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

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

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

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By P. DODDRIDGE, D. D.

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GOD is not the Author of Confusion. 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

Συ δε φωλοδοτας

φωλος ΝΟΕΡΟΥ. Synes. Hymn. III.

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L O N D O N :

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

M DCC XLIII.

4.



A T H I R D  
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CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*  
*Argument, &c.*

S I R,

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

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

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

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

*if admitted, must subvert Christianity.* 5

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

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

" and,

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

“ and, in one Word, to make him absolutely in-  
“ fallible.”

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

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



*Christianity must be false, if this be true.* 7

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

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

8 *The gross Absurdity of such a Scheme.*

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

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

As

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It

*Many Things relate to Extraordinary Gifts. 11*

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

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

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

145

<sup>a</sup> 2 Pet. i. 21.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 8.

<sup>c</sup> John xvi. 12.

*and do not warrant the Author's Assertions. 13*

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

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

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

<sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.    <sup>e</sup> Ver. 12, 13, 15, 16.    <sup>f</sup> John xvi. 14.

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

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



*do not suppress the Use of Reason in Religion.* 15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>h</sup> Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

*and that, even in those that are Teachers.* 17

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

<sup>i</sup> Acts xx 32.

<sup>k</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

18 *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Spirit's Agency.*  
proof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness;  
that the Man of GOD, i. e. not only the Christian,  
but the Minister, the Evangelist, the Apostle, may be  
perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works<sup>m</sup>.

And thus, Sir, by the Review of *these Passages*,  
in Comparison with a Multitude more which might  
easily be added to them, we are taught the true  
*Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Illuminating Influences of the*  
*Spirit*, (which are now chiefly in Question;) and I  
shall endeavour in a few Words to propose it, with-  
out the Assistance and Incumbrance of those *Tech-*  
*nical Phrases*, which *Modern Divines* have intro-  
duced; and which, how profitable soever many of  
them may be, cannot I suppose seem absolutely  
necessary, to any who regard the *Scripture* as a com-  
pleat Rule.

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

<sup>m</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As

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



*where we do not see any Thing extraordinary.* 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>n</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 20. <sup>o</sup> Prov. ii. 6. <sup>p</sup> Phil. i. 6. <sup>q</sup> Phil. ii. 13.

26 *The Author gives a different Account,*

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

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

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

Now

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

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

28 *The Subject requires a Critical Exactness.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

† John vi. 44. ‡ Eph. ii. 8.

32 *The Spirit should testify of Christ.*

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

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

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

<sup>t</sup> John xv. 26. <sup>u</sup> John xvi. 13. <sup>w</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 29. <sup>x</sup> 1 John v. 10. <sup>y</sup> 1 John ii. 20.

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

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

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

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

<sup>z</sup> 1 John ii. 27. <sup>a</sup> Ver. 22, 25. <sup>b</sup> Rom. x. 14. <sup>c</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>d</sup> Rom. x. 6, & seq.    <sup>e</sup> Deut. xxx. 12, 13, 14.

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

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

<sup>f</sup> Rom. x. 5.



*Natural Man receives not Spiritual Things.* 39

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

¶ 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

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

#### 40 *Spiritual Things are spiritually discerned.*

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

That

*He who believeth not, makes GOD a Lyar. 41*

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

<sup>h</sup> 1 John v. 10. <sup>i</sup> Gal. i. 8.

42 *Christians should be all of one Mind,*

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

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

<sup>k</sup> 1 Cor. i. 10. <sup>l</sup> Rom. xv. 5. <sup>m</sup> Rom. xii. 16.

*and think and speak the same Thing.* 43

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

F 2

tation

<sup>n</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 11. Rom. xv. 7. <sup>o</sup> Phil. ii. 1, 2.

44 *We must become as little Children,*

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

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

<sup>p</sup> Mat. xviii. 3. <sup>q</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.

*and every Thought be captivated to Christ.* 45

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

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

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

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

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

† 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. ‡ 1 Thess. ii. 3. † 1 Cor. xiv. 20.



*Other Scriptures occasionally vindicated.* 47

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

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

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

It

<sup>u</sup> John iv. 39.

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

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

<sup>w</sup> John ii. 24, 25. <sup>x</sup> John iv. 41, 42.

*The Disciples slow of Heart to believe.* 49

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

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

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would

7 Luke xxiv. 25.

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

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

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

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

(which, by the way, are not quite *synonymous Terms*;) “ But in *Faith* we see it is a necessary Preliminary; “ *He that cometh to Christ, must believe that he is.*” —As to the *latter Part* of this Sentence, every body will perceive, that, however dignified by *Italicks*, it is a *Scripture of your own making*. It is indeed said in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, that *he who cometh to GOD, must believe that he is*<sup>2</sup>. The Sense of which is plainly this, “ that a Persuasion of “ the *Being of a GOD* must be the *Foundation* of all “ *Rational Religion*, and particularly of all *Devotional Addresses.*” And how a Person of your Sense could think of representing this as a *Circular Argument*, it is almost impossible to imagine; unless it were merely to humour the *Character* you had assumed, of a *Christian* whose *rapturous* and *enthusiastical Divinity* might transport him into an entire *Forgetfulness* of his *Logick*, and perhaps teach him to reckon *that Forgetfulness* among the *special Gifts of the Spirit*, which he imagined he had received? —But as to the *former*, or to speak more properly, the *only Text of Scripture* which you have here repeated, (for the *other* is merely *burlesqued*;) I mean *that in John*<sup>1</sup>; Archbishop *Tillotson* might long since have furnished you with an *Explication*, which sets it above this *Cavil*, which I confess, from the mere *Sound of the Words*, might easily present it self to the *Mind of a Superficial Reader*. He justly observes, (if I remember his *Interpretation* right,) that *this Epistle* was written, when *Christianity* had been for a considerable *Time* settled in the *World*; and that it might now be considered as a *Test of Doctrines*, sufficiently *confirmed* by a *Train* of most illustrious *Miracles*, and a *Variety of other Evidence*. In Consequence of this, a Person, presuming to teach by any *Spirit*, *that Jesus was not come in the Flesh*, might

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6.    <sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

54 *His Argument from Infant-Baptism*

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

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

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

\* Ἰκέλευω σε, Δεσποτα, — συμπραξαι ως αὐτοκινήτως ἡμιν — προς διορθωσιν ακριβη τι εν ἡμιν λογος, — και αφελειν τελευτας την αχλιω των ψυχικων ἡμων ομμάτων, οφρα γινωσκομεν ευ — η μεν Θεος, ηδε και ανδρα. *Simplic. Comment. ad fin.*



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

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

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

§6 *His Design, to expose Infant-Baptism.*

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

*His Remark on the Adjustment of Evidence.* 57

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Your most humble Servant,*

*Northampton,*  
*March 4. 1742-3.*

P. DODDRIDGE.





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# C O N T E N T S.

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

## CONTENTS of the FIRST LETTER.

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

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

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

64      *Contents of the First Letter.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ans. The Objection most unreasonably supposes,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Obj. vi.*

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

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

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

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

Consideration of other Topicks referred to future Letters. Pag. 61.

Conclusion. Pag. 62.

## CONTENTS of the SECOND LETTER.

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

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

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

It is proved in Opposition to A. C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Transition to the Second Part of this Letter, which contains the Examination of A. C's Attempt to prove that Christianity is not founded on Argument, from the Damnatory Sentence it pronouuces on those who reject it.* Pag. 28.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A brief View of *Objections,*

(1.) From wrong Associations, and Misrepresentations of Religion, which may lead upright Men ignorantly to reject what appears so absurd:—*Not to be pleaded by those, who might have Access to the Views given of it in Scripture.* Pag. 42, 43.

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

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

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

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

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

*Concluding Reflection on his Prayer for his Young Correspondent.* Pag. 59, 60.

## CONTENTS of the THIRD LETTER.

*Occasion of this Letter.* Pag. 3. *A. C's Doctrines of the Spirit's Agency* more largely stated; Pag. 4,—7. *Is evidently false in Fact*; if there be any *erroneous Christians* in the World; Pag. 7. And therefore, *if it be granted to be the Scripture-Doctrine, is plainly subversive of Christianity.* Pag. 8. It cannot be supported by referring the *Errors of Christians* to their *not following this infallible Guide*, since its *Influences* are said to be *irresistible.* Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

2. That



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This true Account is inconsistent with that of A. C. and subversive of his Scheme. Pag. 26.

Transition to the Third Part of this Letter, in which

III. The pretended Proofs from Scripture are considered, which A. C. has alledged, as what might furnish out an Objection against Christianity, drawn from the supposed Absurdity and Inconsistency of what it has taught concerning the Spirit's Influence. Pag. 26.

A. C. has scattered those Proofs promiscuously, conscious, as it seems, that they would appear yet less to his Purpose, when ranged together; aiming at something plausible, and not solicitous about Exactness. Pag. 27, 28.

Enumeration of the Texts he produces. Pag. 29, 30. General Remark on the Impropriety of their Application; with a Distribution of them into Classes:—Some refer not to any Revelation of Truth at all;—others were peculiar to the Apostles;—and others may fairly be interpreted in an important Sense different from that which A. C. has given them. Pag. 30. 31.

On these general Principles of Solution, particular Texts are explained. Examination

of *John* vi. 44. and *Eph* ii. 8. Pag. 31.

of *John* xv. 26. and xvi. 13. Pag. 32.

of *1 John* v. 10. and ii. 20, 27. Pag. 32,—34.

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ii. 2. Pag. 42,—44.

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*A Reply to the Argument* taken from our being obliged to pray for the Increase of Faith. Pag. 52. *To pray for this, is as consistent with Rational Endeavours to strengthen it, as praying for the Increase of Virtue is: It is required of Believers only, and supposes a Readiness to do our Part.* Pag. 52,—54.

*The Argument* which A. C. draws from *Infant-Baptism, not founded on a true View of the Institution.* Pag. 54, 55. *Important Ends to be answered by it, without supposing such an Extraordinary Communication of the Spirit in it.* Pag. 55,—57.

*A Remark* on the contemptuous Manner in which A. C. speaks of the Supposition, that the Evidence of Christianity may be so adjusted, as to be a Touchstone of the Integrity and Impartiality of those to whom it is addressed: Pag. 57. The Denial of which is hurtful to Natural, as well as Revealed Religion, and tends to introduce the most pernicious Scheme of Fatality. Pag. 58, 59.

*Conclusion* with a serious Address to A. C. as to the Tendency of his Pamphlet, and the mischievous Consequence of its Success, if it should succeed, which probably it will not. Pag. 59,—62.

