, or to be produced without any Reason that could lay a just Foundation for believing; but to be founded on sufficient Evidence, and capable of continual Growth and Improvement. He represents the Holy Ghost as abiding with all Christians as their infallible Guide, so as to preserve them from *all Possibility of Error and Imposition*; and to cause them to *think all alike* *.

According

* To shew that the Influence and infallible Guidance of the Spirit is universal, our Author produces that Text, *This is the Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*, which has no relation to any such infallible Guidance of the Spirit at all. The Evangelist is there speaking of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that he is the *true Light, which coming into the World enlightneth every Man*, as the Words might be very properly rendered; which signifies no more than our Saviour himself intends, when he saith, *I am the Light of the World*. The Design of such Expressions is to signify, in opposition to the narrow Notions of the *Jews*, who were for confining the Benefit of the Messiah to their own Nation, that he was design'd to be an universal Blessing; that he came to instruct and enlighten

According to which Scheme, it is impossible there should be any Errors or Differences of Opinion among Christians. Whereas in the Gospel it is all along supposed, that Persons may be weak in the Faith, tho' sincere; that they may differ from one another, that they are liable to Errors and Mistakes; and it is expressly foretold, that there shall be Heresies among them.

I need not take any particular Notice of the Insinuations he makes, *p.* 61. that the sacred Writings are corrupted; a Charge which has so often been refuted and exposed with great Strength and Clearness. And as to what he talks of, *p.* 62, 63. as if no Man could understand the Scriptures without a great deal of Learning and Criticism, and being well read in profane History, it will be readily own'd that these are good Helps for a better understanding many Passages of Scripture; and it is our great Advantage that we have many such Helps in our own Language, which the Unlearned may

enlighten *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. He was to be a *Light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as the *Glory of his People Israel*. This also is the Intention of that other Passage he produces, *the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation* (by which we are there evidently to understand the Gospel of *Jesus*) *hath appered unto all Men*; in which sense *St. Paul* elsewhere declares, that the *Gospel was gone into all the World*, and that it was *preached to every Creature which is under Heaven*. These are strong Expressions to signify, that the Gospel is designed for the Benefit of all Mankind, that the Offers of it are universal, and that it actually made a wonderful Progress in a short time thro' a great Part of the then known World.

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have the benefit of. But the main Principles and Duties of Christianity are so frequently repeated and plainly inculcated, that a Man of common Understanding may, without any nice Criticism or Acquaintance with History, by a careful considering the Scripture, understand them as far as is really necessary for Faith or Practice.

This Gentleman having assigned what he calls *the true Principle of Gospel-Evidence*, proceeds in the remaining Part of his Pamphlet to heap up many things without much order, to shew that Faith is not only not founded in Reason, but directly contrary to it; and that there is an *irreconcilable Opposition*, as he expresses it, *between the Faith of Grace and the Faith of Reason*.

The Proofs he pretends to bring of this from Scripture are very weak, and indeed scarce deserve a particular Consideration. Thus he argues from our Saviour's declaring that *no Man can receive the Gospel except he receive it as a little Child*, which he explains as if Christ required that Persons in order to their receiving his Religion should be Children in Understanding; when it is manifest, that what he intends is, that they should be like Children in Humility and Innocence, and a freedom from Pride and Ambition, and from carnal vicious Prejudices *. Those Words of the Apostle Paul effectually obviate such Misconstructions; *Brethren, be not Children in Understanding: howbeit*

* Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

Christianity not founded on Argument. 75

beit in Malice be ye Children, but in Understanding be Men *. In like manner St. Peter exhorts us to receive the Word as *Babes*, but what he intends by it he himself explains, that it is a *laying aside all Malice, and all Guile and Hypocrisies, and Envyies and Evil-speaking* †. And on the other hand, being *Babes* in respect of Knowledge, or *unskilful in the Word of Righteousness*, is represented as a Fault in Christians, for which they are reprov'd ‡.

If the Apostle describes Faith to be the *Evidence of things not seen*, this does not prove that there is an Inconsistency and Opposition between Faith and Reason, though this Gentleman attempts to bring an Argument from it to serve his purpose, p. 77. On the contrary, it appears from this very Description of Faith, that tho' the Object of it be *Things not seen*, yet Faith gives such an *Evidence* of them (and the Word there used properly signifies an argumentative Evidence) as is sufficient to satisfy the Mind of their Truth and Reality. The first Instance of Faith there produced is this, that by *Faith we understand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that Things which are seen were not made of Things which do appear.* ver. 3. And it is represented as the main Principle of Faith, that *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* ver. 6. And in both

* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. † Pet. ii. 1, 2. ‡ Heb. v. 13. 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

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these Cases, though the Things to be believed are Things removed from our bodily Senses, yet the believing them is no way inconsistent with Reason, but perfectly agreeable to it. The other Instances of Faith recorded in that Chapter are high Instances of Trust in God, and Reliance on his Promise and Faithfulness, his Power and Goodness, even in very difficult Circumstances. But in none of them was Faith contrary to Reason. Our Author indeed would fain have the Faith of *Abraham* pass for an unreasonable one, because it is said, that *against Hope he believed in Hope*; the Meaning of which is no more than this, that he believed a Thing which seemed very improbable, and contrary to the common Course of Things: yet he did not believe against Reason; for as he had sufficient Assurance that God had promised it, so he *was fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform*. And there was nothing in this way of judging, but what right Reason must approve. See *Rom. iv. 18, 20, 21.*

Our Author thinks it a hard Case, *p. 78.* that *Zachariab* should be struck dumb for *hesitating* about a Thing contrary to the *common Course of Nature*; but supposing him to have believed that it was an Angel that came to him with a Message from God, Reason ought to have led him to conclude, that it was a Thing not beyond the divine Power; and his being struck dumb for a time, was both designed as a Chastisement

tisement for his Fault in hesitating, and as a Sign to himself and others too of the Certainty of the Event foretold. And whereas he also thinks our Saviour was in the wrong to reprove his Disciples as of *little Faith*, because they thought *they were going to be drowned when the Ship was sinking under them*, and it would have been a *Sin against common Sense to have thought otherwise*; it is manifest the Reproof was just. For if their Faith had been as strong as in reason it ought to have been, considering the many illustrious Proofs they had seen before this of Christ's divine Power, they needed not to have been afraid of perishing, when they had him with them.

When our Saviour said to *Thomas*, *because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed*; he did not intend to pronounce those blessed who should believe without any Reason at all, as this Gentleman insinuates; but he blames *Thomas* for not believing that he was risen from the dead, except he himself saw him with his own Eyes; though he had Reason sufficient to believe it, both because he knew that it was what Christ himself had foretold and promised whilst alive, and because it was confirm'd to him by the concurring Testimony of those who had seen him after he was risen. So that our Saviour here condemns the Principle of those who are not for believing a Thing, however well attested, except it be confirm'd to them by the
Testimony

Testimony of their own Senses; which is the very Principle this Gentleman proceeds upon; a Principle perfectly unreasonable, and which all the World owns to be so in every other Case.

He produces with great Pomp that Passage *Rom. x. 6—10.* *The Righteousness which is by Faith speaketh on this wise; Say not in thine Heart, who shall ascend up into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) Or, who shall descend into the Deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that is, the Word of Faith which we preach. For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* I am not so clear-sighted as this Gentleman, who sees in this Text a full Demonstration that the Faith required in the Gospel is not a rational one. To me the contrary appears here to be supposed, *viz.* that the Gospel does not insist upon impracticable Conditions, and that the Faith of the Gospel is founded upon Evidence not very abstruse, and above our Capacity, but such as is clear and obvious to a sincere and well-disposed Mind.

It would be more to his purpose, if it were true, what he alledges, *p. 84.* That “there is
“no one Lesson, that the holy Writings have
“taken more Care to inculcate, than that of
“denying our Reason to give our Faith Scope.”

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For a proof of this, he only brings one Text, and that he strangely misrepresents. He asks, "Are we not strictly enjoin'd to *captivate Reason to the Obedience of Faith?*" And his Comment upon it is this, "To *captivate*, to lay it under the most absolute Restraint and Prohibition, not to permit it the least Opportunity or Freedom to exert itself, or interpose on any Occasion whatever." The Passage he refers to is 2 Cor. x. 5. where St. Paul expresses himself thus, *Though we walk in the Flesh, we do not war after the Flesh. For the Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations or Reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ.* His Intention is not to signify, that what he taught was contrary to right Reason, or that when he converted Persons to the Faith, he obliged them to renounce their Understandings, or to believe without Reason or against it; but his Design is plainly to shew the great Success of his Ministry, in subduing all opposite Prejudices and Reasonings; which he expresses by *casting them down* and bringing them *into Captivity*, to carry on the Metaphor, because he had compared his Ministry to a *Warfare*. But still this Success was owing to superior Evidence, which carried a greater Conviction than any Reasonings that could be brought against it.

Thus

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Thus this Passage, which is only designed to shew the strong and convincing Evidence, and the Proofs of a divine Power and Original whereby the Gospel was established, is used by our Author to shew, that the Faith of the Gospel is contrary to Reason. And though there be no *Injunction* here at all of any kind, yet he improves it into a general strict *Injunction* to all Christians, *never to exert their Reason upon any Occasion whatsoever.*

It is with the same Candour that he observes, that “the Scripture-Test and Standard for finding out the Spirit of Truth is no more than this: *Hereby ye shall know them—Every one that confesseth that Christ is come in the Flesh is of God.* Now this is evidently what Philosophers call arguing in a Circle, and begging the Question. But in Faith it is a necessary Preliminary, *He that cometh to Christ must believe that he is.*” p. 78.

Here he represents it, as if the Scripture proposed to us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, without any Proof at all, but only the bare Word of those that first preached and published it; and that the first Principle of Faith is a taking for granted the very Thing that is to be proved. Can any thing be more unfair and disingenuous, when the Design of the whole Gospel is to shew that Christ’s divine Mission was confirmed by the most illustrious Evidences, and divine Attestations? And it is manifest, that in the Passages here referred to by this Writer,
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all these Evidences are supposed. The Apostle *John* is here writing to those who were already Christians upon full convincing Evidence, and whom he supposes to be well appriz'd of the main Doctrines of Christianity *. And to such Persons he might justly lay it down as a Mark or Test, by which they might distinguish those false Prophets or Teachers, which he tells them were then *gone out into the World*, that they *denied* Jesus to be the *Christ*, or *confessed* him not to be *come in the Flesh*, whose divine Mission had been confirmed by such signal Attestations, and convincing Evidences. For it is in all Cases allowed reasonable, when a Truth has been sufficiently established, to make use of it as a Principle by which to detect and expose Falshoods.

Our Author, who has a knack of applying Scripture in a way that no Man but himself would have thought of, would fain extract a sort of Proof that Faith is not a rational thing, from our being required to hold *the Faith, not in Unity of Understanding*, as he glosses it, but *in the Bond of Peace, and Unity of the Spirit*, p. 75. He plainly refers to that admirable Passage of the Apostle *Paul*, *Eph. iv. 2, 3.* where we are exhorted to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; a Passage that does honour to the sacred Writings, and which is designed to signify that we should be united in Peace and Love, tho' not in all things exactly of

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* See I John i. 1, 2, 3. ii. 13, 21, 24, 27.

the same Opinion; concerning which see my former Letter, p. 19. He also insinuates, p. 76. that the Apostle approves the Distinction between *Faith and Understanding*, when he affirms of the Case “ of repeating Prayers in an “ unknown Tongue, that we may *pray with “ the Spirit, tho’ not with the Understanding.*” As if the Apostle’s Meaning was, that he that pray’d with the Spirit did not himself understand what he pray’d; whereas it is extremely evident to any one that examines that Chapter, that the Apostle there plainly supposes, that the Person that pray’d in an unknown Tongue did himself understand what he pray’d, and was *edified* by it, but that if he did not interpret what he pray’d, others did not understand him.

He would also improve it as a Presumption against the Reasonableness of Christianity, that not *many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called*, p. 79. and he frequently observes, that the first Publishers of it were *illiterate Persons, no Proficients in any Science*. And probably, if many of the first Publishers of Christianity, or the first Converts to it, had been Persons of Eminence for Riches and Power, and for their Station in the World, or had been great Philosophers, renowned for Learning and Eloquence, those who now affect to despise Christianity for the Meanness of those who first published and embraced it, would have regarded this as a strong Presumption,

sumption, that the Christian Religion was a Contrivance owing to the Genius and Policy, or Interest of its first Publishers; and that the Progress it made was to be attributed to these Advantages. But it pleased God in his Wisdom so to order it, as to leave no room for Pretences of this kind. The Character and Circumstances of those that were first employ'd in publishing the Gospel, afford a convincing Argument, that the Religion they published was not of their own Invention, nor was the Success they met with owing to human Power or Authority, or to their own Learning and Eloquence, or to any worldly Advantages, but to the Force of Evidence, and a divine Presence and Blessing accompanying it.

But he urges farther, that “ if Christianity
“ had proceeded upon rational Principles, it
“ could never certainly have laboured under
“ all that Contempt in the eye of the
“ learned World, which it did.” *p.* 71. And here he breaks out into a high Encomium of the Age in which Christianity first appeared; that “ Reason was then sure to have the fairest
“ play imaginable; never were her Friends,
“ the profess'd Searchers for Truth, more countenanced and encouraged; and the World
“ was never better disposed to attend the canvassing things by Argument, if that had been
“ the ground they went upon.”

It will be acknowledged, that at the time when Christianity appeared, the Knowledge of

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the Arts, Eloquence and Politeness, had spread considerably; and Men in general, it is to be presumed, were better qualified for examining and judging, than in a less learned and civilized Age they would have been. And the Christian Religion's making so great a Progress as it did, in such an Age as this, and in the *Roman* Empire, the most knowing and civilized Part of the World, is a Circumstance very much to its Honour, more than if it had been at first preached among rude and barbarous Nations, quite uncultivated, and destitute of all Learning and Improvement. It is true, it did not meet with a ready Reception among those who then took upon them the Name of Philosophers; nor ought this to be turned to its disadvantage; since there were no Persons less disposed for an unprejudiced Enquiry into the nature of this Religion, than they were. Some of them, as particularly the *Epicureans*, which was then the most numerous and prevailing Sect, denied a Providence, and ridiculed all Religion as Superstition. Others of them, with the Scepticks, bent the whole Force of their Wit and Subtilty to subvert all Evidence of Reason, and shew that Truth and Certainty is not any where to be found. And with regard to the several other Sects of Philosophers it may be observed, that they generally thought themselves in honour obliged to stand up for what were looked upon as the distinguishing Tenets of their particular Sect, and the Dictates of their several Founders.

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Such Men blown up with a vain Conceit of their own superior Wisdom and Learning, would be apt to think it beneath them to rank themselves among the Disciples of a crucified *Jesus*, or to receive Instructions from the first Preachers of Christianity: Men not bred up in the Schools of Philosophers, and who made no Ostentation of their Learning and Eloquence. Any Man of common Understanding, and good Dispositions, not listed into any Party of Philosophers, was certainly in a fairer way of judging impartially of Truth than they generally were. If therefore the Apostle warns those to whom he writes, to *beware lest any should spoil them thro' Philosophy and vain Deceit*; this Caution is very reconcilable with the Supposition of the Christian Religion's being agreeable to Reason. And it is with great Justice that he pronounces concerning many of those that were then called Philosophers, that *professing themselves to be wise they became Fools: They became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkned.*

If there were Persons of eminent Parts and Learning, and strong Reason, that were Enemies to Christianity, both at its first Appearance, and afterwards, it may be justly presumed to have been very much owing to their not taking pains to examine into that Religion, and consider the Evidence brought for it. This may well be supposed, when such Men as *Tacitus* and *Suetonius*, so exact in other matters, shew themselves so strangely negligent and ignorant

in what relates to the *Jews* and Christians, and speak of them according to popular Reports and Prejudices; without ever, as far as appears, giving themselves the trouble to get any certain Information concerning them, or the Principles they professed. And tho' *Pliny* with more Candour gives an honourable Testimony to the Probity of the primitive Christians, yet it is very evident from the Account he gives, that he did not concern himself to make any distinct Enquiry into the Nature of their Religion, its Doctrines and Principles, or the Evidence that could be produced for it. This seems to have been the general Disposition of the Heathens with regard to Christianity; and no wonder that those who were so negligent and superficial in their Enquiries, did not embrace a Religion so contrary to that which was established, and to their worldly Reputation and Interests. But yet it is certain, that there were many excellent Philosophers, and other Persons of Note and Eminency, that overcame all their Prejudices, and embraced the Christian Faith, before it had the Countenance of the Civil Authority. Many of the ancient Apologists for Christianity were Persons of considerable Learning and Eloquence, and extremely well versed in the *Pagan* Writings and Philosophy*. And with regard to
most

* *Arnobius*, who had himself been a rigid Pagan, and a Man of considerable Learning and Acuteness, and who turned Christian, even in the persecuting Reign of *Dio-*
cletian,

most of them, it appears from the Accounts they give us of themselves, that they had been strongly prejudiced in favour of Paganism, in which they had been educated, and which had all worldly Advantages on its side: and it was by examining into the Christian Religion, and considering the Excellency of it, and the Evidences brought for it, that they were convinced; and that at a time when they had the best Opportunities of enquiring into the Truth or Falseness of the original Facts of Christianity; and when, if there had been any Counter-Evidence to be produced, they might easily have known it; yea, and at a time when by embracing it they exposed themselves to the most bitter Reproaches, and most grievous Sufferings.

It was a thing so well known, that many of the Christians were eminent for their Learning and Knowledge in Philosophy, and had made an advantageous use of it in defence of Christianity, and in refuting and exposing the Pagan Superstition and Idolatry, that the Emperor *Julian* thought it one of the best Methods he could take to subvert Christianity, to shut up the Schools,

Julian, taking notice of the wonderful Progress of the Christian Religion, observes, that Men of great Parts, Orators, Grammarians, Lawyers, Physicians, and Philosophers, relinquishing the Sentiments in which they had been educated, embraced the Christian Faith.—*Magnis ingeniis præditi Oratores, Grammatici, Rhetores, Consulti-juris ac Medici, Philosophiæ etiam Secreta rimantes, Magisteria hæc expetunt, speretis quibus paulo ante fidebant.* Arnob. advers. Gentes, Lib. 2.

Schools, and hinder the Christians from Learning. This Gentleman indeed takes upon him to blame his Politicks in this, and could, it seems, have directed him to a better Method of putting a stop to the Progress of Christianity, *viz.* by opening to the Christians the Schools of the Philosophers, *p.* 74. But whatever Opinion I may have of our Author's great Sagacity, I apprehend *Julian* and his Advisers understood the State of things at that time much better than he; and were more capable of judging from their own Observation, what was the most likely way to effect a Design they had so nearly at heart.

I need not take any particular notice of this Gentleman's Declamation, from *p.* 70, to *p.* 75. to shew the Inconsistency there is between Christianity and Philosophy. It certainly argues a very peculiar degree of Assurance in this Writer, in the same Pamphlet in which he takes occasion to mention the illustrious Names of Lord *Bacon*, Mr. *Boyle* *, Mr. *Locke*, and Sir *Isaac Newton*, the greatest Philosophers of this, or perhaps any Age, to take upon him to pronounce with so much Confidence, that there is an irreconcilable

* This excellent Philosopher, Mr. *Boyle*, has written an admirable Treatise, call'd the *Christian Virtuoso*, on purpose to shew the good Agreement there is between Experimental (*i. e.* the best and soundest) Philosophy and Christianity;—And what a Tendency a good Acquaintance with the former hath to dispose a Man for receiving and believing the latter, and discerning and acknowledging the Force of its Proofs.

concilable Opposition between the Christian Religion and Philosophy, and that no Man can be a good Christian and Philosopher at once. They were Christians that have set Philosophy on the noblest Foundation, that have carried it to the greatest Height, and enrich'd it with the most important Discoveries. And tho' he insinuates, that those of the meanest Understandings are best qualified for believing, and have most of *true Zeal*, and *Acuteness of Spiritual Discernment*, and seems willing to claim the *brightest Votaries of the rational Class* on the side of Infidelity; yet nothing is capable of a clearer Proof, than that the most distinguished Names in the Republick of Letters, those that have discovered the greatest Strength of Reason, and Compass of Knowledge, have been Persons that have shewn a high Esteem for Christianity. And it has been no small pleasure to me to observe within the compass of my own Acquaintance, that Men of the best Understandings, and most generous way of thinking I have ever known, as well as of the best Characters, and most exemplary Morals and Virtues, were the firmest Christians. And I must confess it has given me some Emotion, when I have seen Persons every way their Inferiors, no way remarkable for the Goodness of their Morals, or any extraordinary Strength of Genius, and that did not seem to give themselves much trouble in close thinking, assume a kind of Superiority, merely on

90 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*
account of their pertly rejecting the Faith of the
Gospel.

There is one thing in his Harangue about the Opposition between the Christian Religion and Philosophy, which it may be proper to take notice of, to shew the great Consistency of this Writer. He had in the former Part of his Letter represented Reason as in an eternal Fluctuation and Uncertainty; that the *Decrees of a human Understanding can in their nature have no pretension to be irreversible*; and that the Philosopher *cannot be certain of his own Constancy or lasting Attachment to any Principles*; nor that *his Judgment shall be inviolably fixed to one Point*; p. 25, 26. But here he represents it as the Character of a Philosopher, that he *has contracted an inviolable Attachment to certain established Tests, and will bear of nothing that does not fall in exactly with what he calls the Laws of Nature, which he has already irreversibly determined*; and that, he makes *moral Relations the Touchstone for the Trial of all Truths*; p. 73. What he here offers, shews a great Inconsistency between this Author and himself, but none at all between Christianity and Philosophy; since it is certain, and has often been shewn, that the Christian Religion is perfectly consistent with those Laws and Relations; and they that have treated those Laws of Nature and Moral Relations with the greatest Strength and Clearness, and to whom the World is most obliged on this head, have been Christian Writers. This

This Gentleman takes occasion in his Pamphlet to mention several great Men, and their Performances. *Stillingfleet's Origines Sacræ*, Dr. *Clark's Demonstration*, &c. Mr. *Addison's Treatise of the Christian Religion*; *The Trial of the Witnesses*; *The Analogy of Reason and Revelation*: And by just mentioning them in a sneering way, has no doubt done enough to convince his Readers that they are very insignificant Things, and that it would be lost pains to consider them. So extraordinary a Man is this Author, that one Dash from his lucky Pen shall be of more force than all their learned Writings.

It is pleasant enough to hear him expressing his Concern for the great Prejudice that is done to Christianity, by the carrying on of *Boyle's Lectures*, which he *cannot avoid* regarding as a *very principal Cause of the present prevailing Disposition and Turn to Infidelity*; p. 85, 86. And I believe every body is convinced, that if this had really been the Case, this Gentleman would not have been so forward to complain of it. All that one can gather from what he says on this Subject is, that he and his Friends would be very well pleased to have those Lectures laid down, which I must own with me is a very good Reason for their being continued, and a strong Presumption of their Excellency and Usefulness*.

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* As these Lectures are designed for the Defence of Natural Religion as well as Reveal'd, it seems, according to our Author, Reasoning is equally an Enemy to both.

He declaims very rhetorically, *p.* 87—94. on the Inconsistency of the Gentlemen employ'd in carrying on those Lectures, in urging Persons to a free Examination and Enquiry; and at the same time exhorting them to embrace or adhere to the Christian Faith, and setting before them the Guilt and Danger of Unbelief. He is pleas'd here to make Speeches for them, which, as he manages the matter, look odd enough; and it would be very easy, if any Man were disposed to such an Employment, to make a Speech for this Gentleman himself drawn out of the Principles of his Book, that would be much more inconsistent and ridiculous. The Principles upon which this Part of his Declamation proceeds, and on which the whole Ridicule is founded, are such as these; that the being educated in any Religion, or baptized into it, absolutely precludes all future Enquiry or Examination; that there can be no fair Examination, where there is not an absolute Neutrality or Indifferency with regard to the Principles enquired into; and that all Examination necessarily supposes at least a temporary Disbelief; that whatever is proposed to Examination or Enquiry may be innocently rejected; and that if a Man may doubt or suspend his Assent for a while, he may doubt always; that no Man can without claiming Infallibility exhort another to embrace the Principles he himself judges to be true and important, or speak to him of any Danger in rejecting them. These are the Principles here supposed,

supposed, and which he had laid down in the former Part of his Pamphlet. I have distinctly considered them in my former Letter, and shall not now repeat what I there offered. I shall only at present observe, that notwithstanding this Gentleman's curious Harangue, it is obvious to common Sense, that when a Man upon the most mature Consideration is satisfied by Arguments which he judges good and valid, that such and such Principles are of great importance to the Happiness of Men, and to the Cause of Religion and Virtue in the World, this must naturally make him desirous both to confirm those in the Belief of them, and in a suitable Practice, that profess to believe them already, and to bring over others to the Belief and Acknowledgment of those Truths, by all the fair Methods of Reason and Argument in his power. If he looks upon those Truths to be of great importance, on which much depends, he cannot but represent them as such; and if he be a Person who has himself carefully examined, and upon an attentive Consideration of the Argument has found the Evidence rise up strong to his view, it is natural for him to recommend Enquiry to others, in hopes it will have the same happy effect upon them. And if he thinks he has reason to conclude, that the true Cause of their not believing those Truths is their want of considering them fairly and impartially, or that it is owing to vicious Prejudices and faulty Dispositions of Mind; then it is very reasonable for him to warn them seriously

seriously and earnestly of the bad Consequences of such a Conduct, in a Matter that he looks upon to be of the highest importance. This a Man may consistently do, without claiming the Privilege of absolute Infallibility.

With regard to this Writer himself, any Man that thinks he discerns in his way of treating this Subject many Things very unfair and disingenuous, and unbecoming an impartial Enquirer after Truth; many Things that argue a great Want of Candour, and a mighty Willingness to misrepresent and subvert Christianity at any rate, tho' with it he should subvert all Religion; any Man that thinks thus, (and whosoever carefully considers the Tendency of this Pamphlet, and the gross Misrepresentations with which it abounds, will be naturally led to think so,) might very consistently, without pretending to Infallibility, admonish this Gentleman of the Unjustifiableness of such a Temper and Conduct, and earnestly recommend to him a more equal and attentive Examination of the Nature of the Christian Religion and its Evidence; especially considering the Declarations made in the Gospel, concerning the Guilt and Danger of those who, when it is made known to them, disbelieve and reject it.

Our Author himself often mentions those Declarations, but it is manifest, that it is only with a design to expose them, and Christianity on the account of them. And in order to this, he puts the Case of Persons continuing Unbelievers with the best Dispositions in the World, after the fullest
and

and most impartial Consideration, and whose Unbelief is not owing to any Fault on their parts, but is absolutely unavoidable and invincible. But this is not the Case the Gospel puts. On the contrary, it is still supposed, that the Unbelievers there condemned are such as love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil; that their Unbelief is owing to faulty Causes, to vicious Prejudices and wrong Affections and Dispositions of Mind, to their hardning their Hearts, and shutting their Eyes against Evidence. This is there supposed to be the general Case of Unbelievers; and their Guilt and Condemnation is represented as highly aggravated. If there be any particular Exceptions, they must be left to the Mercy and Equity of the supreme Lawgiver, but such Exceptions could not be properly taken notice of in the Gospel-Law. It would not be wise or fit, supposing a well-attested Revelation to have been really given from Heaven of great importance to Mankind, to put the Case of any Person's being excusable in not believing or receiving it, when fairly laid before him. This would soon be abused; the believing and receiving it would be looked upon as a Matter of Indifferency, and so the Design for which that Revelation was given, would be in a great measure defeated.

The remaining Part of his Pamphlet has little in it that deserves Consideration. He declaims against the Methods made use of by Magistrates, and in the Universities, for promoting
the

96 *Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled,*
the Christian Faith, and discouraging free En-
quiry. *p.* 95—102. And if any wrong or
mistaken Methods have been made use of for
promoting the Interests of Religion, which no
doubt has often been the Case, I don't see that
Christianity can be made accountable for them,
or by what Logick it can be concluded from
thence that it is not a rational Religion. But
I think it cannot reasonably be denied, that sup-
posing the Principles of the Christian Religion
to be beneficial to Society, tending to promote
the Practice of Piety, Fidelity, Virtue and good
Morals, and that Infidelity tends to set Men
loose from Restraints, and to encourage Licen-
tiousness, Immorality and Vice, a Magistrate
that is persuaded of this may very justly en-
courage the one by all prudent Methods consist-
ent with Liberty and the publick Rights, and
discountenance the other. Nor can the Uni-
versities, that have the Care of educating Youth
committed to them, be blamed for endeavouring
to train them up by Reason and Argument, in
those Principles, which are most for the Good
of their Country and of Mankind, and for pro-
moting Religion and Virtue. The same may
be said with regard to Parents, that have any
Concern for the Good of their Children. Nor
can any thing be more absurd than what this
Gentleman insinuates, *p.* 102. as if Parents
could not breed up Children in the Principles of
Religion, without arrogating to themselves In-
fallibility. For if they had only a Probability

of the Truth and Excellency of the Principles of Religion, it would be their Duty to endeavour to instil those Principles betimes into the tender Minds of their Children, and would be a very wrong thing to leave them at large in a World, where they are liable to be led into Principles and Practices of the most pernicious Tendency, without endeavouring to guard them by good Instructions against those Principles and Practices.

It is not necessary to take particular Notice of the Quotations he produces with so much Pomp from Bishop *Beveridge*; since whatever Esteem we may have for the Learning or Piety of any particular Writer, if he has fallen into any improper Sentiments or Expressions, it would not be fair to turn them to the Disadvantage of Christianity, which is in no wise accountable for them. The Book from which our Author quotes these Passages was written when the Bishop was very young, and it is not much to be wondered at if there are several things in it not well digested, and written in an unguarded and hyperbolic manner. But since in that Book he gives an Account at length both of what he believed and of his Reasons for believing, it appears that he was far from looking upon the Influence of the Spirit to be, what this Gentleman represents it, a blind irrational Impulse, or to be at all inconsistent with believing upon Reason and Evidence.

Our Author concludes his Pamphlet with recapitulating and applauding his own Performance, which I hope however will not have the Effect that seems to be intended by it. That Man must certainly be already very strongly prejudiced in favour of Infidelity, who can be brought to think worse of the Christian Religion, for the Representations he is pleased to make of it. He undertakes indeed to shew that *Christianity is not founded on Argument*, but any one that reflects on the unfair Arts made use of by this Gentleman, and others that have appeared on that Side, and how little of solid Reasoning they have been able to oppose to the Defences that have been made for Christianity, will be apt to think, that it may with much greater Justice be said, that *Infidelity is not founded on Reason or Argument*; and that if it spreads among us, which this Writer seems to glory in, though I doubt not he mightily exaggerates it beyond the Truth and Reality of the Case, it must be owing to some other Cause than fair and impartial Enquiry. Some have been prejudiced against Christianity on account of the Ill-conduct of many of its Ministers and Professors, or of the Absurdities that have been taught, and the Corruptions that have obtained among those that call themselves Christians. But if this were all, a calm and impartial Consideration of the Christian Religion in its genuine Purity and Simplicity as laid down in the holy Writings, would be an effectual Preservative against

gainst this Prejudice. But besides this, there is in some Tempers a strong Affectation of appearing to be Persons of superior Genius, able to break through the Force of Education, and common Prejudices; and this I doubt not has carried many who were not able to distinguish themselves to advantage by their superior Virtues or Abilities, to endeavour to do it by opposing and rejecting the Faith of Christians, and on this account assuming to themselves a Judgment and Penetration above the Vulgar, as if they could see farther than the rest of Mankind. But the most powerful Prejudice of all against Christianity, and which has a much stronger Force to incline some Persons to reject it, than any or all the Prejudices in its favour to incline Men to embrace it, is that which arises from the Byass of their corrupt Lusts and Passions. When Men are devoted to any of those Sins, which the Gospel forbids under the severest Penalties, they must either renounce the Scriptures, or condemn themselves. A Man that is under the Power of strong vicious Inclinations and depraved Habits, will of course be prejudiced against a Religion, which if it be true obliges him to counteract and mortify his darling Appetites, and will not suffer him to be easy in his licentious Courses, and teaches him to expect a dreadful Punishment in a future State, as the Effect of his Ill-conduct in this. His Interest and Inclinations naturally bribe his Judgment to pronounce against such a Religion,

they give force to every Objection, and will hardly admit him calmly to consider its Proofs. And therefore in an Age of growing Diffoluteness and Corruption of Manners, it is not very surprizing to see an Increase of Infidelity too.

On the other hand, a Man of real Piety and Virtue, one who is a devout Adorer of the Deity, who endeavours to govern his Passions, and is regular in his Life, can scarce help approving and wishing well to a Religion of such an excellent Tendency, that raises him to the most sublime Hopes, that gives him the most ravishing Discoveries and Assurances of God's rich Grace and Mercy, and of his wonderful Love to Mankind, and of the Glories prepared in a future State, as the Reward of a Life of sincere Piety and Virtue in this. I will therefore readily own, and let our Author make the most of this Concession, that a good Man will be apt to be prejudiced in favour of the Christian Religion. But then this Prejudice, if it must be called so, is a just and reasonable one. When a Man discerns the Characters of divine Wisdom, Goodness and Purity in the Gospel, when he feels its Suitableness to his own Case, the happy Effect it has upon himself in purifying his Heart and governing his Life, in strengthening good Dispositions, and engaging him to abound in every good Work, this hath a natural Tendency to convince one of a sincere and upright Mind, that the Gospel is not the Work of Impostors, that it is worthy of God, and
came

came from him. And it is a great Proof that the Christian Religion is founded in Reason and Evidence, when it has both such obvious Characters and Proofs of its Excellency and Divinity, as strike the Minds and internal Sense of those who are not so well able to carry their Views through a long Chain and Series of Reasonings; and when it is also confirmed by such a Variety of Arguments and Evidences, as taken in a more extensive View are capable of giving Satisfaction to those of the greatest Leisure and Penetration. These Reasons and Evidences have often been represented to the World with great Strength and Clearness, nor do I find this Writer has offered any thing to prove those Reasons insufficient.

I have now obeyed your Commands in communicating my Thoughts to you upon this Pamphlet, and have not left any thing in it unexamined, that seemed to me to deserve Notice. And as this Writer makes some shew of treating the Subject he has undertaken in a methodical Way, I have, that he might not complain of having his Arguments mangled or not represented in their full Force, followed him in the Order which he himself has chosen. But tho' I will not deny him the Praise of Wit and Ability, yet upon the most impartial Consideration of his Performance, I cannot help saying, that an Author that in any other Cause would give himself such a Liberty of misrepresenting
Things,

Things, and endeavour to impose upon his Reader at the rate this Gentleman has done, or that would treat any other Book as he has done the Scriptures, would be justly regarded, as having forfeited all his Credit and Reputation as a fair and candid Writer; and it certainly aggravates it highly, when it is done with a View to mislead Persons in a Matter of the highest Consequence. If you think the Remarks I have offered may be of use, I shall not repent the Pains I have taken in them. I am with a real Esteem

Your faithful humble Servant.



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