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*The Divinity of Christ proved from  
Holy Scripture:*

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IN A  
S E R M O N

Preached at a  
Morning LECTURE

A T  
E X O N,

B E F O R E  
A SOCIETY of Young PERSONS.

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*Published at their Request:*

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BY *T H O. J E F F E R Y.*

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OF OXFORD

1712



To the Young Gentlemen who are the Supports of the Morning Lecture at Exon.

SIRS,

*AS it was at your desire, the following Sermon was first Preached, so it was your assuring me of the Service it was of to you which tempted me to think it might be of more general Use. When you read it now it is published, you will observe some things added which I had not time to deliver when the Sermon was preached, which I hope may be of Use to strengthen the Argument: In the first part relating to the Divinity of Christ I have endeavour'd clearly to state the Question, viz. Whether Christ be only improperly called God, or in a proper Sense as possessed of Divine Perfections? In the Establishment of the Doctrine itself, I have endeavoured to guard it against the two Extremes, of those who on the one Hand attribute Divine Perfections to him only in an improper and figurative Sense, or on the other deny his eternal Sonship. In the latter part of the Sermon, I have endeavour'd to shew the good Agreement between Truth and Charity, and have offered the Reasons why, I think, we should bear with one another in our Differences, particularly relating to this Doctrine. All are agreed, I think, in the general Doctrine of Charity: The only question is, how far our Charity should extend? Now to me the case is clear, that there is a brotherly Love distinct from common Charity; that we ought to love all those as Brethren and of the Household of Faith, notwithstanding their Differences from us, whom in a Judgment of Charity we ought to esteem Christians;*

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that

*that Christ is the sole King in his own Kingdom; that therefore he only can appoint to his Subjects the Terms of Acceptance to his Favor, or of Communion with each other; that he has appointed no Terms of either that do exclude those who believe him to be a Teacher come from God, who carefully study his Revelation, and are ready to receive whatever they can find he has revealed to them; that those are to be judged ready to receive Christ's Doctrines when made known to them, who declare this, and discover the Insincerity of such Declarations by no Overt-acts, otherwise none can be reckoned Christians by us who differ from us in their Sense of Scripture Doctrines, and at this rate all Christian Charity and brotherly Love will be destroyed, and the Communion of Saints be rendred an impossible and contradictory thing. This seems to me as evident and clear a Demonstration as any in Euclid: If any think otherwise, they have their Liberty to differ; but I hope none will oppose to fair Arguments, angry and personal Reflections: If they do, sagacious and impartial Persons will be apt to guess some unlucky Reason or other of such Conduct. May the God of Heaven bless you in your Designs for the promoting his Glory, and your own and others Spiritual Good, may you continually improve in Knowledge, Piety and extensive Charity! And after you have been useful to God's Church here on Earth, may you make a part of the Glorious Society above!*

*This, Gentlemen, is the hearty Prayer of one who is sensible of the many Obligations you have laid on him, and shall ever endeavour to answer them.*

THO. JEFFERY.



## JOHN i. 1.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

**S**T. *John* writ this Gospel partly to supply what was wanting in the other Evangelists accounts of our Saviour's Life and Ministry, and partly to correct the Errors of some Hereticks then sprung up in the Church, who denied some of the principal Articles of the Christian Faith; as that God the Father was the Creator of all, by attributing the creation of the World to other powers distant from the supreme; that Christ existed before he came into the World, that he was incarnate, &c.

In the beginning. This plainly refers to the creation of the World, mentioned *ver. 3.* as in the beginning *Gen. i. 1.* is explained from what follows, God created the Heavens and the Earth. In the beginning of things was the Word, that glorious Person by whom the Word and Will of the Father has been all along revealed and executed; was with God, *i. e.* with God the Father. 1 *John i. 2.* And the Word was God, and not a mere Man, as the *Ebionites* taught: The same was in the beginning with God; this he repeats as a matter of great consequence, in opposition to those Hereticks who taught that the World was made by some other powers distant

tant from the supreme, and that God the Father was not Creator of the World; whereas the Apostle shews that the Word by whom the World was made was ever with the Father; and therefore that by attributing the Creation of the World to him we don't lose our Faith in the first Article of the Creed, *viz.* that God the Father Almighty is the Creator of the World, *ver.* 3. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; whereas some of the ancient Hereticks attributed the Creation of the visible and invisible Worlds to different Principles.

The Apostle goes on to shew that he really answered all those glorious characters of Life, Light, &c. which they had parcelled out amongst different imaginary beings. *Ver.* 10. he was in the World, presided and directed all the affairs of it from the beginning, and the World was made by him, and yet the World knew him not; he came to his own, into his own Family, to the World that was made by him, and not by some other power that bare no relation to God the Father, as some Hereticks taught; and yet his own, the Men of the World made by him, received him not.

Having thus shewn the drift of the Apostle's discourse, I come to what I design to treat of from them, *viz.* the Divinity of Christ. All do grant that he is God; the only question is, whether he be God in a proper or an improper Sense? there are certain Characteristicks of the true God which natural Reason discovers to us; as that he is Creator and Governour of the World, and by consequence that he has those Perfections which shine forth in these Works; this is the easy and popular Notion of God; this is the Notion of God,  
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which the Works of Nature, expos'd to our view, teach us; this is the Notion of God, which is the Foundation of all his Relations to us, and so of all the Duties we owe him; this is the Notion of God, taught us in holy Scripture; this is the Description we therein meet with of God; by these Characteristicks the Jews were trained up to the Knowledge of the true God; by these, God distinguishes himself from meer nominal Deities and the Vanities of the Heathens; from these he claims to himself that Honour, Worship and Service that is his due: In the Scripture we are always referred to the Creation of the World for the Knowledge of the true God; and the Works of Nature furnish us with no other Notion of God than that which I have before represented.

This now is the proper Notion of God; a Person is improperly called God, that is called so only for resembling him that is properly God in some or other of these Perfections, particularly Dominion. The question then is, whether Christ be God in the former, or only in this latter Sense of the word. The word God differs from words of a mere absolute Signification, that it connotes some relation to the Creatures, and therefore 'tis proper to say my God, our God, &c. but then it seems not wholly to denote a relation to the Creatures; the relation that he who is properly God bears, as Creator and Governour of the World, can't be separated from the notion of Perfection and Excellence as the relation of King may: a foolish or weak Creator are contradictory Ideas; God's Dominion is nothing but that Power which he has of doing always what is fittest and best, and therefore of making what variety of beings he sees best, and then of disposing



posing of 'em and directing their affairs in the wisest and fittest manner.

Having thus stated the true Notion of God, I come to prove that Christ is God in the sense above explained; and that

- (1.) from his Names and Titles.
- (2.) His Attributes and Perfections.
- (3.) His Operations.

(1.) His Names and Titles, and amongst these I shall take notice only of two, Son of God, and God.

1. Son of God, he is called Son of God in Scripture on several accounts, as on the account of his birth of the Virgin by the *immediate* Power of God, *Luke* i. 35. But thus he seems not to have any Preheminence above *Adam*, who was formed from the Dust of the Ground by the immediate Power of God, and on that account called the Son of God, *Luke* iii. 38. He is called the Son of God as he received a Commission and Authority from God, as the Word of God came to him, *John* x. 36. But on this account, others are called Sons of God also, *John* x. 35. He is thus, not God's only begotten, but his *first-born*, higher than the Kings of the Earth, *Psal.* lxxxix. 27. Anointed with the Oyl of Gladness above his Fellows, *Psal.* xlv. 7. He is called Son of God, as he was raised from the dead by the Power of God, *Psal.* ii. 7. But thus he is only God's first-born, as he is called on that account, *Col.* i. 13. He was Son of God antecedently to his Resurrection, and by that was declared, mark'd out or determined, to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness, the *ἀγιος* or his divine Nature, in contradistinction to the flesh, according to which he was of the seed of *David*, *Rom.* i. 3, 4. He was the Son of  
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of God before his coming into the World, and therefore the Love of God seems represented as heightened by this consideration, that the Person sent, was one of such an excellent Nature, and so near and dear to the Father, as his only-begotten Son, *John* iii. 16. 1 *John* iv. 9, 10. The Word is called the only begotten, *John* i. 14. Christ is said to be begotten before every Creature, or before the whole Creation, *Col.* i. 15. As the ancient *Greek* Fathers interpreted the words in that place, and as the Context most naturally leads one to interpret 'em, he was begotten before the whole Creation, as is plain, because all things were created by him; and this reasoning is repeated, *ver.* 17. he is before all things, and by him all things subsist: he is therefore Son of God in a peculiar and eminent Sense, he perfectly represents the Father in all his divine Excellencies and Perfections, being the Image of the invisible God, *Col.* i. 15. representing and manifesting his glorious Perfections in his Works, particularly of Creation, as it follows, *ver.* 16. He is the Brightness, or Shining forth of his Father's glory, in whom his Father's Excellencies and Perfections do shine forth, and are manifested to the World; as the Sun becomes visible by the Rays which shine from it, and as God was formerly manifested in acts of Judgment or Mercy by the *Shechinah* in the Tabernacle and Temple; and the express Image of his Person, or the Character and Impression of his Substance, that as perfectly represents him as the Image stamped on Wax does the Original on the Seal, *Heb.* i. 3. And thus he is the Heir and Lord of all things, all things being created not only by him, but for him, *Col.* i. 16.

(2.) Another title given him is that of God: this is expressly ascribed to him in the Text; and that the word God is here to be taken in a proper Sense, we have these three Arguments from the context to prove.

1. That he is said to be God in the beginning, and therefore not merely in a relative Sense, since he was God before there were any Creatures in being, to whom he should bear such relation.

2. He is said to be God by whom all things were made; now this is a Characteristick of true and proper Godhead, which the Light of Nature gives us, and which the Scripture every where confirms; the Scripture refers us to the Creation of the World for the Knowledge of the true God, *Psal. xix. Rom. i. 20.* By this Characteristick *Jehovah* distinguishes himself from false Gods; to this glorious Work he refers us for the Knowledge of those Perfections and Relations to us from which the Honor, Worship, and Service of him results, and from which he lays claim to these; see *Isa. xl. throughout: Isa. xlv. 5, 6, 7. Jer. x. 11, 12. 2 Kings xix. 15.*

The Works of Nature discover only the Perfections of him who is their *immediate* Creator, and no other Perfections than what were necessary to their Production, and yet to these Men are referr'd for the Knowledge of God; to their not attending to what was taught them from these Works is imputed the *Gentiles* either Ignorance of the true God, or Wickedness in neglecting or corrupting his Worship, *Rom. i. 20 — 25.*

In the competition between *Jehovah* the God of the *Jews*, and the Gods of other Nations, *Jehovah* claims this as his Prerogative, that he made the World, which they neither did nor could;

could; he appeals to this as a Characteristick of true Divinity, which Mens natural Reason wou'd discover to them; he makes a Challenge to the Gods of other Nations to shew any Works like these, or to make out their right to any share in the Glory of these Works, by concurring with him in them, by counselling or assisting him; he magnifies his Power, Wisdom and other Perfections discovered in these Works; he shews from hence his absolute sovereignty over all, his Power to dispose of all, his perfect Knowledge of all things in the World, even the secretest Thoughts of free Agents, and their Designs even before they are formed, *Psal.* cxxxix. 1. ——— 16. his Knowledge of all the relations between things, of the dependance of things one on another, and so his foresight of future events, *Isa.* xlv. 18 ——— 22. his relation to the Creatures as their Governour, and so his right to their Homage, Worship and Service.

(3.) He is said to be God in the same place which speaks of a Person, *viz.* the Father, who by all is allowed to be truly and properly God, and that without the least hint that he is not God in the same true and proper Sense. Magistrates are called God's, in the same place where the Creator of all things is called God; but then there is a plain hint given of the improper Sense, in which they are so called, I said ye are Gods, but ye shall die like Men; but here there is not the least hint of any change of the Sense of the word God: Suppose that it were said such an one was with the King, and such an one was a King, who would not think the word King was to be taken in both places in the same proper Sense, *viz.* for one that has Subjects under him, and not to be understood in the latter clause, of one that  
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merely resembles a King in living independently, and at large? &c. If the Apostle had designed to signify, that the word God here applied to Christ, was to be taken in a proper Sense, he could not, as Dr. *Waterland* excellently observes, have well expressed it otherwise than he has done. The Articles being left out, does not shew an improper Sense of the word, for 'tis oft left out when applied to the Father himself; and particularly in this very Chapter, but it must necessarily be left out, to signify that Θεός was the Predicate, not the Subject, and that the λόγος was not the same Person with him who had been before stiled ὁ Θεός, viz. the Father.

That the word God is attributed to Christ in the proper Sense is further plain from hence, that 'tis used of him not with such Characters as shew it to be taken in the improper Sense, as when used of Magistrates; but with those Characters which in other places are joyned with it when applied to him who is truly and properly God. Thus *Rom.* ix. 5. he is said to be God over, or above all, blessed for ever, worthy to receive Blessing and Praise from all reasonable Creatures, which are the very Characteristicks which are joined with Godhead, when one who is truly and properly God is described.

The Apostle is mentioning the Privileges of the Jews, and amongst the rest takes notice of the *Messiah's* Descent from them; his Descent, as the Apostle immediately explains himself, according to the Flesh, to signify that he had another and more divine Original; com. *Rom.* i. 3, 4. *Mic.* v. 2. by which he was the Son of God in a peculiar and eminent Sense, so as to be himself possessed of all divine Excellencies and Perfections: This was an Honour to the *Jewish* Nation, that  
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that so great a Person was descended from them, one of so divine a Character. The Apostle indeed has not expressed the Distinction between Christ's two Natures and his two Descents, but it seems plainly implied in the determinate expression of his descending from *David* only according to the *Flesh*, and then immediately adding, his being over all, God blessed for ever and therefore having another Nature, in which he existed before *David* or any of the Heads of the *Jewish* Nation, and in which he infinitely exceeded 'em all.

That by Christ's being God over all blessed for ever, can't be meant only his receiving Dominion after his Resurrection, is plain, because the Apostle speaks of the Honour the *Jewish* Nation had by Christ's Descent from them; and therefore 'tis most natural to suppose the honourable Characters he applied to him were, his Due before such Descent.

(2.) Christ's true and proper Divinity may be proved from the Perfections ascribed to him in Scripture; In the general 'tis declared that in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: *Col. ii. 9.* The fullness of the Godhead, *i. e.* all that which constitutes Divinity, or makes a Person to be truly and properly God; as Manhood is that which constitutes that sort of being which we call Man. Thus in the *Greek*, other words of a like termination, as *ἀνθρωπότης*, &c. are used, and thus *humanitas*, &c. in the *Roman* Writers. By Godhead here we are clearly to understand, that eternal Power and Godhead which are seen by the things that are made, *Rom. i. 20.* and therefore which must be discovered to belong to him by whom all things were made. Thus, in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

dily, as the Word who has true and perfect Godhead was made Flesh, and tabernacled amongst us, *John* i. 14. Thus discovering his Glory to us in a more perfect manner than formerly to the *Jews*, when he manifested himself in the Tabernacle and Temple by some Symbols of his Presence, on which, yet those that boasted of the Law were so apt to value themselves; and thus being also far exalted above all those Principalities and Powers, some at that time were so fond of worshipping, *v.* 10, 15, 18.

But to come to Particulars.

1. Eternity is ascribed to Christ in Scripture: There were no Words in the *Jewish* Language which did necessarily denote a strict Eternity, all the Words used to express the longest Duration had been used to express the Duration of temporary Beings; but then without doubt the *Jews* had as well as the rest of the World a Notion of the Eternity of God; and therefore when they talked of God's Duration, tho' the Words they used, expressed less, yet they conceived in their Minds of a necessary and eternal Existence. How was this Sense of theirs then signified? plainly by the emphatical use of the Words they applied to express the Duration by: Thus they speak of him as existing thro' all Ages of the World, before all things, and when the material World shall be destroyed: And sometimes only thus, he that is, (which of it self signifies no more than he that now exists; but being designed as a Description of God's Existence must have some peculiar Signification, and our natural Reason supplies the Emphasis, thus; he that now exists necessarily and independently) and that was, (which necessarily signifies no more than he that hath existed for some time, but our natural Reason supplies  
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the Emphasis thus; he that has existed not only before the World was, but absolutely without any beginning of his Being) and that is to come, (which necessarily signifies no more than he that shall exist for some time to come; but our natural Reason supplies the Emphasis thus, which shall exist without any end of his being) some such Emphasis must be put on the Words, and such Ideas must be connected with them; for otherwise they contain no distinguishing Characters of God at all.

The Argument therefore for Christ's Eternity is not taken meerly from the Application of such Characters to him, but their Application to him in the same emphatical and distinguishing manner as to the Father without any intimation in other Places that he had a beginning of his Existence; whereas a beginning of Existence is plainly ascribed to other things that are represented as eternal, particularly the Mountains, which evidently shews that they are not absolutely eternal but only so called in Comparison with other parts of the Earth which are not of so lasting a Duration. Thus he is described as he that liveth, the living one, eternal Life, &c. his Spirit is distinguished from other Spirits, by the title of the eternal Spirit, *Heb. ix. 14.* Now this peculiar and distinguishing Sense of the Words, by which Christ's Existence is described, can't indeed suppose him to exist of himself (for that is contrary to the notion of his Sonship) but the Words when applied to him must have some peculiar and distinguishing Sense; and what can that be but that Christ had no beginning, Tho' he had an Original of his Existence, and therefore that he is distinguished not only from human Souls which are immortal, but also from Angels who



had a beginning of their being, tho' they have existed for an unknown length of time before the Foundation of the World? Christ may well be described emphatically as he that liveth, *Heb. iv. 13.* when he ever lives, and is the fountain of Life to all things that do live.

It must be owned that if in any other Places, a beginning was assigned to Christ's Existence, all that has been before said would only prove that he existed before the other Creatures; and so in comparison with their Existence, which was of a shorter Duration, his might be called eternal, as the Mountains are so called in comparison with the other parts of the Earth; but since in no one place of Scripture he is described by Words that necessarily imply his having a beginning of his Existence; since he is ever distinguished from the Creatures, *Heb. iv. 13.* the things that are made, *John i. 3.* since he is spoken of not as the first-created but the first-begotten of every Creature, or begotten before every Creature, *Col. i. 15.* it seems most natural to suppose, that the Emphasis in the Expressions above recited relating to his Duration is to be lain here, *viz.* that he had absolutely no beginning of his Existence. There are but two places of the New-Testament, that would lead one to think Christ had a beginning of his Existence, and they are, *Col. i. 15.* and *Rev. iii. 14.* the former of these has been considered already, and as to the latter wherein Christ stiles himself ἀρχὴ τῆς Κτίσεως, which we render the beginning of the Creation, which would lead one to think he was the first of the Creatures, I humbly propose it to the Consideration of the Learned, whether that Text does not rather refer to the new than the old Creation.

God has now as it were, under the Gospel Dispensation,

penfation, created all things anew: Of this new Creation Christ is the Head; we belong to it by being in him, by being Members of his Body, 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. He is the first-fruits of them that fleep; 1 Cor. xv. 20. *The faithful Witness*, (the very fame Title that is given him here) and First-born from the Dead, Rev. i. 5. the Head of the Body the Church, the Beginning, the First-born from the Dead, ἀρχὴ, πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, the first that was raied from the Dead; or else ἀρχὴ for ἀπαρχὴ, the first-fruits, viz. of them that fleep, as 'tis expreffed, 1 Cor. xv. 20. and accordingly fome Copies read ἀπαρχὴ here, Col. i. 18. Concerning this new Creation, fee Jam. i. 18. Rom. viii. 19. 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. iii. iv. 9. 24. In this new Creation Christ was raied from the Dead as the first-fruits of them that fleep, and feated in the heavenly Places, and all Believers, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, are quickned together with him, Eph. ii. Believers are of this new Creation, and as Christ is represented as the Head of Believers, he may well be described as the first and chief in it; com. Eph. iv. 20, 24. with Gal. iii. 27, 28. vi. 15. 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 13, 15. We are in this new Creation by being in Christ, putting on Christ, being baptized into Christ, thus both *Jews* and *Gentiles* making one new Man in him.

Upon the whole then, Christ's Duration is described by all those Expressions by which one would expect, considering the Genius of the Language in which the Scripture was writ, that it should be described upon Supposition that it were eternal, which I think may be sufficient to satisfy us in this matter. As to natural Reason, there is I think no difficulty but what arises from the nature of Eternity, which will be just the same, whether

whether applied to one that exists from himself, or from another, it may be demonstrated that 'tis *possible* there should be such an eternal Emanation from him that exists eternally of himself; and whoever turns the thing over in his Thoughts will, I believe, find it more difficult to conceive that there should *not* be an eternal Emanation from one of perfect Wisdom and Power, than that there *should* be such an one; and infinitely more easy to conceive of such an eternal Emanation, than of a Creation out of nothing; as accordingly those who had only the Light of Nature to direct them ever judged. But this is a matter of very nice and curious Speculation, and would lead me much too far out of the way, 'tis enough that the Scripture has clearly revealed the Doctrine of an eternal Son of God, and then there can be no bar to our Belief of it, but the Impossibility of the thing, which he who asserts must prove.

2. Omnipresence; this is ascribed to Christ in as strong terms as to the Father. If he created all, upholds all, and all by him do subsist; if all things are naked and open before him, (all which the Scripture plainly asserts) his Knowledge and Power, and therefore he himself, must be Omnipresent. If it be said that this does not prove him absolutely Immense, I answer with the learned Dr. *Waterland*, that this is as high as ever the Scripture goes in describing even the Father's Omnipresence: If it be urged that the Scripture speaks of his coming down from Heaven &c. I answer, the very same Expressions are used in the Old Testament concerning *Jehovah*, the Lord of Hosts; and as he is said to come forth from the Father, as if he left the place where the Father was; so the Father is in that way of expressing

pressing the matter, supposed to have some particular place of residence, and a Figure may be as well admitted to explain the one as the other of these.

3. Omnipotence; he is said, *John v. 19.* to do all things which the Father himself does. Christ vindicates his Actions from his doing nothing but in concert with the Father, nothing but in imitation of him; as a Son he is ever with the Father, and whatever the Father does, that he does, *John v. 19, — 22.*

4. Omniscience; there are some very strong Expressions of this in Scripture, thus *Heb. iv. 12, 13.* The Word of God (this is a Name elsewhere given Christ in Scripture, as *Rev. xix. 13.*) is quick (or living, *i. e.* that ever lives and is the Fountain of Life) and powerful, sharper than any two edged Sword, (the same Similitude that is used of Christ, *Rev. i. 16. xix. 13, 15.*) piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Nerves; and there is no Creature but is manifest in his Sight; for all things are naked and opened before the Eyes of him with whom we have to do: 'tis a Metaphor from the Sacrifice which was first flayed, then cut down the Back and laid open before the Priest; *q. d.* all things are as it were dissected and laid open before his view, there is no concealing any thing from him. The Apostle seems plainly to describe a real Person, and there is such a Connection between the several parts of his account, that he seems to describe one and the same Person from the beginning to the end of it; and then that can be no other than the Word of God, *i. e.* Christ who is the only Person who has this Title in the New Testament; and 'tis no wonder, the Apostle Writing to the

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*Jews* should give him this Title; since 'tis plain from the Writings of *Philo* about this time, that some amongst them were wont to use this Title, and apply it in a manner not very different from the Apostles. But to carry the matter something farther, it will appear yet more probable, that this Discourse refers to Christ from the Context: In the Conclusion of the second Chapter, he had mentioned Christ's taking our Flesh, and suffering and dying for us, and thereby becoming our merciful and faithful High-Priest, as bearing a Testimony to the Truth of his Doctrine by sealing it with his Blood. In the third Chapter he exhorts them to adhere stedfastly to Christ the great Apostle, by whom God's Will was now revealed to the World, and the great High-Priest by whom Access to God was now procured for them; since he so far exceeded *Moses* into whose Hands, as Mediator, the Law was formerly delivered by Angels, *Gal. iii. 19.* (he being the appointed Minister by whom God's Will was made known, and the first as it were of those High-Priests that were Sureties of the old Covenant, *Heb. vii. 22.* performing the Office) of Priesthood till it was settled in *Aaron*, and consecrating him and his Sons to the Office; since he exceeded *Moses*, I say, as far as a Son exceeds a Servant, and as there was great Danger to the *Israelites* from their despising the Word delivered by *Moses*, the Promise of a temporal Rest in *Canaan*, there can't be less Danger in our despising the Word delivered by the Son of God himself, the Promise of a more glorious Rest in Heaven *Chap. iii. throughout; Chap. iv. 1. — 11.* Let us labour then, says the Apostle, to enter into that Rest, lest any Man fall thro' the same Example of Unbelief, for the Word of God, &c.

*q. d.* We have now to do with the Son of God himself, and not only with a Servant in the Family; with the Son of God, before whose Eyes all things are naked and open, and therefore from whom our most secret designs of a revolt from his Religion can't be concealed, and who ever lives, and never wants Power sufficient to revenge it; and at the same time is perfectly acquainted with all our Difficulties, and able to help us in every Distress, and touched with the feeling of our Infirmities; com. *Chap.* ii. 17, 18. with *Chap.* iv. 15, 16. Having then, continues the Apostle, *Chap.* iv. 14. an High-Priest so great and powerful as the Son of God, *Chap.* iii. 6. as the Word of God, *Chap.* iv. 12. and yet so kind and tender as one that has taken part with us in our Infirmities, *Chap.* ii. 17, 18. *Chap.* iv. 15. let us adhere stedfastly to our Religion, *Chap.* iv. 14, 16. This is the course of the Apostle's reasoning, which seems to require the Understanding the Words under Consideration of Christ, and thus understood, they seem a very strong Proof of perfect and intimate Knowledge of the whole Creation. That we may clearly discern this 'twill be convenient to go over the Text again with a short Explication: The Word of God is living (lives for ever to revenge the Contempt of his promised Rest,) and powerful, sharper than any two edged Sword (which the Priest makes use of to lay open the Sacrifice) piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, (ransacking all the secretest parts of the human Composition, separating those that are most nearly, connected even the Soul and Spirit; com. 1 *Thess.* v. 23.) and of the Joints or Nerves, (by which other parts are held together) and Marrow, (under which are comprehended those

parts which lie hid and are inclosed in others) and is a Discerner, or a Judge of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart; (as the Priest sits Judge of the Sacrifice thus laid open before him, whether intire, and without Blemish or no) and not only are *we* thus laid open before him in order to his passing a Judgment on us; but neither is there *any Creature* that is not manifest in his Sight, but *all things* are naked and open before the Eyes of him with whom we have to do, or to whom our Account is to be given naked and open, *i. e.* as perfectly discovered to him as the Sacrifice is to the Priest when 'tis flayed, cut down the Back, and laid open before him, in order to his passing a Judgment on its Soundness.

THE Christ is described in other Places as searching the Hearts: He claims it as his Prerogative, just as the Father is represented as doing in the Old-Testament, where this is plainly described as a Mark and Characteristick of the true God, by which he is distinguished from false Gods and from the Creatures: com. *John* ii. 24. *Rev.* ii. 3. with *1 Kings* viii. 39. *Jer.* xvii. 10. This is certainly very different from the describing a free and arbitrary Gift of the holy Ghost, as the Power of discerning Spirits bestowed on some particular Occasions, and continued only for a time during Pleasure.

If the Son be Creator and Preserver of all Things, and present with all the Creatures, he must immediately and intimately know the Hearts, since on these two, *viz.* his creating them, and being present with them, the Scripture founds even the Father's Knowledge of the Hearts.

A late very ingenious and candid Writer has suggested that Christ is here said to be he that searcheth the Hearts, because he is appointed the  
Judge

Judge of the World, and therefore must have the Knowledge of all our Concerns communicated to him: Now this might be admitted as a fair Account of the Matter, if it were not for two things; that this is mentioned in the very same Words in the Old Testament as the Characteristick of the true God, and that 'tis there represented as founded on creative Powers and Omnipresence, two other appropriate Characters of Divinity; and that Christ in the New Testament is represented as having those very Powers on which the Scripture had founded even the Father's Knowledge of the Hearts; and therefore must know them as their Creator, intimately and perfectly and immediately, and not only by Revelation, in order to the being their Judge.

If it should be said that all this proves only the Son's Knowledge of the Creatures, but that he can't be strictly Omniscient, except he also perfectly knows the Father; which there is some difficulty in supposing from our Saviour's own assertion of his Ignorance of the Father's Will as to the time, when the Day of Judgment should be. In answer to this, I will (1.) directly prove the Son's perfect Knowledge of the Father: (2.) Consider a little the Objection which is brought against it: Now that the Son does perfectly know the Father seems plain to me, because the Spirit of the Son is represented as searching all things, even the deep things of God; and knowing the things of God, as the Spirit of a Man knows the things of a Man, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

The Apostle is shewing the Advantages that the spiritual Man, or a Man who has the Spirit of God, has above the natural Man; or one who trusts meerly to natural Reason, and has no Revelation from the Spirit; that just as one Man can't know the Thoughts and Designs of ano-



ther Man, except they are made known to him by that other; so neither can we know the things of God, except God is pleased to reveal them to us; the Agent by whom God does this is the Spirit: Those therefore who have not the Spirit, can't know the great Counsels of God; but those who have the Spirit, may know them as far as the Spirit is pleased to reveal them, since the Spirit searches, *i. e.* perfectly and throughly knows (as God is said to search the Hearts, to shew the Accuracy of his Knowledge, not his Difficulty of coming at it) all things, *all* without Exception; and to shew that none are to be excepted, the Apostle instances in the deep things of God, which *are not* and according to the drift of the Apostle's Argument, *cannot* be hid from him who is the Spirit of God, so nearly and intimately united with him, any more than the Counsels and Designs of a Man can be hid from his own Spirit, which must be immediately and intimately acquainted with its own Operations, however concealed they may be from others, except only those to whom he is pleased to reveal them. This, I apprehend, is plainly the course of the Apostle's Reasoning, and if this be so, every one sees how lame and defective his Argument must be, on Supposition, that the Spirit were not strictly Omniscient. Let us but suppose the Spirit to know the Counsels and Designs of God only by Revelation, as we know, not our own Counsels, but those of others; and this therefore imperfectly, only in those Measures and Degrees God is pleased to communicate them to him, tho' in larger degrees than he has seen fit to communicate them to us; and the whole Discourse of the Apostle appears flat Nonsense; he must then be supposed to talk after this manner.

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The things of God can't be known by the natural Man, for how can a Man know such things but by Revelation from God, any more than a Man can know the things of his Neighbour except revealed to him by him? But these things God reveals only by his Spirit; therefore the natural Man who is destitute of the Spirit cannot know them at all; but the Spiritual Man may know them: How so? Why by having the Spirit of God. But does the Spirit then know them? Yes, says the Apostle, even as the Spirit of a Man knows the things of a Man. But may not the Spirit be ignorant of these things? Yes, if God is pleased not to reveal them to him. And is he not ignorant of some of these things? Yes, particularly of the Day of Judgment. Then it seems the Spirit of God knows the things of God, as the Spirit of a Man, knows the things of Man; and yet the Spirit of a Man intimately and perfectly knows the things of a Man. The Spirit of God is ignorant of some of the things of God, and may be of many more, *i. e.* indeed he only knows them, as one Man knows the things of another Man, and not as the Spirit of a Man knows the things of the Man himself. A Man who has the Spirit then may be ignorant of the things of God, even tho' the Spirit were willing to reveal them; because it may have pleased God not to reveal them to the Spirit himself; just as I may be ignorant of the Mind of my Neighbour, tho' I am perfectly acquainted with a Friend of his, provided he has not opened his Mind to that Friend. But now the Apostle's Argument supposes him who has a Revelation from the Spirit, in the same case with him who has a Revelation from the Father himself, since the Spirit is supposed to be intimately and perfectly acquainted with his Mind; and

and therefore to know the things of God, as one Man should do the things of another, who has received an immediate Discovery of them, from that other who must necessarily be perfectly acquainted with his own Mind; and not as he would do who has had a Discovery of them from a Friend of that Man's, who may be supposed ignorant of them, because he may not have had them revealed to himself.

If it be said, that all that the Apostle's Argument concludes, is only, that the Spirit must know all those things that 'tis convenient for us to know, and that therefore the Spiritual Man must know all such things also. I answer, this does not at all preserve the force of the Apostle's Argument: At this rate the Spirit will know the things of God, not as the Spirit of a Man knows the things of a Man, who because he is the Spirit of a Man must *immediately, intimately* and *perfectly* know the things of the Man, which the Apostle's Argument supposes; but as a Friend of that Man would know all his Counsels and Designs, which it was fit for him to know upon his Revelation of them to him; and just thus Believers themselves know the things of God, and upon Account of the large Communications of Knowledge they have this way received from God, they are said in other Places to know all things; and yet the Spirit's Knowledge is here contradistinguished to the Knowledge of Believers, and described as of a quite different sort. The Spirit knows the things of God, as the Spirit of a Man knows the things of a Man; if so, he knows them intimately and perfectly, and then as the Apostle argues, he must search into *all* things, even the *deepest Counsels* of God, which can't be hid from him who is so  
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intimately united with him as his own Spirit; any more than the most secret Designs of a Man, so secret as to be concealed from all the World besides, can be hid from a Man's own Spirit. Upon the whole, it does not at all follow, that according to the Apostle the Spirit of God must be the same Person with God the Father, whose Spirit he is, because the Spirit of a Man is the Person of a Man, since this makes nothing to the Apostle's Argument, and a Similitude ought never to be carried farther than it appears to have been designed; and the Apostle has sufficiently guarded against this consequence, by carefully distinguishing the Spirit from God, or the Father, who made his Revelations by him; but it plainly follows, that the Spirit's Knowledge must be equal to the Father's, because otherwise there is no room for a Comparison between the Spirit of a Man and the Spirit of God at all, and all the Apostle's Argument falls to the Ground; and therefore 'tis very trifling to compare this Passage with other Places, where 'tis said, Believers have an Unction from the Holy One, and know all things, and the Spirit is said to lead them into all Truth, &c. when 'tis plain that on supposition the Spirit has but an imperfect Knowledge of the Things of God, tho' very extensive, and reaching to all those things which 'tis convenient for us to know, just as Believers themselves have, the whole Discourse of the Apostle is perfectly ridiculous.

And thus I have endeavoured directly to establish the Point of the Son's Omniscience. I shall now carefully consider the Objection against it, from his own Declaration of his Ignorance of the Day of Judgment, *Mark xiii. 32.*

I own this is a very great Difficulty: I would therefore

therefore with the greatest Humility and Deference to the better Judgments of others, propose what seems to me to be the easiest Solution of this Difficulty; and the true way of reconciling this with those other Places which have been shewn so strongly to prove the Omniscience of Christ. Christ whilst he was on Earth, acted every thing in the Name of his Father, by his Authority and Commission: What he delivered to the World he spake as one commissioned from his Father, who gave him Commandment what he should speak. Those things which he thus delivered to the World, he is said to be taught by his Father, tho' some of them were such things as he could not but know of himself, without a Revelation. See *Job*. viii. 26, 28, 38. xii. 49, 50. xvii. 8.

It does not appear that the Disciples, during our Saviour's Ministry, considered him in any other Capacity than as such a Prophet of God.

To him therefore they applied, as to one who they believed had very large Revelations made him of the Will of God, to know what God had taught him concerning two great Events, *viz.* the Destruction of the Temple, &c. of which he had been just speaking; and the End of all Things, or the Coming of the Son of Man, which they supposed, as is very probable, would be soon consequent upon the other. Our Saviour gives them a direct Answer as to the former part of their Question, telling them that all *these things*, *i. e.* the things they had at first asked him about, *viz.* relating to the Destruction of the Temple, (compare *ver.* 4. with *ver.* 30.) should happen within that Age, *ver.* 30, 31. but as to the other Day, that Great Day, called *that Day*, by way of Eminence and Distinction, he gives them

no account of that, because that was a Secret lodged with the Father himself, which he had communicated to no Messenger or Revealer of his Will to Mankind; not to any common Prophet, not even to the Angels themselves, by whom he was wont formerly, on many Occasions, to reveal his Will to his People; not to the Son himself, to whom he had given a Commission to reveal many Secrets of his Will, which he had communicated to none other. This was not one of those things which as a Prophet he had *shewn him*, or *taught him*; and therefore as he spake nothing of himself but as the Father gave him Commandment, it was not one of those things he could *reveal* to them. The Times and Seasons when this should be, the Father kept in his own Power, *Acts* i. 7. and then only would they be known when he was pleased to accomplish the things themselves. Thus, I apprehend, our Saviour describes himself, the Son who came from the Bosom of the Father to reveal his Secrets, *John* i. 18. as ignorant of that Day, because as a Prophet, in which Capacity he then acted, and in which Capacity *alone*, as far as appears, the Disciple then considered him, he had not been *taught* or *shewn* these things; if he might be said to be *taught* or *shewn* those things which he knew before, when he received a Commission to reveal them to the World, when these Truths were delivered to him as a Prophet, to be communicated to Mankind, if the Spirit of God that searches all things, even the deep things of God, is yet said to lead the Disciples into all Truth, because he should not speak of himself, but whatsoever he should hear (*viz.* from Christ, in whose Name and by whose Authority he acted,) that should he speak, *John* xvi. 13. if those

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things are said to be revealed to Christ, *Rev. i. 1.* some of which, as having been before revealed to other Prophets, particularly to *Daniel*, he could not possibly have been ignorant of before; because he then first receiv'd a Commission to reveal them to the World; if the whole Series of Events from his Ascension to his second Coming is described as opened to him, when he receiv'd a Commission to reveal them to the World, *Rev. 5.* tho' as he was the Governour and Director of all, it can't be conceiv'd he was ignorant of these Events; and some of them, as I just before observ'd, had been before reveal'd to other Prophets; then I apprehend Christ might be said to be ignorant of that Day which he had not been *taught or shewn* as a Prophet in order to reveal it to the World; and this especially if you consider how frequent it was in the *Hebrew* Language to make a Change of the Conjugations; that our Saviour spake in the *Syriack* Language, which preserves very much the Genius of the *Hebrew*; that therefore the Word our Saviour used might indifferently signify to know and to make known; and that therefore 'tis not to be wondred at, if the Evangelists rendred it by the former, especially since the *Greek* Language admits of the same Latitude, as may be seen in the Use of the Word *μαθηάω*, both for learning and teaching. See Instances like this in the *Greek* of the New Testament, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* *Gal. iv. 9.* *1 Cor. viii. 3.* *Mat. v. 45.* *Acts ii. 40.* *1 Cor. ii. 2.* According to this Interpretation, I think our Saviour's Words may be thus paraphrased, so as intirely to remove the Difficulty: The other Day I have told you of, it being *taught* me as the Great Prophet of the Church, by my Father; but concerning this, none make it known, or shall make it known to you,

you, not the Angels themselves, whom God has so often employed on such an Errand; not even the Son, whom he has *taught* so many Secrets of his Will, which he had delivered to no other, to be revealed to the World: The Father only *makes it known* himself, who reserving the Times and Seasons *in his own Power*, Acts i. 7. will *accomplish* these things, and thus *make them known*, when he sees fit; but having *taught* them to no Messenger of his Will, 'tis not for you to enquire after them, but to be contented with your Ignorance, and improve it to the Purposes of greater Diligence and Watchfulness. Whatever 'tis fit for you to know, he has *taught* to some or other Messenger of his Will, in order to be revealed to you; but having *taught* this to none, you know you are to be ignorant 'till the time that he makes it *known* himself, by the *Accomplishment* of the Things designed.

5. Perfect Wisdom. This clearly follows from Omniscience, and is plainly discover'd in his Works of Creation, and Government of the World, as well as expressly revealed in Scripture; it being said of him, that *in him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. In whom are hid, &c. the Words *ἐν ᾧ*, which we translate, *in whom*, must either refer to Christ or Mystery, *ver. 2.* and they seem rather to refer to the former, from the Drift of the Apostle's Discourse, which was to make those he writes to stedfastly adhere to Christ and the Purity of his Worship, against certain Judaizers who taught them to worship Angels, and observe the Ceremonies of the Law, *ver. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19.* and to this purpose he represents to them, *ver. 9.* the Dignity of Christ's Person, as *in him dwelt all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily.*



6. The Dominion of Christ over all, or his Right to direct the Actions of all reasonable Creatures, follows necessarily from his perfect Wisdom, upon which natural Reason shews us the divine Dominion is founded: He was God in the Beginning, *John i. 1.* and as he then had those Perfections, from which, when the Creatures existed, there would result the Relation of Governour to them; so as soon as they existed, he of consequence became their Lord, and as such had a Right to direct their Actions. When he came into the World, he came not, as some ancient Hereticks taught, into a World made by some other Power, but to his own; *ἐἰς τὰ ἴδια*, to his own Family; the World which was the Workmanship of his Hands. *He was in the World*, continually presiding over, and directing its Affairs, *and the World was made by him*, and yet *the World knew him not*. *He came to his own*, i. e. into his own World, the Workmanship of his Hands, and the continual Care of his Providence, *and his own received him not*, *John i. 10, 11.* Thus the Apostle, as is very common with him, very beautifully repeats the Sense of what he had said before, with some little Variation of the Phrase. All things were made for him, for his Glory and Service, as well as by him, *Col. i. 16.* by him all things consist, *Col. i. 17.* and he is described, antecedently to his purging our Sins by his Blood, as upholding all things which he had made, *Heb. i. 3.* *φέρων τὰ πάντα*, bearing all things, sustaining the Weight of the whole Creation, rational as well as irrational; which seems therefore to take in the Idea of Government, as well as Preservation. See *Dr. Whitby*, and *Grotius*, on the Place.

7. His moral Perfections are but so many different Considerations of his perfect Wisdom; or, in other Words, his constant, steady, and unalterable Disposition to do always what is fittest and best, whether that be to bestow Good, or inflict Evil.

(3.) I come in the next place to prove the Divinity of Christ from his Operations; viz. (1.) Creating the World; (2.) Raising the Dead.

Now the Creation of the World is attributed to him in the strongest Terms imaginable. Lest it should be suspected that the Creation attributed to the Father and the Son were different things, the strongest Expressions that are ever used to describe this Work, are applied to the Son, all things are said *γινεσθαι δι' αὐτοῦ*, *John* i. 3. all things are said *κτισθῆναι ἐν αὐτῷ*, *Col.* i. 16. If the Ambiguity of the Greek Word be here pleaded, which sometimes signifies a figurative and metaphorical Creation, there is the same Ambiguity in it when applied to the Father himself; but if we do, as is reasonable, recur to the Context, we shall see plainly that the Apostle designed to speak of Christ in two States, as existing before the World with the Father, and as exalted after his Humiliation, to the Right Hand of the Father; and thus the Son of God possesseth the Inheritance of all things, and he who made the Worlds is the Head of them; (compare *Col.* ii. 10, *Eph.* i. 10. iii. 9.) and thus Christ in all things has the Preheminence, *ver.* 18. And lastly, Christ is said, *ποιεῖν τὰς αἰῶνας*, *Heb.* i. 2. those Worlds which are said to be made by the Word of God, xi. 3.

Next, lest it should be suspected that some things were excepted out of Christ's Creation,

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*all things* are said to be made by him, and without him was *nothing made* that was made, *John* i. 3. in opposition, probably, to those ancient Hereticks who attributed the Creation of the visible and invisible Worlds to different Principles.

And lastly, lest it should be thought that he did not create the World by a *Power inherent in himself*, because of the Expressions of God's making all things *by him*, &c. his creative Powers are described in the same Terms in which the Father's use to be set out in the Old Testament, *Psal.* cii. 25. These Words are represented by the Apostle, *Heb.* i. 10. as spoken by God the Father to his Son, for they are connected by the Particle *κ*, with all the former Places quoted by the Apostle, wherein the Father is represented as ascribing some glorious Characters to his Son. See *ver.* 5, 6, 8.

So that upon the whole, the Controversy relating to Christ's creating the World, is now brought to this short Issue, *viz.* that either we must be for ever uncertain whether the Creation of the World be attributed to God the Father himself or no, or even whether the Creation of the World be so much as mentioned in Scripture, or else without Hesitation pronounce Christ Creator of the World. The second Operation attributed to Christ in Scripture, is raising the Dead, *John* v. 19, 20, 21. He gave some Specimens of this Power of his whilst he was on Earth, *ver.* 25. he raised up his own Body when laid in the Grave, *John* x. 18. ii. 19, 21. and lastly, he will raise up the Dead at the last Day, *John* v. 28. *Phil.* iii. 10, 21.

And thus I have now gone thro' what I proposed for the establishing of the true and proper  
Divinity

Divinity of our Lord; I imagine the Proofs are so clear from Scripture that they would never have been disputed, if Persons had not thought such exalted Notions of the Son of God were inconsistent with his Subordination and the Unity of the Godhead, which they apprehended *more clearly*, revealed in Scripture; but I would humbly propose it to their Consideration, whether the supposing the Son (which his very Name of Son implies) not to *exist of himself*, but *from the Father*, does not preserve the full force of all those Texts relating to his Subordination, and equally save the Unity of the Godhead, when he is supposed to *have all divine Perfections* mentioned above, as *when he is not*? And then, whether it be not most natural to ascribe these Perfections to him, which are represented in Scripture, as belonging to him in all the Variety of Language in which they are ascribed to the Father, in a Sense *no way differing* from the Father's, but only *what self Existence will make*; since thus we take in the entire Scheme of the Gospel, make the Scripture perfectly consistent with itself, and are obliged to strain no one Text? This is the way which the great Lights of Antiquity, and the best Writers of the Moderns have taken: This was the Doctrine of the Nicene Fathers, and of the ablest opposers of *Arius* and his Followers both in the *Greek* and *Latin* Church: This is the Doctrine of the Church of *England*, as may be seen in her Articles, and this Doctrine has been defended by the greatest Men of that Body, particularly Bishop *Pierson*, Dr. *Cudworth*, Dr. *Pain*, and Bishop *Fowler*. As to those who attribute Self-Existence to Christ, I would humbly propose it to their Consideration, how they will reconcile that Doctrine with the

Character

Character of his Sonship; with the many Places which describe his Subordination, some of which relate to a State antecedent to his Incarnation; and lastly, with the Unity of God, without running on the extreme of *Sabellianism*?

And thus I have represented what I take to be the plain Scripture account of this Matter; and as long as it appears thus to me, I shall be always ready to represent it to others; and shew them the Danger of shutting their Eyes against the clear Scripture Evidence I apprehend there is for it, and to shew the great Importance of this Doctrine, as it discovers the Wisdom of God in the Work of Redemption, and the great Love of Christ towards us, and so lays a firm Foundation for those Duties that we owe to him: but then on the other Hand, I should be very far from judging hardly of those that differ from me in this Matter; there are I verily believe many pious Persons amongst the common sort, who have no distinct Conceptions at all about the Doctrine of the Trinity: When they talk of God, they speak of him as of one Agent, the great Creator and Governour of the World; and when they think of Father, Son and Spirit, they conceive of three differently concerned and operating in the business of our Redemption, but never trouble themselves how to reconcile these things at all. There are many others who have talked the highest things of the Son of God, and I don't at all question but have really imagined they had as high Thoughts of him as any; yet when they have been put on explaining their Notion, it has amounted to no more than this, that the Divine Word is a Property of God, and that Jesus Christ was a Man in whom God, with all his Properties, dwelt; which is no more than what those

those have believed, who have been esteemed as the Deniers of the Divinity of Christ; and yet it must be owned this Scheme wants not some plausible Colours.

When a Man attends to his natural Notions of the Unity of God, or the plain Scripture Representations of that Matter, and at the same time considers how clearly Divine Perfections are ascribed to Father, Son and Spirit; how natural is it to conclude that these three are that one Person, who in other Places seems alone to be described as possessed of Divine Perfections? And then as to their being described in other Places, as so many proper Persons, one in this Scheme will easily allow for a Figure of Speech used in all Languages, but especially the Eastern, and of which he can give many Instances in the Scriptures, and he will not wonder that in order to give us some Notion of God's *manner of Acting*, he should be described to us in a Language rather Popular than Philosophical; that the Properties of his Nature, should be represented by that in us, which most resembles them, and that he should be described as *Existing* in this or that manner, when he only *acts* so as he would do, if he thus, or thus existed; just as he is described as possessed of human Passions, when all that the Scripture means by that, is to represent his *Behaviour* towards his Creatures to be *just such as it would be if he were thus, or thus affected*. It will be somewhat difficult to avoid this way of Reasoning, if a Person begins with considering the Unity, as it will be difficult to avoid running into the other extreme, (which I shall represent presently) if he begins with the Trinity: Just as in another noted Controversy, if a Man begins with considering the natural Attributes

of God, 'twill be hard to avoid the Opinion of absolute Decrees; as on the other Hand, if he begins with Consideration of the moral ones, 'twill be as difficult to avoid the Opinion of Conditional ones, and it will require a pretty great Attention and impartial Consideration, and well weighing both, before a Man hits on what I take to be the happy medium in that Controversy. But to proceed with the Argument: Many of the most ancient Christian Writers have talked strange things of the Son of God, as both a temporary and finite Being: I know Colours have been thrown on this by learned Men; the most plausible thing that can be said is, that they meant the same, as the Church did afterwards, but only expressed themselves inaccurately, the Language of the Church not being yet settled. I own this does not at all satisfy me, the Expressions of some of them are, I think, much too strong to admit of such an Interpretation; but let it be so that these good Men thought as we do, their Language at least was inaccurate; but is it likely that in case this were established in the ancient Church as a *necessary* and *fundamental* Doctrine, the Language of the Church about it should not have been a little better fixt? Strange indeed, that the wisest and most learned of the ancient Fathers should not know how to express themselves about a Doctrine, which must have been the subject of all their Creeds, and Confessions of Faith, which they must continually have instructed the *Catechumens* in! Wonderful indeed, that these holy Men, and some, of them Martyrs for our Religion, should need to have their Language concerning a *fundamental* Doctrine of Christianity, corrected by their distant Posterity! But let us for once allow this  
whole

whole Plea; these Men then at least *expressed* themselves *inaccurately*, if they did not *think erroneously*, and this concerning a *fundamental* Doctrine of Christianity; and this tho' they lived so *near the Apostles* Times, and had so much greater Advantages for Understanding the Doctrines of Christianity than we now have; and yet none doubt of their Salvation. Why then is not the same Candor shewn to those in our Days, that with less Advantages have happened to be equally inaccurate in their Expressions concerning this awful Mystery? And why *should not greater Charity* be shewn to those who have always carefully *avoided* those harsh Expressions, and to whom the Doctrine itself supposed couched under these Expressions, can't be imputed *but by Consequences which they disown*? If it be said the Ancients have expressed themselves very well concerning the Perfections of Christ, in other Places, which shew how these harsh Expressions are to be interpreted; I answer, let but the same Candour be used to the Men that talk in the same way in our Days, and I desire no more. Another thing which determines me to have candid Thoughts of those that differ from me in this Point is this: There have been and still are many great and worthy, many pious and holy Men, who tho' they have firmly believed the Divinity of Christ, yet have thought there were three independent, all perfect Spirits. Now as plain as it is, that God is one such Spirit, so plain must it be that three such Spirits *are* three Gods; and as evident as it is that the Worship of one such Spirit is the Worship of one God, so evident must it be that the Worship of three is the Worship of three Gods; and yet God forbid I should judge these Men, who besides that from the Integrity of their Lives, they appear to act sincerely in this Matter, have really much



more to say for themselves than what the common People are aware of: 'Tis expressly declared there is but one God, but 'tis not with the same Accuracy defined in Scripture in what respects God is one; God is represented as one, he is set out as endued with certain Perfections; there are three represented as possessed of these Perfections, that are described as three distinct Spirits are ever wont to be. What now is the Consequence from all this, but that God is not one Spirit, but three such Spirits, in some wonderful manner united together, which Union 'tis no wonder we can't comprehend, when we don't understand the Union between our own Souls and Bodies, or even between the parts of Matter. The greatest number at least of those things which we call one, have not *an absolute Simplicity*, and many of them are not *perfectly uniform and similar*, nor absolutely *indivisible* in their own Nature; whereas the Divine Persons have all the *same sort of Properties*, and *are inseparably united*. The Works of Nature shew the greatest Uniformity, an *Unity of Design*, and so an *Union* in the designing Cause, but do not give us any strict Notions of the absolute Simplicity or perfect Unity of this Cause; and yet the Scripture directs us to the Works of Nature for the Discoveries of God, and blames the Heathen for not directing their Worship according to those Notions which the Works of Nature had given them of God: Tho' the Scripture can't *contradict*, yet it may be allowed, nay, 'tis its proper Business, to *fill up and compleat* our natural Notions; and therefore tho' natural Reason had discovered but one all perfect Spirit, yet as it had not in these Mens Apprehension shewn there could be no more, Revelation here steps in and supplies its Defects, shewing

shewing that there are three such Spirits; between whom yet there may be such an Union as may make one God, since Reason has not fully discovered God to us; and therefore he may be one in such a way as that could not direct us to the Knowledge of.

Dr. *Sherlock* in the last Age very warmly espoused this Scheme. The learned, pious and judicious Mr. *How* proposed the Notion to the World, tho' with the greatest Modesty, and has said the most plausible Things in its Defence that I believe ever have, ever will, or perhaps can be said; and tho' there are some Passages in the very learned and acute Dr. *Waterland's* Writings that look another way, yet if the Dr. can at all be made consistent with himself, I will venture to affirm, that 'tis alone upon this Scheme: He denies indeed that the Divine Persons can be properly called three distinct Spirits, because not separated as three human Spirits are, but then he asserts that the Word Person denotes not a Property, but the Being itself, and he asserts that Father, Son and Spirit are three distinct Persons; which seems the same, as saying, they are three distinct Beings. He makes three in all, and each an intelligent being, which to the common Sense of Mankind is saying, there are three intelligent Beings: He expressly says the  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$  is a real, living, *substantial Thing, distinct* from the Father; he always places the *Mystery in the Unity*, and makes the whole Difficulty in this Matter to lie here, that we don't know what it is makes a thing one and the same with itself: He every where resolves the *Divinity* of the Persons into their having the *same sort* of Excellencies and Perfections, and their *Unity* into their possessing these *inseparably* from one another; which is just such an Account

of Matters as one in this Scheme would give.

If there be any difference between Dr. *Sherlock* and Dr. *Waterland*, I take it to be no more than this, which is meerly verbal; they both agree in the Notion of Person, here only is their difference. Dr. *Sherlock* chuses to call three, each of which is an intelligent Being, three intelligent Beings: Whilst Dr. *Waterland* thinks it improper to call three, so closely united as the Divine Persons are, three Beings, which he imagines would intimate their separate Existence.

Dr. *Sherlock* contends for that Union which Dr. *Waterland* would have, and equally denies the separate Existence of the Persons. Upon the whole, if it may not be thought Presumption to pretend to pass a Judgment on a difference between two such excellent Writers, I should think this to be the true state of the Case. Dr. *Sherlock* seems to be right in observing that three, each of which is an intelligent Being; however closely united, must be *three distinct* intelligent Beings: But Dr. *Waterland* seems to be right in observing, that three existing in the *same space and time*, and exactly *similar in all Perfections*, will in *reality* be not three, but one Being, which one Observation, in my Mind, effectually overturns that Scheme of the Trinity. The Truth I take plainly to be this, three intelligent Beings, however closely united, will be still *three distinct* intelligent Beings, as Dr. *Sherlock* would have it; but then it is still true, what Dr. *Waterland* observes, that three *supposed* intelligent Beings, *so closely united* as the Divine Persons are imagined on this Scheme to be, will *really* be but one intelligent Being; *i. e.* the Supposition of their being three, will appear to be a false Supposition; just thus, two Triangles can never become one Triangle, but two Triangles, in the *same space*

and time, will really be but one Triangle; *i. e.* the Supposition of their being two, appears a false Supposition: See Mr. *Lock's* Chapter of Identity and Diversity in his Essay, and the French Letters of the Unity of God in his Posthumous Works.

I shall mention but one thing more, which inclines me to judge favourably of those that differ from me in this Point, and that is this. I find that what is the Foundation of practical Religion, is not so much God's metaphysical, as his relative Attributes; that about the former there have been great Differences, even amongst learned and good Men; that some of them, particularly *absolute immensity*, have been expressly denied by some; and that others, as Eternity, have been quite explained away by others: I find pious Persons amongst the common sort have very inaccurate, and sometimes very false Conceptions of some of the metaphysical Perfections; I find the Scripture generally describes God in a Popular, rather than Philosophical manner, and meddles but little with those Niceties that learned Men trouble themselves so much about; when it comes to reveal the Doctrine of the Trinity it rather describes it as a practical, than a speculative Doctrine; it seems to give such an Account of it, as tho' the design of the Revelation were not to fill our Heads with accurate Conceptions of the Nature of the Divine Persons; but to shew their Relations to us, and their Nature only so far as is necessary to their bearing such Relations, taking different parts in the Work of Redemption, and requiring suitable regards from us. I think indeed we should endeavour to form our Notions of the Son and Spirit from the Scripture, and if we come up fully to what the Scripture teaches, us concerning these Divine Persons, we shall see

more of the Wisdom of God in the Work of Redemption, of our Obligation to the several Divine Persons, &c. And therefore that 'tis of great Consequence to us diligently to search the Scriptures, and to form our Notions from thence; but when a Man appears to me to have taken this Course, and depends on Christ as the Mediator appointed by God, and therefore without doubt every way fit for this Work; God forbid I should judge him, tho' he should not think the Scripture gave him Warrant to say so high things of Christ as I think it does, or tho' he should think such Perfections were not necessary for the performing of this Work as I may think were: God forbid I should impute to him those Consequences he disowns and abhors; and because I may think Christ would not be fit for the Work of Mediator, if he were not so and so qualified, judge that he who does not ascribe to him those Perfections which he does not apprehend necessary for this Work, and which he thinks the Scripture does not ascribe to him, can't acceptably rely on Christ as Mediator; God forbid, I should think that all who have different Notions of God must worship a different God; or that all who have different Notions of the Mediator must have a different Mediator; or that none can come to God without perfect Notions of God; or come to him thro' a Mediator without perfect Notions of the Mediator; or that all those false Notions which do in *just Consequence*, in the way of strict Reasoning, overturn the Foundations of our Service either of God or of the Mediator, must render our Service of either unacceptable, when we do not see those Consequences; nay, often cannot see them: God forbid I should rank those Men with the Deniers of Christ's *Messiahship*, who only

deny those Truths they can't find he has reveal'd; or the contrary to which, after their best Search they think he has reveal'd; or those with Deniers of Scripture, who only understand Scripture differently from me; or those with the Deniers of an exprefs Scripture-Doctrine, who only deny my Sense of that Scripture-Doctrine, or perhaps a Consequence I deduce from it, which they are not sharp-sighted enough to see, or which, possibly, I only fancy I see, having seen a little, presumed a great deal, and so leap'd to the Conclusion. God forbid, that when there are Difficulties in the Revelation, either as to the Sense of *single* Texts, or the Manner of reconciling *many* Texts *seemingly* opposite, I should take upon me to judge any honest and good Men that take this or the other Method to explain or reconcile those Texts; God forbid, that in this Controversy I should judge either of the opposite Parties, who on the one hand reconcile those Texts by different Senses of the Words God, Creator, &c. or by two different Natures of Christ, any more than learned Men who differ in their Solutions of other Scripture Difficulties; and a very great Scripture Difficulty I think this must appear to all that have look'd into their Bibles; except only perhaps to a very few superior Understandings, who are generally the farthest in the World from rash Censures, and a supercilious Contempt of those that differ from them, which almost ever proceeds from deep Ignorance of human Nature.

The most plausible Argument that ever I heard for judging hard of our Neighbours for their Differences from us in this matter, is the severe Censure the Apostles, particularly St. *John* in his Epistles, pass'd on them that denied the

Great

Great Doctrines of Christ's Sonship, his Incarnation, &c. But to this I answer,

(1.) It may be time enough for us to think of passing these Censures when we commence Apostles our selves, when we are furnish'd with those Gifts which they were to enable them certainly to distinguish the true Doctrines of Christianity, to determine therefore who did not adhere to them, and even in some Cases with what Mind they resisted the Evidence for their Truth, which they, who had the Gift of discerning Spirits, might know; a Gift long since lost in the Church: Tho' a certain Quality of judging the Spirits, which ought never to be but where the other is, I am afraid never will.

(2.) There is a great Difference between denying the same Truth at one time and at another; a thing may be necessary to be believed at one time, and not at another; *v. g.* it might be necessary to believe the true Sense of Christ's Sonship and Incarnation, at a time when the Apostles were living, to explain their own Sense, and did continually explain it, and when the Language in which these things were delivered was readily understood; and therefore an Opposition to these Doctrines, was really an Opposition to the Apostles Authority, who had proved their Mission by uncontrolled Miracles, and proceeded from a worldly Principle, as a Desire to set up an opposite Interest, and draw away Disciples after them; and yet it may not be necessary to believe the same Truth now, at this Distance of Time and Place, and with all those Disadvantages we labour under for understanding the Revelation.

(3.) There is great Difference between express Denial of Scripture Revelation, and Denial of a particular Sense put on that Revelation by a

fallible Man: You and I, suppose, differ in our Senses of some Parts of the Revelation; I no more deny the Revelation by denying your Sense of it, than you do by denying my Sense, except you quit the Supposition we set out upon, *viz.* that you are a fallible Man as well as I.

(4.) There is a much greater Difference between denying a Consequence from the Revelation, and denying the express Revelation itself; every just Consequence from the Revelation ought to be receiv'd by me who see it to be so; but this is no Reason why my Neighbour should own it, who does not see the Consequence; and I ought not to judge that his not seeing it proceeds from Pride and Obstinacy, when these don't otherwise appear to be the Causes, when this Difference from me may be so easily accounted for otherwise, from the different Make of our Minds, &c. but if I should see Reason to think that in his Searches he is influenced something by Pride, or the like Vices natural to us all, I ought not to judge more hardly of him than I do of my self, who have, perhaps, an equal, or a greater Share of these. See Mr. *Evans's* admirable Letter concerning Scripture Consequences.

(5.) Some of those who have been as hard in their Judgments of those that have differed from them as any, yet have explained both these Points, of the Sonship of Christ, and the Incarnation, in a Manner different from the Generality of Christians in all Ages. The Church, in all Ages, has taught, that the Son of God, a distinct Person from the Father, was incarnate; whereas some of these Persons have explained away the Distinction of Persons, into a mere Figure of Speech, and have made the Word *Person*, ap-



plied to the Son, to signify either directly no more than a Property, or to stand for some Distinction in the Deity (as they have been pleased, oddly enough, to express it) greater, they believed, than That; tho' what it was they could not tell. Others, or perhaps the same Persons, have denied Christ's Sonship to belong to his Divine Nature; and yet they would take it very hard if those of their Brethren who believe Christ's Eternal Sonship, and that as grounded on some of those very Texts in St. *John's* Epistles, which seem at first View to make this Doctrine necessary to be believed, should judge of them as denying the Sonship of Christ, and therefore as unworthy the Communion of Christians, *whether Civil or Sacred*, as St. *John* represents the Hereticks he speaks of to be: And yet these might plead against the others, just as they both do against their common Adversaries, that the Sense of Scripture is Scripture; that the true Scripture-Doctrine may be very different from the mere Sound of the Words; that the Doctrine of Scripture is no other than what was the Mind of the Holy Ghost in Scripture, and therefore those who think this to be the Mind of the Holy Ghost, must think the others don't believe the Doctrine revealed by the Holy Ghost; and therefore, tho' they are desirous to make as charitable Allowances for them as they can, and won't judge their eternal State, yet they can't help seeing things as they appear to them, and therefore determining that those contradict the Doctrine of the Gospel, who contradict what they can't help thinking to be the Doctrine of the Gospel; and that if Christ has commanded them to avoid the Communion of such, they must do it, without disputing Obedience to his Commands.

Commands, tho' they leave the Judgment of the World, and the determining Mens different Deserts, which depend on their different Degrees of Knowledge or Ignorance, Weakness or Willfulness, &c. to him.

By the time these Gentlemen have answered the Argument thus urged by their own Friends against them, they will easily see what Reply their common Adversary might make to it when they both urge it against him.

And now, if Christ be God, we may see the wonderful Wisdom of God in pitching on him for our Redeemer; we may see God's great Love in sending so glorious and divine a Person to save us; we may see Christ's wonderful Condescension, in taking our Flesh, living among us, and dying for us; or may learn the Importance of the Message of the Son of God, and how highly he will resent the Contempt of it; we may learn the Worth of our Souls by the Value God has set on them; we may learn how fit Christ is to govern us, and how able to direct all Affairs for our Good: We should improve this Doctrine to these Purposes of Holiness, and then we answer the great End for which 'twas revealed to us; then we have that Faith which will be available to our Salvation; whereas a meer speculative Belief will serve us in no stead, but aggravate and heighten our Condemnation the last Day. Doest thou believe Christ to be God, and yet despisest that Errand on which he came into the World, tramplest on his Authority, contemnest his Love and Goodness, defeatest the great Purposes for which the Son of God was manifest in the Flesh?

It were great Presumption to despise a Message sent from the Great God, tho' brought by  
any

any Hand; but how amazing is the Presumption, to despise a Message brought by the Son of God himself, and proposed to us in so mild, gentle, and condescending a manner?


Let us seriously consider our Danger, and no longer neglect the Great Salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and diverse Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will. Upon the whole, *God manifest in the Flesh*, is a *Mystery of Godliness*, and he that understands it aright, will be led from thence to excite in his Mind a Love to God and the Lord Christ; a Value for that Sacrifice Christ once offered up, and that Intercession he continually makes with the Father, and a firm Confidence in God on these Grounds; he will be led to have high Thoughts of the Wisdom of God discover'd in this whole Affair of our Redemption, and will see the Reasonableness and absolute Necessity of submitting to Christ's Teaching and Government: All which abundantly demonstrates the Divinity of Christ revealed in Scripture not to be an idle Speculation, but a noble Foundation of Practical Religion, and therefore worthy of that Holy Being from whom it proceeded: And this may serve to take off the Force of one of the most plausible Arguments against the Christian Religion.

F I N I S.



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