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THE
REASONABLENESSE
OF THE
Christian Religion,
As delivered in the
SCRIPTURES.
BEING AN
ANSWER

To a late TREATISE, intitled
CHRISTIANITY *not founded on*
Argument.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. Contains the Arguments for the TRUTH
of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

PART II. The Answers to the Difficulties and
Objections proposed by this AUTHOR.

PART III. An Interpretation of the TEXTS,
which he hath perverted.

By GEORGE BENSON.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White Hart* in *Cheapside*;
R. KING, at the *Bible and Crown* in *Fore-street*;
M. FENNER, at the *Turk's Head* in *Gracechurch-*
street; and M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster-*
Row. MDCCXLIII.



THE
P R E F A C E



THE book, which is here answered, is much lesse than the answer. But every intelligent reader knows that it is easy to couch an objection in a few words, when the answer cannot possibly be brought into the same compasse. A groundlesse objection may arise from asserting that a thing is constantly so and so, when the answer must be, by an induction of particular instances, to show that it is seldom or never so. Again; An objection may arise from bringing a text to prove what it has no relation to, or from quoting it in such a manner as to set in a wrong light, when the answer must take in most or all of the surrounding circumstances, in order to show what is the proper view of such a text, or that the objection is intirely founded upon a misinterpretation. And finally, I shall be forced to quote, more than once, this author's words, at large,—in which he has expressed his main arguments or objections; lest

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I should be thought to have misrepresented him. And this will considerably swell the answer.

I think it of no moment, who the author of this pamphlet is. If I did know certainly, my concern would not be with his person, but with his arguments. Whoever he be, I wish him no harm, but all possible good, and particularly that he may become a rational believer, upon the most clear and convincing evidence.— If I had not apprehended his performance to be one continued misrepresentation of Christianity and its true and proper evidence, and calculated to do harm to the generality of readers, I should not have thought it worth my while to have made any remarks upon it. But I am willing to lay hold on this, or any proper occasion, to write in defence of Christianity, as a thing truly rational and well attested, and of sufficient importance to deserve the attention of all those who have it in their power to come acquainted with the nature and evidences of it.

*Notwithstanding what the author has intimated, p. 82, 83. concerning the dialogue stile's unbinding men's principles and unsettling their Faith, I have ventured upon it, and prefer it for the ease with which one may introduce an objection and return the proper answer. And I think it greatly conduces to keep up the reader's attention, and make the controversy more pleasant and agreeable. How far I have imitated the manner of the antients, or kept up the characters of the persons, who are introduced, must be left to the reader to determine. I have not returned any answers to the difficulties and objections of this author; but such as I apprehend to carry some weight with them; nor have I designedly, in any place, misrepresented him. It is true, indeed, it is a very hard matter, in several instances, to fix his meaning, or to be sure that you have his real sentiments. As a proof of his uncertain, or involved, manner of writing, I could allege some instances of Christians, who take him to have wrote seriously, in defence of Christianity;—
though*

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though such are not found among the rational believers. There are other persons, and those not a few, who take it to be one of the boldest and most formidable attacks upon Christianity, that has ever been made. And the adversaries of revelation glory in it as unanswerable.—I think rational Christians need be in no panic about the event. For neither the weak essays of enthusiastic and irrational Christians, nor what this author, p. 96. calls the pestilential writings of infidels, and the rude attacks of ingenious malice, can prejudice the cause. As Christians have truth and evidence on their side, it can be made appear; and that is the only weapon that ought to be made use of. For a victory obtained in any other way ought to be dreaded no less than a defeat. See the author, p. 92,—101.—Such repeated attacks upon rational Christianity must of course lead rational believers to a more careful and exact inquiry into the nature and evidences of their Faith; which cannot fail of ending to the advantage of truth and virtue. It is possible that, upon examination, it may be found that Christians have mixed some of their own private sentiments with the pure doctrine of Christ. And, as such things cannot be defended, they had much better part with them, than give up rational Christianity, or load it with those difficulties which afford the most plausible objections against it; though in reality they do not belong to it. Such authors as this (whatever be their design) will, perhaps in the issue, help us to get rid of such difficulties and incumbrances,—which is, doubtless, a very desirable thing.—The author of Christianity as old as the Creation pretended that Reason, or the truth and fitness of things, is a sufficient rule for all mankind,—that every man is of himself capable of clearly perceiving what is reasonable, fit and proper in all circumstances. From whence he would infer, that there can be no occasion for their being instructed by Revelation.—That was his way of attacking Christianity.—This author, p. 17, &c. asserts that the common people cannot reason

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at all, that the generality of apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition; that the souls of the multitude are lodged in their hands; and (in one word) that they are incapable of acquiring a rational Faith, or of judging of a rational religion. And, therefore, he contends that there is a necessity for an universal inspiration of the Spirit, to infuse Faith, or inspire conviction, or (as he expresses it, p. 112.) a constant and particular Revelation, imparted separately and supernaturally to every individual. And this he pretends to prove both by Reason and Scripture. To make good this principle of his, he assumes a variety of characters, or collects arguments from different quarters. P. 52. he falls in with the sentiments of the church of Rome, and pleads that miracles ought never to cease. If they do, they are (says he) by no means a competent support for the cause, or to be produced as conclusive and substantial testimonies for the truth of their religion. And, then, as his own professed sentiments, he asserts, that, if miracles were necessary in the infancy of the Gospel, they are so still, and will be to the end of the world. Whenever they cease, the authority of the evidence, which depended on them, ceases with them. Again, p. 82. he falls in with the sentiments of the church of Rome, and adopts one of her most celebrated maxims. For, having insinuated that religion ought not to be reasoned about, or examined;—that a prying into it has ever proved a fatal curiosity; that in religion, above all things, familiarity breeds contempt;—he contends that an absolute unacquaintance with these matters is the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion. The church of Rome takes away the Scriptures from the common people, to prevent a rational Faith, and to make them believe as the church believes. This author says, p. 89. that putting out the eyes of men is, certainly, the only method

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method in nature to make them see all alike.—
P. 9. he takes on him the character of a member of the church of England, as by law established; and, having represented babes, as commencing true believers, at once, by the Faith of their bondsmen, whilst as yet they have not the least share, or symptom of understanding themselves;—and yet he knows not how they could well give a rational assent by proxy. Yet such (says he) is the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. P. 15, 16. he quotes part of one of the Thirty Nine Articles, in support of his argument,—concerning good works done before Faith,—having the nature of sin. P. 22, 23. he makes the supposition of a man's reason's leading him to imbrace Christianity in preference to all the other religious professions in the world;—and, then, to distinguish still further our established church, in particular, as the mode the most conformable to that Divine plan:—And, again, p. 76.—“ though men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of one Faith, which they hold not in unity of understanding, but (as our Liturgy well expresses it) in the bond of peace and unity of Spirit.” Under the character of a member of the established church, he contends, p. 83. that religion was instituted to prevent controversy, and to that end, pleads for a general rule of Faith: And, p. 84. for the interposition of the civil authority to prevent those unhappy divisions and hateful animosities, which arise only from a fatal and ill-judged indulgence to that restless spirit of contradiction and confusion. P. 97. he says, “ the civil magistrate, wherever the Gospel has obtained, has ever taken upon him to inculcate, by all the means in his power, the same particular belief, without leaving the least part of that task for the parties concerned, to execute for themselves.” And, p. 98.—that the point, he is contending for, appears yet farther, from its being, likewise,

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likewise, the concurrent sense of our holy church in council assembled. We are taught, in our Liturgy, to pray, that God would give our magistrates *grace to maintain truth*.—P. 30. *he assumes another character, and speaks of the full and lasting assurance of a just and heavenly Faith; to which, if a man has once arrived, he can never possibly be to seek at any time, for the grounds and motives of his first conviction and dependence. And, in the same page, he insinuates that the Faith, infused by the Spirit, has force enough to make us virtuous against our inclinations. P. 58, 59. he is for instantaneous conversion and irresistible grace;—declaring that this inspiration and infused evidence,—is of immediate influence, and operates without delay. And, speaking of the conversion of Saul, he calls it, a conversion effected, not by the force of dilatory inferences and conclusions, but by an irresistible light from heaven, that flashed conviction in a moment. Thus called (says he) we make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day; our Faith is completed in an instant, &c. Accordingly, he ascribes the sudden conversion of such numbers in the primitive church, upon little or no seeming evidence, to the sole and immediate act of the Divinity, whereby the power of God was in a particular manner glorified;—that power which was of immediate influence, and operated without delay. See p. 40; 58; 65.—By and by he wheels about, and talks in quite another strain;—and then says, p. 58. this inspiration, or grace, is, in the first place, universal;—and speaks the same thing to all. And, p. 63. this very grace (which he had represented as instantaneous and irresistible) is described as what may be resisted by the will of man, (which he declares to be in its nature ever free, p. 64.) For (says he) The universal tender of this conviction, however potent in its influence (even though he had represented it as irre-*

irresistible) must yet depend greatly upon the proper disposition of our minds, to give it reception for its efficacy; and so far will give place, and afford ample matter for trial and probation, and become, indeed, a test of our obedience. *P. 68, 69. he speaks of persons, who would, by their infidelity of spirit, render its operations, if tried, of no effect.—Again; he, in other places, talks in the stile of an Enthusiast;—and then the Spirit is to do all, and his operation is of equal certainty with any gratifications which sensible objects can possibly propose. See p. 58. Here is feeling opposed to feeling,—and a strong and palpable, internal sense to ballance all the motions of the external.—Above all, it is of immediate influence, and operates without delay. He, in several parts of his book, pleads for believers being infallible, by their having the Spirit. And, p. 112. contends for a constant and particular Revelation imparted separately and supernaturally to every individual. And, then,—offers up his most ardent prayers, in behalf of his friend, at the throne of grace, not for leisure to consult, or sagacity to apprehend what learned men have said upon the subject; but that God would be pleased himself to illuminate and irradiate his mind, with a perfect and thorough conviction of the truth of his Holy Gospel;—that he would be graciously vouchsafed to renew, once more, his disregarded notices; and establish in him an uncontrovertible knowledge of its strict veracity; such an one as that, with the enlightened Apostle, he might, at once, believe, and be sure that Jesus was the Christ;—such a full and home-felt persuasion, as might render superfluous all his further care and labor in searching, by fixing him, in the happy instant, a true, a zealous and unalterable disciple of Christianity.—Such an one is the enlightened disciple, p. 59. In this the sum and substance of all argumentation is briefly comprized,*

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the very spirit and extract of all-convicting power, of a nature, perhaps, but little differing from that of intuition itself. This is that still, small voice, that bespeaks the immediate presence of the Divinity, and makes its dictates, as it were, self-evident to the mind where it is lodged. *After this he speaks of human learning with contempt; reflecting also on the Scriptures, in comparison of this light within, and sais,—*we stand no longer, now, in need of any of the credit of antient miracles, or of the genuinenesse of distant records,—a very slender and insufficient ground of *Faith*;—we can vouch, in its stead, a present and standing miracle of our own;—a living witnesse and commentator in our own breasts;—that is to abide with us himself, that we might not be left liable, one moment, to a possibility of error and imposition; which must unavoidably be the case, if we were ever left to take the least part of our instructions from one another, p. 60.—*P. 101. he sais,—*we cannot bear with patience, under any specious pretences, to have that Savior, which we feel, denied in effect, by being called in question. *This is, p. 65. the call within, corresponding to the external call, when Jesus said unto Matthew, Follow me, and immediately he left all and followed him. P. 61. he calls the Scripture a dead letter. P. 73. the most excellent human learning is carnal wisdom,—nay earthly, sensual and devilish. P. 84. we are to deny our reason, to give our Faith scope:—To captivate our reason to the obedience of Faith,—to captivate it, to lay it under the most absolute restraint and prohibition; not to permit it the least opportunity, or freedom, to exert itself, or interpose on any occasion whatever; to look upon the result of human reason, as that carnal wisdom, every where industriously decried in the affair of believing.—P. 17. from what he had said above, he infers, that religion can never be a thing*
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to be taught ; that it must be something which does not require time to attain, like other common lessons and sciences.—*How consistent this is with those texts, which injoin men to search the Scriptures ; —to train up a child in the way he should go ; —to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; —and that speak of it, as a matter of commendation, that such an one from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, which were able to render him wise unto salvation ; —I leave every reader to judge. —In the last place, I would point out several passages, in this author, from whence many have been led to take him for an Infidel, who has put on the various characters above-mentioned, that he might, through their sides, wound Christianity itself ; and collect arguments, from all hands, to prove that the Gospel is an absurd and unreasonable institution of religion. Sometimes, indeed, he speaks in this manner ; p. 32. I will very readily grant you all the moral certainty in these proofs, that you can desire ; and farther, that this is, indeed, the highest degree of rational evidence that the nature of the subject can, possibly, admit. P. 19. he calls it, that absolute and certain truth of the Gospel, which shines out, indeed, so conspicuously, upon a proper discussion and acquaintance. And again, demonstrable, doubtless, it is ; —and this demonstration, he allows, may appear to a Locke or a Newton, to men of learning and diligent inquiry ; but that it does not lie level to the capacities of the vulgar, or (as he expresses it) to the rude and short-sighted understandings of many, that cannot enter sufficiently into the argument to become apprized of its merits. Hereby Christianity would become almost an uselesse institution, and the common people would be set at liberty from paying any regard to that important Revelation. —But that is not all ; —for, when the Scriptures recommend one thing, he often recommends the contrary. P. 5. he represents it as a dangerous thing to conform to the Apostolic rule, which carries the highest*

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reason along with it, viz. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Whereas, he sais, If once you come to your proposed situation for proving all things, be assured that you will never hold fast any thing. Again; the Scriptures condemn the Scribes and Pharisees for seeking a sign, or miracle, from Jesus, after the many miracles he had already worked for their conviction. —This author sais, p. 38. If Jesus had, indeed, appealed to their understandings, this had been so far from any thing criminal, or blame-worthy, that it had been, in all reason, their indispensable duty; whereas it was, it seems, in Faith, an unwarrantable, presumptuous, and vain curiosity. And, in the case of Herod's wanting to see some miracle done by Jesus, he sais, p. 49. that, if miracles had been at all calculated for the purpose of converting, it would have been, surely, countenanced and cultivated as a good promising symptom and mark of a towardly disposition for future discipleship. The coming desirous to canvass the evidence, though from no other principle, perhaps, originally, than that of gratifying a light curiosity, were, one would imagine, a turn of mind to be favourably entertained and carefully cherished in a novice, by any who was solicitous to gain proselytes by such means, and conscious of having any thing of the kind to produce to him. His way of speaking of the Scriptures will plainly appear, from the following passages, p. 30, &c. He insinuates that they are a doubtful account, a testimony liable to be controverted: And sais, that venerable tradition and historical records, though never so plausible and well attested,—can yet never, with all its boasted pretensions, be a sufficient basis for a belief, which is to produce a new course of life;—it is still all but human testimony this, in its nature ever liable to error, as depending only on fallible authors. And, in the same page, he represents the Faith which arises from

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from the Scripture, to be in times of severe trial, nothing more than the precarious conjecture of a fallible judge, upon the traditional testimony of a fallible witnesse. P. 52. He sais, that the voice of God himself,—has been, by one intervening age, dwindled long since to human tradition. God no longer bears witnesse to his Son, but men only bear witnesse to God. The awful sound—is sunk with us into the uncertain assertions of fallible men, relating it one after another. P. 53. A miracle, that was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, to us is no more than uncertain hear-say.—That seeing is, indeed, believing, has ever been allowed reasoning; but that I am to believe a thing, because another sais he saw it, and it is not in my power to prove a negative and contradict him, is surely a very unprecedented and new sort of logic. The testimony of sight is, by its nature, an evidence not to be communicated: All the assurance, in the world, of another's seeing, can never have an equal effect upon my senses, or make me see a thing where I was not actually present. [A rational Christian would say, in answer to this, “I do not expect that you should see by the eyes of another, or where you yourself were not actually present; but you ought to pay regard to the testimony of credible persons.” But this author takes care to except against this way of arguing also, and sais,] p. 51. These mighty works could be no demonstration to any that were not actually and personally present when they were done; and, for the same evident reason, can be none to us now. And, p. 52. The light of conviction, therefore, which is thus received, can extend no farther than to the eye-witnesse himself, lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted. P. 59. He takes notice that the enlightened disciple—need not apply to libraries for a more competent information and

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discovery. [*He need not so much as read the Scriptures for the time to come.*] For what is there after this remaining in—these suspicious repositories of human testimony, that can now deserve our least notice, or be thought of consequence to engage a moment's attention upon this subject? *Again; he sais,* we stand no longer, now, in need of any of the credit of antient miracles, or the genuinenesse of distant records;—a very slender and insufficient ground, as I have shewn, to answer all the great purposes, and insure all the rigid demands of religion. *See p. 60. He calls them* manuscript authorities and paper revelations, composed—of perishable materials, *which* must in time come to want repairs. *P. 61. Every transcript is a copy and representation at second hand, which* will (like the tradition of a miracle) detract, in a great degree, from its divine authority; as this must necessarily be the work of man, and liable of course, from a thousand causes, to fall short, and deviate from its great exemplar. *He likewise adds,* the opposers of the Gospel say, indeed, this is the case; and insist strongly that the sacred text has been actually much adulterated. *And he* will not take upon *him,* at present, to determine, *whether* their assertion is true or no. *Nay, if the sacred text did now remain uncorrupted, in every particular, he pronounces* it still absolutely defective and insufficient for any such reveling purpose as they would expect. *And in the same page he calls the Scripture,* a dead letter,—as I have taken notice above.—*P. 68. he sais,* that *Jesus Christ* was particularly cautious of exposing his person, after his resurrection, to public view; when his taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and lives of so many holy vouchers, who perished merely by the thing's being done in a corner. *P. 36, 37. he represents* our Savior, as *not allowing the disci-*

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riples to expect, or desire, any rational evidence, any arguments or proofs, of his mission;—intimating that he was always cautious and reserved;—that he did but ill approve the being called on, upon any occasion, to explain;—that he discouraged their farther inquiry, even at times when they did not really apprehend his meaning;—p. 38. that he refused to work a miracle, when persons desired a sign, or miracle of him, and that as a rational evidence for their discipleship;—p. 48. that he was always remarkably upon the reserve, in that respect, whenever he happened among unbelieving company;—and was particularly sparing of these supposed arguments, amongst the very persons who seemed most to want them.—I hope to show, in the clearest manner, that Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles, in proof of his mission and doctrine;—in order to gain disciples, or confirm such as, upon some preceding evidences, were already become his disciples. But this author, p. 48. often intimates the contrary, viz. that our Lord had not any such meaning, as to convince by these works;—more plainly still, that he had no such intention to prove his own truth and character by these instances of his power; he often industriously avoided that accidental consequence, and took particular care to prevent their ever coming to public notice;—that he generally charged such as he cured, to tell no man. P. 49. he insinuates that our Lord was so far from any thought of procuring disciples, by his miracles, that he made a bargain with them before-hand, that they should first believe;—His words are,—A certain degree, and that no ordinary one, of previous confidence and persuasion, appears to have been constantly stipulated for before-hand, to intitle them to have their applications at all listened to, or regarded, and to be the sole measure and rule of dispensing these occasional favors. The character he has given of our Lord, p. 67. is as unworthy and unjust.—See, likewise, his representation

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tion of the conduct of the Apostles, p. 38, &c. where they are described as always in haste, as not allowing men to ask questions, or demand any rational evidence, as circulating their creeds, and insisting constantly on the ready acknowledgment of their doctrines, without any concessions of time for doubt, or deliberation ;— as never attempting to inform the understanding, or convince the judgment, of one single person. —Having contended for Faith without reason, he, p. 82. represents Christianity as a thing not to be reasoned about, nor too curiously pried into ;—that familiarity, in religion, above all things, breeds contempt ;—that an absolute unacquaintance with these matters is the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them ; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion.—These, and the like, are the passages from whence many have been induced to look upon the author, as an insidious and covert advocate for infidelity.—Finally ; there are others again, who suspect that he is no more a friend to natural religion, than he is to revealed. This they gather from his speaking of the common people as incapable of reasoning, as having apprehensions which extend not beyond a simple proposition,—as unable to form any judgment about matters of religion. The consequence of which would be, that natural religion is as little calculated for the bulk of mankind as revealed ;—that they are excused from all religion, and can have no concern in the affair.—Truth has evidence which falshood never can have ; and good an amiableness and excellence which evil is destitute of : And the Apostle says, what is highly reasonable, viz. that we must first prove all things, and then hold fast that which is good, and abstain from every kind of evil. This author says, p. 5. If I am once left free to examine, I can, by no means, be tied up in the issue. P. 26. he speaks of a rational Faith, as always very precarious. For what reason first established,

blished, it is evident (*sais he*) the same reason must ever have the power to repeal. [*As if reason and evidence were like enthusiasm, fancy and credulity, —ever liable to shift about from one point of the compass to another.*] P. 44. If a man is to be held only by his own reasonings,—*that would be stamping an equal mark of truth upon a thousand opposite opinions.* P. 96. *he sais*, reason may chance to lead a man wrong as well as right. P. 16. the unquiet essays of reasoning, curious dispositions [*disquisitions*] upon his [*i. e. God's*] being and attributes, — are practices utterly inconsistent with the pretensions of all such as call themselves Christians, &c. P. 42. *he speaks of* eternal relations, moral differences of things, and a precise delineation of the religion of nature and its obligations, *as a sort of precarious things, and far from being such obvious truths as can never possibly appear otherwise.— But what offends the friends to natural religion, most, is what he has said, p. 81. concerning the first volume of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures, which that great and good man wrote in defence of the being of a God, and of his natural and moral perfections; in answer to the difficulties and objections of Hobbes, Spinoza, Blount, Toland, and such like men;— a book, which will ever be valued by the most learned and judicious;— and yet he asserts, that these labored productions— have rather contributed to make for the other side of the question, and raised a thousand difficulties in the reader's mind, which would never else have occurred to him; where it has sent away one single person satisfied in the point; or indeed left him in the same degree of persuasion it found him. I do not take upon me to determine whether these things are said in railery, or seriously. They, who understand him to be in earnest, do justly condemn such passages, as representing natural religion to be wholly precarious and uncertain:*

—as the passages mentioned before, would overthrow all the rational grounds and evidences of Revelation.

I am not obliged to declare my own sentiments concerning the real character of this author, and his manner of writing. I apprehend that rational Christianity is the only Christianity worth contending for; and, indeed, the only true Christianity. And, if I show that there is sufficient evidence for a rational belief;—it is all one to the argument, whether the objections procede from a real Enthusiast, or a disguised Unbeliever. What is a good argument against one, is a good argument against all; and nothing but what is wise and reasonable can deserve the attention or regard of men, whom God has created reasonable Creatures.

N. B. The texts refered to, in the margin, are such as were misapplied by the author of Christianity not founded on Argument; and the pages refered to, are such and such pages, in the second edition of his book.

London,
April 18.
1743.



T H E



THE
REASONABLENESSE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
As delivered in the
SCRIPTURES.

INTRODUCTION.



Pyrrho, Theophilus and Crito used frequently to meet and converse. They had been brought up together from their infancy. And, tho' persons of very different tempers and ways of life, they continued to preserve an intimacy, which had grown up with them from the begining. Pyrrho had of late frequented the company of some persons who were continually talking against *revelation*, and making *religion* in general the common subject of their mirth and ridicule. They had picked up several of the objections, thrown out by some late writers; and

B Pyrrho,

The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion,

Pyrrho, having never studied the point, was unable to answer them himself, and therefore concluded that they were unanswerable. This gave a new turn to his conversation, and made him exceeding apt to raise difficulties and start objections, whenever *religion* was the subject. Tho' he had as strong a faith in other things as most men; and, as *King Charles the II^d*. is reported to have said of *Vossius*,—*He believed almost every thing but his Bible.* *Theophilus* was a man of great piety, plain sense and great sagacity, who retained so much of what he had learned in his younger days, as to be able to consult his *Greek Testament*; but had not a great deal of learning besides. But *Crito* was a man of great erudition, and was thought to have made a considerable progress in *critical* knowledge. They well knew each other's character and talents, and could with temper talk on a variety of subjects. One evening their conversation turned upon a late book-intituled, *Christianity not founded on Argument*; concerning which *Pyrrho* was very copious and eloquent, as his manner was on such occasions; and he extolled it as an extraordinary and even unanswerable performance. *Theophilus* said, with a smile, He knew so much of his friend *Pyrrho*, that, if it was an attack upon *revelation*, it must be, in his account, a very extraordinary performance indeed; and that he had observed of such gentlemen, that they always represented the last book, wrote on their side, as the most considerable that ever had appeared, and frequently endeavored to spread their mighty performances, by giving out, that they were afraid of the civil government's laying hold on the *author*, for his shrewd insinuations against the *religion of his country*, &c. *Pyrrho* said, he supposed *Theophilus* had not read the book; and upon that, declaimed very fluently against partiality, and narrowness of spirit, and reading on
one

one side only. *Theophilus* let him know that, if he had a mind to recriminate, he could charge the enemies of revelation with as great partiality, and point out some of them, who were determined to read such books only, as were on the *infidel* side of the question. Nay, that he could produce the man, yet alive, and a man of veracity, who went to visit the famous *Dr. Tindal*, and found him reading the New Testament : and, when he expressed his surprize at it, the Doctor said, *You read the Scriptures, that you may believe them ; I, on the contrary, read them, that I may not believe them.* However (continued *Theophilus*) I am so well satisfied of the truth of Christianity, and that it is founded on solid and rational evidence, that I am not afraid of reading any thing that can be writ against it. Though, at the same time, I do not think myself obliged to read every book, that is wrote, on one side or the other. For, when I have satisfactory evidence, that is sufficient ; and a truth, which is once well proved, cannot be overthrown, or confuted. I have, indeed, read the *treatise* you speak of, and find men of various opinions about it ;—some looking upon the *author* as writing in defence of Christianity, tho' not of rational Christianity. Others look upon the book as a bitter sarcasm upon enthusiasts and irrational Christians, designed to cure men of such groundlesse sentiments and follies. Whereas the generality view him in the same light with my friend *Pyrrho*, and consider him as only wearing the mask of a friend to *Revelation*, and representing it as unreasonable, in order the more effectually to attack the rational evidence of Christianity. It is all one to me which way you take him. The arguments themselves are full of *sophistry*, and have a bad tendency, wherever they are taken to be conclusive. I dare undertake to prove that Christianity is founded on Argument, in opposition to this *author*,

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whether he is *Christian*, or *Infidel*. *Pyrrho* was full of hopes that *Theophilus*, by reading such an acute performance, would have been staggered and become the disciple of the *Sceptics*. But, when he found him as much a believer as ever, notwithstanding he had perused *that author*, he was unwilling to leave the matter so, and therefore proposed an examination of the book, in the *dialogue* way, which *his author*, p. 82, 83. had taught him to be so dangerous to a rational faith. *Theophilus* was not displeased at the proposal; but very coolly engaged to make good what he had said;—begging of *Crito* to preside in the debate, till there should be occasion for *critical* learning, and then he must desire his assistance, in order to explain some of the texts which *the author* had perverted;—or the like. *Pyrrho* seconded that motion; upon which *Crito* came into their proposal. The preliminaries being settled, the two disputants agreed to come prepared to begin the examination of this argument the next evening.

THE SECOND EVENING.

Their agreement took air, by their telling some of their friends, and their telling others again, till at last there happened to be a more numerous audience than they had expected. This made them dubious at first whether they should proceed or no; but, upon finding them all to be friends and acquaintance, who would have withdrawn, if they had desired it, rather than interrupt their conversation,—they allowed them to attend if they pleased;—which they in general chose to do, and continued to attend, from evening to evening, till they had quite finished their design.

When *Crito* had taken the chair, *Theophilus* and *Pyrrho* placed themselves over-against one another,
and

and then the conversation proceeded as follows. *Theophilus* began with saying that, as he was called upon to defend *rational Christianity*, either against an *enthusiastic believer*, or a *disguised infidel*, he would take his own method, that he might handle the subject in a clear and distinct manner. For things may be proved one way, which could never have been proved another. Who (for instance) would pretend to demonstrate the 32^d proposition in the first book of *Euclid*, viz. that *the three angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles*;—or the 47th, viz. that *the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares of the other two sides of any right-angled triangle*,—without first demonstrating the preceding propositions, upon which the proof of these depends? Who would go to instruct a man in *algebra*, before he has learned common *arithmetic*? or who would attempt to make a child read words and sentences, without first teaching him letters and syllables? I mention these things the rather, because I have observed great perplexity in the method of some authors, who write in the most artful or involved manner;—which is, indeed, the way to puzzle and confound things, but not to clear up truth, or set evidence in its proper light.

The method, I propose, is this;—After having settled the meaning of the word [*Faith* ;] I would (1.) Mention some of the principal arguments which are, in *Scripture*, proposed to effect such a *Faith*. (2.) Answer such difficulties and objections as *Pyrrho* shall see fit to propose out of *his author*. (3.) Endeavor to give the true sense of those texts, which *the author* has perverted, or alleged to a purpose quite different from their original intention. If, *Pyrrho*, you have any objection to my method, be pleased to allege it. *Pyrrho* intimated that he was satisfied with the order of proceeding, which *Theophilus* had pitched upon, and desired that he would

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would go on immediately to settle the meaning of the word *Faith*. For, if it mean an act of the understanding, or a mere assent, is it in a man's power to believe, or not believe as he pleases? If he sees evidence for any thing, he cannot help believing it; and, if there is no evidence, he cannot assent, or believe. I therefore would ask you to solve the difficulty, proposed by my author, p. 8, &c. *With what regard, with what patience, rather, can one—be supposed to attend to questions, propounded to him, under the restraints of threats and authority? to be talked to, of danger in his decisions, and have the rod held out with the lesson; to have propositions tendered to his reason, with penalties annexed? His reason, ever necessitated to determine just as she does of herself; and, by her nature, incapable, either of paying compliments, or giving offence. He is conscious all the while that he has no such free vote to dispose of; and therefore disdains, with all justice, an attempt, equally weak and unjust, of frightening him into a compliance out of his power.* I was willing, *Theophilus*, that you should see the difficulty, before you set out; and thereby save the trouble of having occasion to return to this point; when you come to answer my difficulties and objections.

Theophilus intimated that he was aware of the difficulty; and observed that the word [*Faith*] was, in Scripture, used in a variety of senses. Sometimes, indeed, it signifies an assent upon sight, or upon the credible testimony of others; sometimes it means an assent to the principles of natural religion, such as the being of a God and his government of the world, deduced by reason from the visible works of creation and providence. In other places, it signifies no more than believing that *Jesus*, or his disciples, had the power of working miracles. In some few texts it stands for one of the *miraculous gifts*, and signifies “a firm persuasion of mind,
“ arising from an impulse of the Spirit, inabling
“ them

as delivered in the Scriptures.

7

“ them to set about some miraculous operation, “ in full assurance of God’s assisting them.” Very frequently *Faith* imports, a belief that *Jesus was the Christ*. In several texts, *Faith* is put for the whole Gospel, or for imbracing the Gospel; as a part is, by an usual figure of speech, put for the whole. Sometimes it signifies a persevering, or being confirmed, in our adherence to the Gospel. Sometimes *Faith* is put for *truth*, or fidelity, or even obedience to God, or Christ. There is no confusion arises from these various senses of the word. For whoever will, with any tolerable care and attention, consult the several places, will easily perceive in which of these senses it ought any where to be understood.

The *Faith*, which I am now to explain, is that which is required of those, to whom the Gospel is made known, with sufficient evidence. *This Faith* is always a *virtue*; and consequently not a mere act of the understanding, or a bare assent upon evidence;—but it is partly an assent of the understanding and partly an act of the will. There are one or two things previous to the assent of the understanding, and one or two things subsequent;—which are all implied in the scriptural notion of *Faith*. The previous acts are such as these.—To lay aside prejudice, to cultivate a love to truth, a willingness to attend and to examine such truths as concern our moral and religious conduct. That part of the crime of *unbelief*, which stands opposed to this, must be want of due attention to reasonable evidence, or a backwardness to examine. The Apostle *Paul*, instead of commanding men to believe, implicitly and without any rational arguments, encouraged a spirit of free inquiry, injoining his converts to *prove*, or examine, *all things*; and then to *hold fast that which is good*. By which he meant, that they were not only left free to inquire, if they

What that
Faith is,
which is
required in
the Gospel.

The first they pleased, into the truth of all fundamentals in religion, but that it was actually a duty, incumbent upon men so to do, and a fatal and unpardonable neglect to omit it. That they could never answer it, either to God, or ed to by themselves, to be any one's disciple, without the warrant the author of that reason he had given them to judge by, and that P. 5: 77. purposely to distinguish betwixt truth and falsehood. That it was, in short, a qualification indispensably required at

The second their hands, to be always able and ready (as St. Peter text explained. has intimated) to give an intelligible and satisfactory account of the ground of their faith, to any that should See p. 77. ask them the question, or desire a reason of the hope that and 1 Pet. iii. 15. was in them. [See the author, p. 77.] In perfect harmony with these two Apostles, St. Luke, the sacred historian, has commended the Jews at Beræa, as more noble than those of Thessalonica, because of their diligent search and examination into the grounds and reasons of what the Apostle taught them. (2d.) Another of the previous acts is to entertain such an opennesse and candor of mind as readily to receive truth upon such sort of evidence as things

The third are capable of. This is what our Savior has termed text explained. *receiving the Gospel as a little child*, i. e. (not as your author has explained it, p. 75. without reason, or See p. 75. understanding; but) with an honest and unprejudiced, a fair and tractable disposition of mind, and Mark x. 15. without the biasse of one educated in false notions, Luke xviii. 17. the conceit of the opinionated philosopher, or the aversion to truth, which frequently appears in wicked and worldly-minded men. All truths are not capable of the same sort of proof. And it is folly and perversnesse to require such evidence, in any case, as the thing is incapable of. Some truths are *self-evident*. Some abstract truths are capable of *demonstration*. But matters of fact can be known no otherwise than by the report of one's own senses, or the testimony of others. And the testimony of credible persons has, in all ages, been regarded,

not

not by the *vulgar* only, but by men of the best judgment and greatest learning. There is certainly some virtue in having a disposition of mind candidly to inquire into the nature and evidence of moral and religious truths. It is plain that some men judge not according to evidence but determine without inquiry, and judge according to inclination. Not only false opinions, but also wicked practices, strangely biasse the minds of many. They are afraid lest the truth should condemn their course of life, and therefore they have an aversion to it.

This, in the language of scripture, is called men's *closing their eyes, stopping their ears, and hardening their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts.* And, in such cases, *their foolish heart is justly said to be darkened.* Such persons, overlooking the evidences already afforded, are always cavilling and demanding new, or other sort of, evidence: They catch at every specious appearance of an argument, or objection, to make themselves easy in rejecting truths of such importance; but are afraid of examining things to the bottom, lest they should be thereby condemned. Such are the reasons, which *our Savior* has assigned, of men's want of faith in him and his Gospel. For, having mentioned the happy consequences of faith and the dreadful consequences of *unbelief*, he saith, John iii. 19, &c. *This is the condemnation* [i. e. of such as remain in *unbelief*, when the Gospel is laid before them with sufficient evidence;—] *that light is come into the world, and these men have loved darkness more than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he, that practiseth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are done according to the will of God.* JESUS said unto the *Jews*, who sought to take away his life, *you will not come unto me, that you may have life.*

The fourth text explained. See p. 36. and John xii. 40. Rom. i. 21.

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the reason is added, v. 42. *I know you that you have not the love of God in you.* And he inquires of them v. 44. *How can you believe, that receive honor, one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God alone?* Hence we may gather the evident reason of what is said, John xvi. 9. viz. that *when the Spirit should come, he should convict the world of Sin, because they had not believed in Jesus before.* For, upon this additional evidence, it would be still more manifest that *Jesus* was the Christ, and that nothing but criminal prejudices had prevented their believing in him, upon his own miracles and the other attestations he had given them, before his crucifixion. This is, likewise, the reason, which St. Paul has assigned, of men's rejecting the *truth* and embracing *delusions*, 2 Thess. ii. 10, &c. For he describes them to be such a sort of men as *had not received the love of the truth*:—And he directly opposeth the

The *fifth*
text ex-
plained.
See p. 68.
and Heb.
iv. 2.

belief of the truth to taking pleasure in unrighteousness. It was among persons of such bad dispositions that *the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* Less evidence would do, in many cases, if truth was more grateful. But, when men dislike the things to be proved, they are very unwilling to attend to, or allow the force of, those arguments which are to convince them. It is evident men's wills, appetites, passions and inclinations have great influence upon their *faith*. However, men ought to remember that things are obstinate, and will not alter with their wishes. And every wise man sees that the right way is coolly and carefully to consider what is proposed, however it may affect him; and to receive the truth according to the importance and evidence of it. —These are the things, which are previous to the assent of the mind, and are included in the scriptural notion of *faith*. *Pyrro* said, you took notice, *Theophilus*, of some subsequent acts, which are also included in the notion of *faith*. I did so,
replied

replied *Theophilus*, and they are also two;—both of which have their seat in the *will*, and are material parts in the *virtue* of faith. The one is, “ that we “ openly profess and acknowledge the truth, “ when we see it, or are convinced of it;—even “ though it should expose us to some dangers or “ difficulties.” That part of the crime of *unbelief* which stands opposed to this, is men’s being ashamed of the truth, or stifling religious sentiments; though in their minds they are convinced of them, or suspect that they are true. There are persons who, in some places and company, are afraid of the very appearance of *religion*, or of being suspected of *believing*; though in their hearts they cannot forbear having a secret veneration for it. They must be in the fashion; they dread the censure of some of their acquaintance; they cannot stand the ridicule of insolent wit and low buffoonery; they want to distinguish themselves as persons of superior genius and uncommon penetration, who scorn to think in the common tract, or believe as the *vulgar* do. They would be the first in the profession of religion, when that is the turn of the age, in repute with the *great vulgar*, as well as with the *small*. But, in a time and place of persecution, or when the profession of *religion* exposes a man to contempt, or ridicule;—then, they have not the courage and the honesty to profess their sentiments. This is a behavior, of which a brave and upright man would scorn to be guilty! This is betraying *Faith* and a *good conscience*! And this has been the vice of mean-spirited and worldly men in many places and ages. This was, by our *Savior*, assigned as the cause, why several of the leading men among the *Jews* refused to profess their *Faith* in him, *John* xii. 42, 43.—*Several of the rulers believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they confessed him not, lest they should have been put out of the synagogue.*

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gogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. But the Apostle, Rom. x. 9, 10. intimates that confession with the mouth is necessary to salvation, as well as believing with the heart. And, to induce his disciples not to fear men, who can but kill the body, in comparison of God, who can destroy both

The sixth soul and body in hell;—our Savior has declared, *who-*
text ex- *soever shall be ashamed of me and my words, [or Gos-*
plained. *pel,] in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him*
 See p. 45. *shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the*
 Matt. x. *glory of his father, with the holy angels.*—And the
 28, &c. man, who hath wanted such love to truth, and
 Mark viii. such integrity and fortitude in the profession of it,
 38. will be then very rationally and justly condemned;
 notwithstanding what your *author* has insinuated,
 p. 45.

When Christianity first appeared, there were no worldly honors and emoluments to induce any persons to take upon them the *Christian* profession; but on the contrary, many and great difficulties and discouragements. There was no pomp and external splendor to dazzle their eyes and attract their regard; but a simple, plain, spiritual religion;—There were no baits and allurements from sensual pleasures, such as accompanied the worship of *Venus, Bacchus, &c.* But in Christianity all such things were severely condemned. Again; the first converts had many of the prejudices of education to conquer, before they could see the evidences of the Gospel and imbrace the Christian Faith. And, after they became the disciples of *Jesus*, the open profession of the Gospel exposed them to many hardships and difficulties, not only from strangers and enemies, but it frequently caused a man to have foes among those of his own household: And the Christians were, then, a *sect* every where spoken against. Nor did *Jesus Christ*, or his Apostles, make any secret of it, in order to draw in converts;

converts; but declared, in the plainest terms, that unlesse a man forsook his possessions, his dearest friends, and even life itself, if called thereto, he could not be a disciple of Christ's. For such were told that, *through much tribulation, they must enter into the kingdom of God*; and that *all, that would live godly in Christ Jesus, must expect to suffer persecution*. For *this was the victory, wherewith they were to overcome the world, even their Faith*. Notwithstanding all these dark prospects, in this world, they were not to make any secret of their Christian Faith, but to profess it publicly, and to *hold fast the profession of it without wavering*; to *take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they should have a better and a more induring substance*;—to *strive even unto blood*. And, instead of fainting or being dejected, they were to *rejoice and be exceeding glad, because great would be their reward in heaven, in proportion to their suffering for righteousness sake, on earth*. So had the prophets and the best of men been treated; and so was the *well-beloved son of God*; who, under the greatest trials, would never desert the truth; no, not even in the prospect of the most cruel and infamous death.—In such circumstances, the embracing the Christian religion was a virtue, and the public profession of it argued great virtue and fortitude. But, in all times and places, generally speaking, a man is exposed to some difficulties by an open profession of truth; and a steady, resolute adherence to it. And such a profession is one of the subsequent acts; or a part of *Faith*, which ought to follow the assent of the *understanding*, and hath its seat in the *will*. *Pyrrho*, observing *Theophilus* to make a short pause, put him in mind that he had spoken of another subsequent act, which (as he understood it) was to complete his notion of *Faith*. *Theophilus* said that *Pyrrho* understood him right, and he would now procede to the *second* (and last)

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last) of the subsequent acts of the will, which in *Faith*, considered as a *virtue*, was to follow the assent of the mind, viz. “to take care that our *Faith* “ (or assent to the truth of the Gospel) be in us a “ principle of right action.” Your author, *Pyrrho*, has observed, p. 13. that *Faith* is *to influence our actions and direct our conduct through life*. Accordingly we read in the scriptures, once and again, of *the obedience of Faith*, Rom. i. 5. and xvi. 26. and of men’s *being obedient to the Faith*, Acts vi. 7. And, Rom. x. 16. *Believing* is evidently the same thing with *obeying the Gospel*. Again, Acts xv. 9. We read of men’s *purifying their hearts by Faith*; and, Gal. v. 6. of *Faith’s working by love*. It is, therefore, no wonder that the scriptures often speak of *the righteousness of Faith*, and of men’s *being justified by Faith*;—when it is considered as a principle of *moral and religious* conduct. They, who do not lead such holy lives, as *Faith* teaches them, may be justly said to *hold the truth in unrighteousness*. In order to render *Faith* a more effectual principle of right action, a well disposed person will frequently review the *grounds and reasons* of his *Faith*, that it may animate him more steddily to the most excellent conduct. And it is evident that, in scripture, *Faith* must mean more than a bare assent to the truth of Christianity; because there are numberless passages which intimate that such an assent alone can signify nothing. Whenever, therefore, promises are annexed to *Faith*, it must be upon the supposition that it leads men to do the will of God and obey his commandments; otherwise they shall never enjoy the *kingdom of heaven*;—even though they have not only believed in Christ, but also, in his name, prophesied and worked miracles;—for *Jesus Christ* will regard the *Faith* of none who have led wicked lives, or been workers of iniquity. Accordingly it is declared, 1 Tim. v. 8. that, *if a man,*

man, who professes the Christian Faith, doth not behave aright, *he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an infidel.* And, to put this matter out of all doubt, we have the authority of an *Apostle*, writing professedly upon this point. For, when some of the primitive Christians had mistaken, or perverted, what *St. Paul* had said, concerning *justification by Faith, without the works of the law*;—[by which he meant that they were to be justified by the *Gospel* method, and not by the *law of Moses*:— But they represented him as saying, that “ a bare assent “ to the Christian Faith was sufficient, without the “ practice of the Christian precepts, or any farther “ conformity to the *law of Faith*, than mere believing ;—] To rectify that fatal mistake, *St. James* wrote part of his epistle, viz. ch. ii. 14, &c. where he teaches us, that we are to *show our Faith by our works*;— that *Faith without works is dead*;— that the *Faith of Abraham* co-operated with his works, and that by works his Faith was rendered perfect ;— that *Abraham* was justified by Faith joined with good works ;— from whence he infers that *a man is justified by works, and not by Faith alone*; and finally, that, *as the body without the spirit is dead, so Faith without works is dead also.*

To sum up this whole matter ; *Faith* is a complex thing, being partly an act of the *understanding*, partly of the *will*. As an act of the *understanding*, or assent of the mind upon evidence, it is necessary, and can have no virtue in it. But, as it is an act of the will, it derives all its value from its being a virtuous disposition of mind, a candor or love to truth, or a principle of virtue and piety. *Unbelief*, on the other hand, is not a mere doubting, or with-holding one's assent, when there is no evidence ; but it is a *vice*, which consists in indulging criminal prejudices, in an aversion to truth, or in men's refusing to search and examine, for fear the disco-

discovery of truth should condemn their course of life ;—or in refusing to profess, and be influenced by, those truths which they have already discovered. I have been informed that when *Celsus*, the antient adversary of the *Christian Religion*, would have represented the Christians as “ rash, credulous and “ believing without reason, and contending for “ *Faith alone*, as sufficient ;” — *Origen* answered, *There is (to say the least) as much examination of things believed in Christianity, as in Philosophy. And the Christian Faith is a more excellent help to the multitude, as appears from its having freed such numbers from the vices in which they formerly wallowed.* [Vid. *Origen. contra Celsum*, L. 1.]

Why men
are com-
manded to
believe, or
threatened
for their
infidelity.

And, notwithstanding what you have quoted from your author, p. 8. concerning the absurdity of commanding men to believe, or threatening them for unbelief ; — all which goes upon the supposition of *Faith's* being a mere act of the understanding, or an assent of the mind upon evidence ;—which is necessary, and therefore cannot be the matter of a command, as being a compliance out of our power ; yet he hath plainly contradicted himself, and found out, p. 64. that *disbelieving and guilt have a meaning, when put together, since the compliance required is no longer that of the understanding, but of the will, in its nature free, and therefore accountable.* And, though we are not by any means chargeable with the effects of our apprehension ; yet there is no reason but that we may be, with all justice, called to the strictest account for our obstinacy, impiety and perversness. If this, therefore, be the case, (as I have plainly shewn it to be, and as your author himself has allowed it, even in the very affair of *Faith*, or believing) then men may rationally be commanded to believe, and threatened because of unbelief. It may rationally be said, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* Men may be talked to, concerning the danger of their decisions, and have the

The 71b
text ex-
plained ;
—quoted
by the au-
thor,
p. 117.
Mark xvi.
16.

the rod held out with the lesson ; they may be cautioned to take heed how they indulge vicious prejudices, or go on to love darknesse rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They may be justly condemned for refusing to profess their religious sentiments, or not suffering their *Faith* to influence their conduct.

Men may declaim against *credulity*. And it must be granted that too many in all ages have been too hasty and credulous. But then others, again, have been too *sceptical*, and have refused to believe, when the evidence, if attended to, would have been sufficient. Some have looked upon the *Christian Religion*, as a sort of *touch-stone*, to try men's integrity, and whether they have that candor, attention, and love to truth and virtue, which is justly required (a). God alone knows how to proportion to every age, nation and person, the evidences of those truths, which he puts in their power to know, or believe.

(a) See
Luke ii.
34, 35.
John ix.
39.
2 Cor. iv.
3, &c.

Your author has misrepresented *Jesus's* answer to *Thomas* ;—which will receive a most plain and easy interpretation from what has been said, and therefore I mention it here. The case was this ;—*Thomas*, one of the Apostles, had seen his Lord frequently work miracles ; nay had, himself, received a power from *Jesus* of working miracles, and had gone out and exercised that power ;—He had often heard his Master say that he was to die a violent death, and rise again the third day ;—He knew that he had, according to his repeated prediction, undergone a violent death ;—and he had received an account from persons of undoubted veracity, who were his own intimate friends, that *Jesus* was risen from the dead, and that they had seen him :—Notwithstanding all these things, he, rashly and without any solid reason, declared, that “ unless he might, “ himself, see in *Jesus's* hands the print of the “ nails, and put his finger into the print of the

The eighth
text, or
our Lord's
answer to
Thomas,
John xx.
24, &c.
explained.
See p. 77,
78.

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“ nails, that had fastened him to the cross; and
 “ moreover thrust his hand into the place where
 “ the spear had pierced his side, he would not
 “ believe.” *Jesus* did, indeed, condescend to grant him all these evidences, which he had insisted upon; but withall gave him a gentle reproof, and said, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; Blessed are they who see not, and yet believe*:—the plain meaning of which is, that *Faith*, as a mere act of the *understanding*, or arising from ocular demonstration, and when he could no longer possibly avoid believing, could have, so far, no virtue in it;—and that *Thomas* wanted somewhat of the proper disposition of mind, which would have led him to have paid a due regard to the evidences that had been already afforded him;—that it was a fault in him to reject sufficient evidence in any way; and to resolve to disbelieve, unless he could have his own particular humor gratified, and was indulged in that very kind and degree of evidence which he himself demanded.

Here is nothing like an intimation that *Thomas's* pretensions to his Master's favor diminished in proportion to the degree of the evidence he had thought fit to require of him;—for, if he had paid a proper regard to the evidence already afforded him; and then, with a becoming modesty and inquiring mind had, for his still greater satisfaction, desired more;—there is no reason to think that he would have had any reproof from our Lord at all. But, for a man, who had had very considerable evidence; who had not only seen the miracles of *Jesus*, but had himself worked miracles by a power derived from *Jesus*; who had heard him often say that he should be put to death, and be raised again the third day;—who had had the concurrent testimony of so many credible persons, of his own acquaintance, who all assured him that they had seen *Jesus* alive again;—
 for

for him, I say, in effect to declare, “all these evidences shall go for nothing, unlesse I have some more, and that just in my own way;”—was certainly criminal and deserved a rebuke. I have observed already that the virtue of *Faith* consists in having an honest and teachable mind, a disposition to attend to truth, and to be influenced by it. If, therefore, upon the rational evidences of Christ’s resurrection, or any other rational evidences (though of a different and inferior kind) we as sincerely imbrace the Gospel, and as carefully conform to the rules of it, as *Thomas* did, when he had ocular demonstration, and could no longer possibly avoid believing;—we may justly be pronounced *more blessed*, and be deservedly applauded for such a disposition and behavior. Here is no encouraging a *forward propensity to assent*, without any rational evidence, nor *any marks of approbation* of rashness and credulity;—but a teaching men that there is virtue in making the best of any kind of evidence; and that we ought not to insist upon our own humors and fancies, and demand evidence just in our own way; or declare that all the evidences we have already had, tho’ very great and considerable, shall with us pass for nothing at all.

Here *Theophilus* made a full pause; and *Pyrrho* began to rally him, for having preached them a *Sermon*, too long for the present mode. *Theophilus* asked, whether it was not too long for him, and too close upon him and his *author*?—and was going to say more. But *Crito* interposed, and would not allow any reflections on either side. And, *Pyrrho* having intimated that he had another appointment that evening, the company broke up for that time, after they had agreed to meet and go on the next evening.

PART I. DIALOGUE I.

PART I.  AT the next meeting, *Crito* put them in mind, that *Theophilus* had already gone through his introductory work ;—having laid before them the nature of that *Faith*, which is required in the New Testament, and to which rewards are there annexed ;—and, on the contrary, the nature of that *unbelief*, which is there condemned, and threatened with great and exemplary punishment ; and that, according to his account, the one was *virtuous*, and the other *vicious* ; and therefore the one might be justly required and rewarded, and the other as *rational*ly condemned and punished : *Pyrrho's* philosophical zeal was alarmed, and he was earnest to have mentioned to *Theophilus* a thousand plausible queries. But *Crito* proposed that *Theophilus* should have liberty, first to go through all his arguments ; whereby (says he to *Pyrrho*) it is possible your objections may appear to be groundlesse, and you may have no occasion to propose them : or, if any of your difficulties remain with you, you shall have full liberty to speak in your turn, when you have heard all the arguments which *Theophilus* shall think proper to allege.

Pyrrho agreed to reserve the principal objections till *Theophilus* had finished : but begged leave, now and then, to ask a question, with relation to some lesser things, which he should want to have cleared up, and which might wholly escape his memory, if he did not mention them while they were in his mind. They all thought that a very fair and reasonable request. And then *Crito* said, *Theophilus*, you have given us your account of the nature of *Faith* ; be pleased, Sir, to proceed to the (*first part*) of your design ; and, according to your own proposal, “ produce some of the principal arguments,

“ments, which are to effect such a *Faith*.” *Theo-* PART I.
philus began with saying that the arguments were
 many in number, and of great variety and extent;—that it would not be an easy matter to do justice to them in a narrow compass. However he promised to be as concise as he was able. *Your author, Pyrrho*, has insinuated, in many parts of his book, that *religion* cannot be a *rational* thing. Now a *rational* religion is the only possible religion for mankind, who are *rational* creatures. An unreasonable religion (if such a thing were possible) could be fit only for brute beasts, for the horse or mule, which have no understanding. There may be ignorance or superstition without reason; but *religion* without *reason* is absurd and impossible.

The evidences of the truth of Christianity are either *internal* or *external*. And, tho’ they all, in general, carry some force in them, yet it is sufficient if any one, or more, or even all of them united, produce in us that *Faith* which is required.

The *internal evidences* are such as these, *viz.* That both the *doctrines* and *precepts* of Christianity (if we take the *scriptural* account of them) are highly wise and *reasonable*;—that there is only one God; that he is a pure Spirit, and consequently invisible; that he has almighty power, infinite knowledge and unerring wisdom; that he is eternal and immortal; and that (in one word) he is every way perfect;—that this great Being created the world, and continually presides over it; supporting and preserving it in that order and regularity which we behold;—that he is not only the Governor of all intelligent beings, but takes care of all the smallest and inferior creatures, and that none of them are below his notice, or thought unworthy of his constant regard;—that he created man in his own image; and that, when mankind degenerated into ignorance, idolatry and vice, he sent among them his only-

The *internal evidences* for the truth of Christianity.

The Christian doctrines reasonable.

PART I.

only-begotten and well-beloved Son, a person of great eminence and dignity ; that, by his own bright example, and most familiar and excellent instructions, he might recover the world to the knowlege of the true God, and the practice of everlasting righteousness ;—that the Son of God, when he with this view appeared among men, chose a state of poverty, self-denial and mortification to this world, neither seeking riches, temporal dominion or sensual pleasures, but kept free from all suspicion of such low and ignoble views ; —that, notwithstanding the great opposition he met with, from the ignorance and prejudice, the malice and wickedness of mankind, he unweariedly *went about doing good*, and rather submitted to sacrifice his life, than deny, or betray, such important truths as he had delivered ;—[*for, surely, no possible condescension could be too great, to promote the moral virtue and happiness of intelligent creatures, and recover a fallen race !*] —that this great and eminent person was in a most remarkable manner rewarded for his extraordinary humiliation and sufferings, (which was honoring and rewarding virtue itself in the most virtuous and excellent person that ever appeared among men, and thereby in the strongest manner encouraging us to be virtuous :)—that, as by him God made the worlds, so by him he now governs all things ;—that he will, at last, by him raise the dead, and confer rewards and punishments upon men, according as they have behaved : —Now are not all these things in themselves highly reasonable ? It is evident that God makes us the daily ministers of good to one another, and chooses in this manner to govern the world, not immediately, but by the mediation of other intelligent beings. The *mediatorial scheme*, therefore, has nothing absurd in it, but is most wise and reasonable ;

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as the person honored with that commission is the most lovely pattern of all moral perfection.

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I forbear enlarging, for fear I should seem tedious; and therefore hasten to the *precepts*, which must be acknowledged to be in all respects most excellent, every way worthy of God, and fited to recover fallen man to virtue and happiness:— that we should love God above all, as he is the most perfect and amiable Being; that we should fear to offend him; that in all things we should cheerfully submit to his will, as convinced of his perfect wisdom, goodness and power; that we should imitate his holiness, or endeavor to be perfect as he is perfect; and carefully obey his commands, which are none of them grievous, but all holy, just and good; that we should worship him, who is a pure spirit, in spirit and truth, with pure and upright minds, with sincere repentance for our sins, and unfeigned resolutions of future obedience; that we should acknowledge our dependence upon God for the continuance of our very beings, and for all our mercies; that we should humbly confess our sins before him, and implore his pardon of all we have done amiss; that we should petition him for every proper good, and to preserve us from every real evil; that we should pray to him, not for ourselves alone, but also for the rest of mankind; that we should celebrate his amiable perfections, and praise him for all his goodness to us and others;—all which we are to do, not to inform God of any thing, as if he was ignorant, or to please him with the mention of his glorious perfections or actions, as if he loved to be flattered or complimented; or to move him to depart from his wise measures of governing all things.—But we are to pray to him and praise him, to bring our own minds to a proper temper for receiving from him whatever he sees convenient for us; and that we

The moral precepts of the New Testament reasonable.

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we may behave towards him with all humility, affection, gratitude, reverence, submission and obedience; and in this way intirely confide in him for all the happineſſe which is proper for us, or of which we ourſelves are capable. That we ſhould love our neighbor as ourſelves, or (which is the ſame thing) do unto others whatever we could reaſonably deſire that others, in like circumſtances, ſhould do unto us; that we ſhould practice truth, juſtice, charity and beneficence in our converſation, and dealings, with men; thereby promoting the good of ſociety, and adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things; that we ſhould not follow the example either of the great, or the many, to do evil; but make our good works ſhine before others to provoke them to emulation, and to promote the ſame laudable virtues in them; that we ſhould not do injury to any, nor indulge our angry paſſions; (a) but if, at any time, we have injured or offended others, we ſhould ſeek peace and reconciliation. That, if others affront or injure us, we ſhould behave with great meekneſſe, and bear injuries patiently, being ready to forbear and forgive our fellow-creatures, as we hope that God, through Chriſt, will have mercy upon us. Inſtead of rendering evil for evil, we are to return good for evil, and ſo ſtrive to overcome them with kindneſſe, and endeavor to carry our virtue to the greateſt height.

(a) See Dr.
Clarke's
Boyle's
Lectures,
p. 324,
&c.

As to *ſelf-government*.—We are taught that the things which defile a man, are not what the man eats or drinks, or to eat and drink with unwashed hands; but wicked thoughts breaking out into wicked words and actions;—*theſe are the things which defile a man*. Chriſtianity recommends to us moderate affections with reſpect to the things of this world, and to ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſſe, and to look upon all other things

things as *accessories*, which God will not fail to grant us, as far as he sees them proper for us. We are, therefore, with an humble, patient and contented mind to confide in the providence of God who oversees and directs all things. The duties of sobriety, temperance and chastity, which are so conducive to the welfare both of our bodies and minds, are frequently and earnestly recommended to us in the New Testament. And, besides the decorum we are to maintain in our outward behavior, we are to keep our hearts with all watchfulness, and regulate our thoughts and designs, as well as external actions.

These are the highest improvements of *moral* virtue. And, by these excellent precepts, vast numbers even of the common people, when Christianity first appeared in the world, were brought off from idolatry, superstition and vice, and became remarkable for piety, self-government and universal righteousness. And whoever will form his life according to these rules, will gain a complete victory over the world, and over all the irregular desires and appetites of flesh and sense;—such a victory as the primitive Christians gained, and such as the best *philosophers* acknowledge their instructions did never effect.

But, besides the *moral* duties, which are of eternal, unchangeable obligation, *the positive ordinances* of the Christian religion were instituted as means and assistances to preserve men steadfast in the practice of those *moral* duties, which are unquestionably *the weightier matters of the law*;—and, even these *positive institutions* are so free from all appearance of superstition and vanity, and so wisely fitted to the end for which they were designed, that no man can justly or with any reason object against the things themselves, tho' against the corruptions and abuses of them there has been abundant reason to

The positive institutions of Christianity, reasonable.

object. For what considerate and thinking man can pretend to say that it is any way unreasonable or superstitious for every member of any particular society to be solemnly admitted into that society, by a plain and significant rite, intitling him to all the privileges, and charging him with all the obligations, which belong to the members of that society, as such;—which is the design of one of the *Christian Sacraments*? or that it is unreasonable and superstitious, frequently and with thankfulness to commemorate the love of their greatest benefactor, who condescended even to lay down his life for them; and thereupon humbly and solemnly to renew their obligations to him;—which is the design of the other?

I would now appeal to any sober and impartial man, whether this be not the most wise and excellent institution that can be thought of? Are not these *moral* virtues (which are the principal things in Christianity) the very things which all true *philosophy* has ever attempted to recommend? Could any thing be more worthy of God than giving men such a revelation, when men had confessedly corrupted themselves, and that to such a degree, that not only reason, or the light of nature, was altogether unlikely to restore true piety, but even that *light* itself (as *Tully* expressly acknowledged) did nowhere appear? Does not such a revelation highly conduce to the happiness of mankind, if *virtue* be their dignity, perfection and happiness, as it undoubtedly is? Let any one read, with seriousness and attention, our *Savior's* glorious *sermon on the mount*, and judge if it does not set before his eyes such a lovely picture, so exact a representation, of true virtue, as *Plato* said, *if it was a visible object, could not but charm men with the highest degree of love and admiration imaginable*? Would not one be prejudiced in favor of a religion which abounds with such

such excellent moral precepts? Or, at least, not treat with scorn and virulence a book which so earnestly recommends *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are venerable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; every thing virtuous and every thing praise-worthy?* One would think that among all the sincere friends of virtue, Christianity would meet with better quarter. For what wise precept was ever delivered by any *Philosopher* of any sect, which is not as plainly laid down by our *Savior* and his *Apostles*, and enforced with more strength and efficacy? What system of moral philosophy have we among all the celebrated *antients*, but what has some mixture of false rules or false principles? And all the excellent rules of piety and virtue were never collected so fully and perfectly, so free from all idle and superstitious opinions and weak or wicked practices, nor ever carried to so noble a height, as in the New Testament. Surely, these must appear to be very considerable, internal marks of the truth of the *Christian* revelation; and it cannot, with any shadow of truth, be said *not to be founded on argument*; when it contains so many things, which carry, in the very face of them, such incontestible marks of truth and goodness. May not obedience to such rules be very justly called our *reasonable service*? And would not every wise and good man be ready to receive it as a *divine philosophy*, and wish that as such it might be frequently read to the people, even though it had not such abundant external evidence that it was imparted unto the world by divine revelation?

As to the *sanctions* to these laws, or the *motives* to induce men to comply with them;—they are, likewise, every way wise and reasonable. Men are assured that upon repentance and amendment, they shall be forgiven all their transgressions; and that

The sanctions of the gospel reasonable.

PART I. they shall be, in this life, supported and assisted, as far as it is proper, in the faithful discharge of their duty. But the principal concern of man is in a future state; for there is a righteous judgment to come, when men shall be treated according to their characters;—that, in order to be judged, the dead are to be raised, and the generation then living to be joined with them, and all mankind to stand at once before the judgment seat of Christ;—that then the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed and every man receive according to his prevailing character, whether it has been good or bad;—that God will judge the world with righteousness, and nicely and exactly proportion rewards and punishments to the degree of every man's virtue or vice.—Now what is there in all this but what is truly rational? Is not the belief of a God and a providence, and of a future state, in itself highly reasonable? And were not these things acknowledged by the greatest and best *Philosophers* that ever lived? Must it not be owned to be a thing of unspeakable advantage to have that one important doctrine, of a *future state*, set before the eyes of the multitude, in the most clear and certain manner, without the fables and fictions of the *Poets*, and the doubts and disputations of the various sects of *Philosophers*? This does not deprive any thinking men of any of the arguments from the *light of nature*; but gives new force to all the arguments that were conclusive, and has settled the minds of many, who could not go a great way in abstract reasoning. It is one thing to see the reasonableness of this, when *revelation* has assured us that it is true, and thinking men have ranged and put in order the arguments, from *reason* also, to support and confirm this truth;—and quite another thing to have found out such arguments, or to have placed them in so advantageous a light. And the common people,

people, who are not accustomed to go far in abstract reasoning, have a great advantage in this respect by *revelation*. Let the beauty of virtue and its own intrinsic worth and excellence, and the baseness and deformity of vice, be set in the strongest point of light, and have all the influence they can. Yet, when they are strengthened with the prospect of most exemplary punishment to the vicious and impenitent, and of a resurrection to eternal glory and happiness to all pious and good persons;—surely *vice* must appear a more foolish and absurd choice, and *virtue* come more powerfully recommended.—Nor is there any the least inconsistency between these different sorts of arguments.—For the perfection of virtue, and the happiness arising from that, is the grand reward of the imperfect, if prevailing, virtue of this state of trial. The doctrine, of a *future state*, seems to me to be fundamental to all religion; and that there would not be sufficient support, in some given circumstances, unless there were sufficient arguments for a future state. And, though I apprehend the arguments from *reason* to be valid and conclusive, yet this grand principle is abundantly established and confirmed by the Christian revelation.

Such is the intrinsic worth and excellence of the Christian doctrine, in all these respects, that one would be ready to ask, “ what occasion could
 “ there be for any external attestation, from *prophecy* or *miracle*, to prove such a doctrine as this?
 “ Would it not have been sufficient to have proposed such a rational and excellent scheme of
 “ religion to mankind, and left it to have made
 “ its own way, by virtue of its usefulness, worth
 “ and excellence”?—But God considered the great weakness and inveterate prejudices, the vice and inattention of mankind, and (as expecting little success from the bare proposal of this most excellent

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lent institution) he added the signal attestation of *prophecy* and *miracles*, to awaken attention to things of the highest importance. But this leads me to the *external evidences*, which I am prepared to lay before you. However, as they are many, and of great extent and variety, I would ask you whether you choose that I should now procede? Both *Pyrrho* and *Crito* said that they had hitherto made but a small progresse; and, being willing to bring the whole matter to as speedy a conclusion as they could, they desired *Theophilus* to take his own way and procede as soon as he pleased. Upon which he intimated that he would sum up the *external evidences* of the truth of Christianity under the two heads of *prophecy* and *miracles*. I will begin (says he) with that of *prophecy*; but cannot give you any more than a summary view of this part of the argument.—When man fell from his innocence, God promised mercy to the penitent, and intimated that, though sin and misery had then taken place, virtue and happiness should at last prevail and triumph;—in that figurative form of expression, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*. This, I think has, by some late authors, been shown to be the meaning of the words, and what our first parents would easily and naturally understand by them in such circumstances. But, as this to many may now appear to be an obscure way of speaking, I will say no more concerning that prophecy; but procede to such as are more plain and *literal*. God made with *Abraham* an *everlasting covenant*, and promised that *in him and in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed*. That covenant was renewed to *Isaac* and *Israel*. Again; it was prophesied that the *sceptre should not depart from Judah*,—*till Shilo came*;—by whom the antient Jews understood the *Messiah*. And some of the later prophets allude to that prediction and give light to it. *Moses* foretold that

The external evidences of Christianity.

The evidence from prophecy.

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the Lord their God would raise unto Israel, a prophet, PART I.
 from among their brethren, like unto him; unto whom they were to hearken, or God would require it of them. Now, as he was to be a prophet like unto Moses, he must also be a lawgiver, which none of the succeeding prophets were. For there arose not in Israel, from that time till the coming of Jesus, a prophet like unto Moses, &c. And they, who did not hearken unto Jesus, were punished in an exemplary manner at the destruction of Jerusalem. God assured King David that his house, his throne and his kingdom should be established for ever. And there are many other intimations, that the grand promise, made unto the family of Abraham, and afterwards limited to Isaac, Israel and Judah, should be yet farther limited to the house of David. There are, in the book of Psalms, direct prophecies of Christ, particularly Ps. cx. which speaks of his great and extensive dominion.

The prophet *Isaiab* hath so many and such expresse predictions, relating to our Lord and his Gospel, that he hath been frequently called *the evangelical prophet*. I will mention a few of his predictions. He comforts the Jews in their afflicted state with foretelling the accomplishment of the grand promise made to the house of David, unto us (says he) a child is born, unto us a son is given; the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called wonderful counsellor, [or, as the LXX are said to read the words, the angel of the great counsel, called by *Malachi*, the angel of the covenant,] the mighty God, the everlasting father, [or as we are told again, the LXX have it, the father of the age to come, as the Gospel age, in Jewish language, was commonly called;] the prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever. And that this is a prophesie, is plain from the concluding words, the zeal of the
 Lord

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Lord of hosts will perform this. *Isaiab* hath also a prophesy, which will give light to that already mentioned, concerning the *sceptre not departing from Judah*, &c. and other preceding prophecies;—for he foretells that *a rod would come out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch grow out of his roots; that the spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, and that he would govern with the greatest justice and mercy.* And again; he declares that *this root of Jesse was to stand for an ensign of the people [of Israel,] and unto it shall the Gentiles seek.* After that, he, in the most beautiful, figurative language, describes the peace and love which the Gospel would promote, if men would live according to its laws, *the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid*, &c. *Is. xi. 6, &c.* And that the kingdom of Christ was to be a spiritual kingdom, is often and plainly intimated, for *then the earth was to be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the channels of the sea.* The liiid chapter of *Isaiab*, likewise, foretells the sufferings of Christ and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and contains so clear and expresse, so literal and evident a prophesy of *our Savior*, and was so remarkably accomplished in him, that it is said greatly to have conduced to bring over several Jews to the Christian faith. And it cannot, without violent wresting and perverting the words, be applied either to the nation of *Israel* in general, or to any other particular person, but *Jesus of Nazareth*. The prophet *Jeremiab* did also prophesy, with a plain allusion to former predictions, *I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In those days shall Judah be saved and Israel dwell safely. And this is his name wherewith he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.* *Ezekiel* spoke thus, likewise, in the name of the Lord, *I will set up one shepherd over them*

them and he shall feed them, even my servant David. He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it (a). Jesus, the descendent of David, is here prophesied of, under the name of David; just as some have observed concerning Virgil, who pretending to prophesy of future, contingent events, says, *there shall then be another Tiphys and another ship Argos, and the great Achilles shall again be sent to Troy.* There are prophecies of the Gospel's spreading among the Gentiles;—*It is a light thing* (says God) *that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, and that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.* And again; *out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; he shall judge among the nations. The Lord alone shall be exalted that day, and the idols of the heathen be shall utterly abolish.* The prophet Daniel has several remarkable prophecies. I shall, at present, take notice of one or two. *I saw in the night visions, (says he) and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* It has been well observed that, with a constant allusion to this prophesy, Jesus stiled himself *the son of man.* And, because he is here described as *coming in the clouds of heaven and having universal dominion*; the Jews, who wanted a temporal prince, to rule over all the nations of the earth, might possibly desire of Jesus a sign from heaven, to prove him to be such a Messiah as they expected. But the time was not then come for his having that extensive power and dominion, with

(a) See a like prophesy, Hosea iii. 4, 5.

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The 9th
text ex-
plained.
Dan. ix.
24, &c.
See p. 20.

Daniel's famous prophesy of the 70 weeks contains a good argument in favor of Christianity. For, according to the *most learned and profound calculations*, it was exactly accomplished. And, if the adversaries of revelation would destroy the force of this argument; let them show, by just criticism and exact calculations, that events did not correspond, as learned Christians have attempted to prove, and (as they apprehend) have actually proved. *Pyrrho* said, that *his author*, p. 20, &c. had excepted against all ingenious applications of mysterious prophecies and their references, as things that, in his opinion, are never to be mentioned as arguments, in behalf of a truth destined to be universally received. After which he takes notice of some late calculations of *Daniel's weeks*, &c. To which *Theophilus* replied, he was aware of that caution, and therefore had chiefly insisted upon plain and expresse predictions, as least liable to exception, and as affording the clearest and strongest arguments in favor of *Jesus* and his Gospel. But if, by *mysterious prophecies*, sais he, you understand predictions, which relate to other events, and can be applied to *Jesus*, only in a *secondary* sense;—all these I give up, as either representing parallel cases, or as the words may be used merely by way of allusion, or accomodation; but as no prophecies of *Jesus*,—ever to be mentioned as arguments or means of conviction, in behalf of the truth of the Gospel. But I have alleged many literal and direct prophecies, which belong to *Jesus*, and to him alone; and there are many others which might be alleged, if I had time;—such as *Jesus's* coming before the second temple was destroyed; the prophesy of his fore-runner, and the like. And, suppose there be some prophecies which do, really and in their original meaning,

meaning, relate to the *Messiah*, or the Gospel dispensation, and yet we cannot clearly make them out;—it must be remembered that they have not yet, all of them, received their full accomplishment; and therefore it is impossible to allege the facts that correspond to some of them; because they are not yet come to pass. Besides, such obscure prophecies do not in the least weaken the proof arising from those which are clear, literal and direct. Again; it has been very justly observed (*a*) that prophecies are like *mythological*, or *satirical* writings, where the meaning is partly discovered and partly concealed. In which case, when a man finds the moral, or design, to which the parts in general agree, he is fully satisfied that he has hit upon the true meaning. In like manner; though one or two prophecies, considered by themselves, may not so evidently appear, at first view, to relate to the Gospel dispensation;—yet, when a whole series of prophecies, for a succession of many hundreds, or some thousands, of years, all in general center in one point, and agree to one thing,—we may be as rationally satisfied that we have hit upon their original intention. A man might have been born at *Bethlehem*, of the tribe of *Judah*, and of the family of *David*, and yet not have been the *Messiah*. But the *Messiah* must have such circumstances applicable to him, as well as all the other *prophetic* characters, otherwise he could have had no just claim to be

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that

(*a*) See Bp. Butler's *Analogy*, &c. p. 251. If the meaning were not partly obscured, who could suppose that the Church of Rome would acknowledge the book of the *Revelation* to be canonical? as it is, one is ready to wonder at their receiving a book, which so directly foretold their cruelty and other corruptions. The like might be observed concerning the *Jews* receiving the writings of the Old Testament, which bear such testimony to Christ, and so clearly prophecy of their being, in their present state, in consequence of their sins. The evidence of persons testifying against themselves, is very considerable.

PART I.

that extraordinary person. Now that such a number of distinct prophecies, for such a long succession of ages, should all center in one person, or one design, could never have happened by chance; nor could such events have been foretold, without a spirit of prophecy. We may therefore be fully and *rationally* satisfied that the predictions were intended to describe the very events which so exactly correspond to them.

I could very justly have argued from the *prophecies* relating to many kingdoms and nations, such as those which speak of the ten tribes of *Israel* being carried into their captivity, never to return and settle as a kingdom; the return of *Judah* after seventy years captivity in *Babylon*;—the overthrow of the cities and nations, which surrounded the Jews, such as *Egypt*, *Edom*, *Moab*, *Tyre*, *Ninive* and *Babylon*;—which learned men have shown to be so punctually accomplished, according to all history, sacred or profane, that nothing could have been more remarkable. And, in all cases, it appears to me, that the more antiquity is studied, and knowledge, and true, solid learning abounds, the more proofs and confirmations are discovered of the truth of *Revelation*. And it is one glorious, oblique consequence of *Christianity*, that the study of *that* has kept alive the learning of the *antients* and made it flourish. And they appear to me as barbarous as the *Goths*, or *Vandals*, who contend that no antient histories deserve credit, and that nothing is to be believed but what falls under our own senses. Such persons must be as much enemies to *all learning*, as they are to *Revelation*. However, *as learning is against them, it is no wonder that they are against learning*. For it is by learned inquiries that the famous city *Babylon* is now known to have been destroyed many ages ago, as the antient prophets foretold, and is
become

become pools of water and an utter desolation. See If. xiv. 23. Jer. l. 39, 40. So likewise, *Egypt* was prophesied of, Ezek. xxix. 15. as what should become the basest of kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them (saith the Lord God) that they shall no more rule over the nations. And learned men can easily show that *Egypt* is now, and has been for many ages, in this abject condition. It was, likewise, prophesied of *Tyre*, that famous mart of the east, Ezek. xxvi. 14. *I will make thee like the top of a rock. Thou shalt be a place to spread nets in, thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it.* Remarkable to this purpose are the words of *Maundrell*, a traveller of established credit, p. 48, 49. who, describing the present state of the antient glorious and celebrated city of *Tyre*, saith, “on the north side, it has an “old *Turkish*, ungarrisoned castle; besides which “you see nothing here, but a mere *Babel* of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. there being not “so much as one intire house left. Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults and subsisting chiefly “on fishing; who seem to be preserved in this “place by divine providence, as a visible argument, how God has fulfilled his word concerning “*Tyre*, viz. *That it should be as the top of a rock, “a place for fishers to dry their nets in, Ezek. “xxvi. 14.*”

I might also take notice of the prophecies concerning *Ninive's* becoming a desolation, and show how exactly *history* confirms these,—there being no trace of it now remaining, neither is it known where it stood. The famous prophecy in *Daniel*, concerning the four grand monarchies, the *Assyrian*, *Persian*, *Græcian* and *Roman*; and that under the last of these the God of heaven would set up a kingdom, that should stand for ever, &c.—might be alleged as another

ther argument in favor of *Revelation*. For it is astonishing how exactly events have agreed to these predictions. And it may and ought to be observed that these prophecies were delivered long before the events came to passe, and there is no foundation for so much as any suspicion that they were forged afterwards. The *Jews*, who are the professed enemies of the Christian religion, bear witness to the antiquity and genuinenesse of the books of the Old Testament. And as to the sense, in which we understand the prophecies, we desire no more than that persons would study the *prophets*, as they do any other antient writings; and try in that way whether the prophecies do not exactly describe the events to which we apply them, and likewise see whether any other events can correspond to them in every particular.

As to the predictions concerning the *Messiah*, they were so famous that the coming of Christ was, in general, expected among the *Jews*, about the time that *Jesus* appeared; so that the calculations were then so far understood even by the common people. And the *Roman* authors have also taken notice, that *an antient and constant opinion had spread all over the east, and was believed by many; nay and was likewise upon record in the antient books of the priests; that about that time the east should prevail, and some coming out of Judea should obtain the empire, or dominion of the world.*

If your *author* means that no arguments are to be taken from *the prophecies*, or that none of them are to be mentioned as means of conviction, in behalf of a truth destined to be universally received,—He ought to be told that he may keep that to himself as his own opinion, if he thinks proper. But those, who are for a *rational* religion, and apprehend that *Christianity is founded on argument*, do not care that he should prescribe to them, or direct them what arguments

guments to use, or what to let alone. The strongest and best arguments are most troublesome to an adversary, and the omission of such would best answer his purpose.—As to the common people's seeing the force of such an argument, that must be according to their capacities. Some of them will be able to understand it, though they could not have of themselves found it out; and others will never be able to see much of its force. But let the arguments of all kinds be fairly stated, and as to those who are able to receive them, let them receive them. The same arguments may not convince all; but there are a number of other plain arguments to convince such persons as cannot perfectly judge of this.

But the *prophecies* of the Old Testament are not all. Our Lord and his *Apostles* have expressly predicted many things, which either have been, or are now accomplished. Such were their predictions concerning the swift and incredible success of the Gospel; which, like a small seed, was to shoot up to a considerable stalk and a great many spreading branches; or like a little leaven quickly to diffuse itself through the whole lump; or which, without a figure, was in a little time to be preached unto all nations. And the event soon verified the predictions. There are *prophecies*, also, concerning the long duration of *Christianity* in the world, which we, who live about 1700 years after, see verified among ourselves. And this is one of the evidences for *Christianity*, which increases in proportion to the distance of time from the first mention of the prediction.

There are *prophecies* both in the Old and New Testament concerning the state of the *Jewish* nation, which are too considerable ever to be omitted, among the arguments for *Revelation*. Before that people were settled in *Canaan*, *Moses* foretold them,
Deut.

PART I.
 Prophecies
 concerning
 the
 present
 state of the
 Jews.

Deut. xxviii. 15; 25. *If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, it shall come to passe that—thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And Lev. xxvi. 31, &c. I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries into desolation; and your enemies, who shall dwell therein, shall be astonished at it; and I will scatter you among the heathen. And yet for all that (v. 44, 45.) when they shall be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly;—but I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors.* It is, in other places, foretold that God would scatter them among all people from the one end of the earth even unto the other. But that, when they should return unto the Lord their God, he would have compassion on them, and gather them from all nations whither he had scattered them;—that, though other nations should be ashamed and confounded, all of them, yet Israel should be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and should not be ashamed or confounded world without end. And remarkable are the words, Jer. xxx. 11. where God saith to Israel, *though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you.* Which is repeated, chap. xli. 28. There are other places, where it is foretold that they shall be planted on their own land, and shall no more be pulled out of the land which God has given them. See Amos ix. 15. *And that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation for ever,* Jer. xxxi. 36—(a). In confirmation of these antient predictions, our Savior foretold that the Jews should be carried captive into all nations; and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, Luke xxi. 24. and St. Paul prophesied, Rom. xi. 25, &c. of the same calamities upon the Jewish nation, and of their final restoration. Now, need I to observe that the Jews have remained these 1500 years, just in such a situation

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as was predicted, Deut. xxviii. 37. *Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee?* See also Jer. xxiv. 9. and xxix. 18.—Are they not even now in a state of dispersion and their land a desolation or inhabited by strangers? Do they not many of them live among us? And, considering them in all their wide and various dispersions, are they not a very numerous people? And, in this one thing, they differ from all the antient kingdoms, which oppressed their ancestors, that they continue a distinct people unto this day: And neither the most cruel nor kind treatment can make them mix with the other nations. This has so much the appearance of a standing miracle, in favor of revelation, that it deserves great regard. It cannot be said, with any shadow of truth, that these prophecies have been forged after the events, or that they are not fulfilled by incontestible, correspondent facts.

(b) How “astonishing is it that the *Jews*, our very enemies in religious matters, preserve, with so much fidelity, the books which afford so many arguments in favor of Christianity;—books confessedly wrote many ages before Christ; and which so severely condemn their vices, and point out their reproach, in affording us such a number of prophecies of their being in their present unhappy circumstances, in consequence of their transgressions? And how much more surprizing still, that the state of things should be such in all *Christian* nations, that the *Jews* may with ease return to their own land, *when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled?* For, very numerous as they are, yet they are without dominion, or property, any where, I mean such as may detain them in any country; and they are prevented by almost all nations from purchasing lands of inheritance.”—How would the enemies

(b) See Dr. Sykes's Connection, &c. p. 195.

PART I. of revelation triumph, could they offer one such clear and incontestible argument against it, as these predictions, compared with the present state of the *Jews*, afford for it? I must leave every one to judge as the argument appears to him. But I must confesse that, as to myself, the present state of the *Jews* appears to contain an argument, in favor of Christianity, of unspeakable force and energy.

*Prophecies
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ing Popery,
&c.*

Several authors of great name, and above all the incomparable Sir *Isaac Newton*, a person of the coolest head, and one of the most learned, diligent and unprejudiced of mankind, hath collected another sett of *prophecies*, answered by some remarkable events; and hath shewn a surprizing harmony therein between *Daniel* and the *Revelation*. *St. Paul* prophesied of a *man of sin*, who should sit in the temple of God, the very Christian Church itself, and exalt himself above all that is called God, every earthly prince, or magistrate, plainly shewing (whatever he may pretend) that he himself is really a God, or temporal potentate. His coming was to be after the working of Satan, with all signs and lying wonders, and all the deceit of unrighteousness; — which would prevail among those who had not the love of truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness. Again; the spirit (saith the same Apostle) speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of Demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with an hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving, of those who believe and know the truth. *St. John* hath also prophesied of a tyrannical power, under the image of a wild beast, to whom was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given him to continue forty-two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and those that dwell
dwell

*dwell in heaven ; and it was given him to make war with the saints and overcome them ; and power was given him over all kindreds, nations and tongues. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him ; and he that exerciseth his power before him,—doth great wonders,—and deceiveth those that dwell on the earth, by means of the miracles which he had power to do ;—and he hath power to give life to the image of the beast,—and to cause all, both great and small, rich and poor, bond and free, to receive a mark in their foreheads, and that no man might buy, or sell, save he that had the mark. And again, he represents this tyrannical power under another image, viz. that of an adulterous woman, sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast,—full of names of blasphemy ;—being arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls ; having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and of the filthiness of her fornication. And St. John saw upon her forehead the following name, written in legible characters, *Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and of the abominations of the earth.* And he, with unspeakable astonishment, saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. And the angel, that was sent to explain the vision, told him that the kings of the earth would have one mind, and give their power and strength unto the beast ;—and that people and nations, and multitudes and tongues would submit to that power,—till the words of God should be fulfilled. It was, likewise, foretold that by her sorceries all nations would be deceived ; and that such would be her persecuting spirit, and her great and matchless cruelty, that in her would be found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were unjustly slain upon the earth. And, that we might be at no loss where to find the seat of that tyrannical power, it is expressly said to be the great city, that stood upon seven hills, and which then reigned over the*

kings of the earth. When *Theophilus* had cited these *prophecies*, he, with an unusual ardor, said to *Pyrrho*, —That a doctrine so reasonable in itself, and which abounds with such excellent morals, should have also such forcible and striking external attestations, is surely a very remarkable thing; and amounts already to such a degree of evidence as I know not how you can resist it. Here is (said he) a most signal event foretold by the apostles of *Jesus*, many ages before it came to passe; —an event the like to which had never happened from the creation of the world to that time, and most probably there never will happen such another; —an event which was out of the reach of all humane conjecture and fore-sight; and yet we, who live almost 1700 years after the prediction, can easily point to facts which exactly answer to these *prophecies*. You call us *credulous* for believing upon these and other as strong evidences, but pray let me desire you, *Pyrrho*, to account for such clear and expresse predictions being verified by such incontestible events. This is not a mere *ingenious application of mysterious prophecies*, or an application wholly groundlesse and imaginary; —any more than that of those already mentioned, which relate to the dispersion of the *Jews* and their present remarkable circumstances. But here are various and expresse predictions, answered by plain and well known facts. Neither *enthusiasts* nor *impostors* could have possibly foretold such uncommon events, so exactly and so many ages before they came to passe. Nor can we, who have lived to see so much of the accomplishment, describe this *grand apostasy of the Church of Rome*, in a more lively, concise, or emphatical manner, than the apostles have done in their predictions. The principal arguments for the truth of *Christianity* are facts, of which a man of plain, common sense may be judge. And here is an evident and notorious fact,
easily

easily known to all that will attend. All *history* for many ages is full of it, and we need only open our eyes, and we may behold too much of it. The man of sin is now upon his throne. The city of *Rome* is the seat of his dominion. He sitteth in the temple of God, the very Christian Church itself. The *Pope* exalteth himself above the kings of the earth, who are many of them subject to his decrees, as well as vast numbers of people and multitudes, and nations and tongues. He pretends to miracles, and boasts of *lying wonders* without number. He makes use of all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and makes converts among those who have not the love of the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness, and desire to be made easy in their vices. He pretends to spiritual dominion, but is really a *God*, a mere temporal potentate, and supports himself by force and policy, like other temporal princes. He has departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons;—promoting the worship of angels and departed saints;—forbidding the *Clergy*, and the *Friars*, *Monks*, and *Nuns* to marry; (a)—and commanding all *Papists* to abstain from certain sorts of meat in *Lent*, and on certain days of the year besides. As to the *Church of Rome's* being fond of *mysteries*, intoxicating the nations with the cup

(a) “ Could St. Paul’s saying that *Christians should depart from the faith* in this particular way, be any cause or occasion that they should do what was so severely condemned? Had he not condemned these practices, it might be said that these prophecies were the occasions of them. But, as he speaks so precisely against them, and condemns them who came into these practices, as *departing from the faith*, the prophecy was not the reason of men’s actions, in order to make it accomplished; but was a real prediction of future events, out of the reach of humane conjecture.” See Dr. Sykes’s *Connection*, &c. p. 196. The like observation holds with respect to the other prophecies, here mentioned.

PART I. cup of her *superstition*, and a blind, implicate faith; —deceiving them with *her sorceries*, such as bulls, pardons, indulgences, dispensations, absolutions, and the like; whereby she pretends to make them very religious and secure of heaven, without an holy, virtuous life;—so likewise, as to her endeavoring to hinder all from buying and selling, but such as have the proper mark, or will be subject to her dominion,—and her persecuting the saints and shedding the blood of the martyrs;—they are so notorious, that they need only to be mentioned. Indeed, if these things had not been foretold, good Christians might have been shocked at them. But now the very corruptions of Christianity become an argument in proof of its divine original. Can it be said that *Christianity is not founded on Argument*, when so many and such cogent arguments may be offered in support of it? Or were all these arguments afforded for mere amusement, and to be rendered quite unnecessary by I do not know what *enthusiastic* notion of every particular person's being inspired, and that *Faith* is wrought in them by the spirit, without the scriptures, or without any argument or rational evidence at all? Will you, or your *author*, *Pyrrho*, pretend to say that these *prophecies* were forged after the events, or have no relation to them? *Your author*, indeed, p. 61. has insinuated, that *the tradition of a miracle detracts*, by length of time, *from its divine authority*. If miracles were handed down by *oral tradition*, I agree with him that that would be the case. (a) But, when books are written by the persons, to whom the *revelation* was made, and before, or by whom several of the miracles were worked, there the probability doth not decrease in the same proportion. For what is handed down by *oral tradition* is soon corrupted or lost. But books subsisting many hundred years, the probability grounded on them

(a) See
Dr. Sykes's
Conne-
ction, &c.
p. 208.

them is the same as if the writers themselves existed PART I. all that time, and retained an exact memory of the facts, without any alteration whatever, as long as the books are extant. Such is the evidence we have for miracles. (b) And, in the case of a series of *prophecies*, relating to events in all future ages, the evidence is constantly increasing, as the events successively happen. This, therefore, is a growing evidence; and we, who live at this distance of time, may see the force of this argument, which to the primitive Christians was no argument at all; —tho' they had miracles done before their eyes, and other arguments which we have not. And, as all the *prophecies* are not yet accomplished, this sort of evidence will by length of time be continually increasing, till all the words of God shall be fulfilled, which will (most probably) open such a scene, as to clear up and explain the whole series of prophecy, both in the Old Testament and the New, and draw the attention and admiration of the whole earth (c).

(c) See Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel, &c. p. 252.

Pyrrho seemed a little disturbed at *Theophilus's* ardor, and his putting such close questions to him. But he had two very plausible answers ready. The one was, that *Crito* had ordered him not to speak till *Theophilus* had finished; and he said he would keep order and observe the directions of their president. The other was, that they had been a long time engaged that evening already, and he believed the company would think it high time to break up:—To which last proposal they all assented, and so departed till the next evening.

DIALOGUE II.

PART I.

W H E N all the company were come together again, and had taken their places, *Pyrrho*, with a smile and an air of ridicule, called upon *Theophilus* to give them another *lecture*. For he longed for his concluding that he might have leave to mention his numberless objections and difficulties. *Theophilus*, observing the air and manner of his pronouncing the words, said, “*Pyrrho*, if you are tired with hearing me, or my arguments become troublesome to you, I will soon relieve you and procede no further.” *Pyrrho* was ashamed to have drawn him in so far and then prevent his going through, and was afraid they would rally him for breaking off the conversation, as one that could not stand it, when closely attacked;—and therefore he begged pardon and desired him to go on. *Crito* likewise said that, for his part, he thought they could not imploy their time better, or more agreeably;—upon which *Theophilus* proceeded to the next argument, as he had proposed.

The evidence from
Miracles.

I am now going (says he) to the other grand external attestation of the truth of Christianity, viz. that of *miracles*. And I hope that the argument arising from these will not appear less cogent, or less considerable. Besides the *miracles*, worked by *Moses* and the *antient prophets*, who foretold the coming of the *Messiah*, JESUS CHRIST himself worked many *miracles*, and appealed to them as evidences of the truth of his mission, and that he delivered unto men what he had received of his father. (a) With that view he turned water into wine; once and again fed with a few loaves and fishes vast numbers of people in desert places; walked upon the sea; calmed the winds and the waves; gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf,

(a) See Mr. Lardner's Introduction to the Credibility of the Gospel History Part. II. p. 8, &c.

deaf, speech to the dumb, soundness and strength to the lame, the maimed and such as were bowed down; healed diseases of all sorts, even the most inveterate, and such as were reckoned otherwise incurable; restored to their right minds demoniacs or lunatics, and even raised the dead. These miracles were performed at his word, in an instant, and some were worked on persons at a distance from him. They were done by him in the most public and open manner; at *Jerusalem* and in every part of *Judea* and *Galilee*; in cities, in villages, in synagogues and private houses, in the streets and in the high ways, in the fields and in the wilderness, by sea and by land; upon a great many *Jews*, and upon some few *Gentiles*, before *Scribes* and *Pharisees* and rulers of the synagogues; when he was attended sometimes by a few persons, but generally before great multitudes; in the presence of *unbelievers* and enemies, as well as of believers and friends;—notwithstanding what *your author* has said to the contrary, p. 48. and it was not, till after he had established his divine mission, by working several of these miracles, that he is said to have taught as one having authority, i. e. as one who had proved that he derived his instructions from heaven and had a right to dictate, as a person evidently sent from God. See Mat. iv. 24. compared with Mat. vii. 29. and accordingly it is expressly said, Luke iv. 32. *and they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.*

The 10th
text ex-
plained;
Mark vii.
29. See p.
36, 37.

The Apostles, the common people, all mankind are able to reason so far, as to conclude that *no man could do such things unless God were with him* and assisted him in an extraordinary manner. And how can it be said that *Christianity is not founded on Argument*, or that *Jesus had no thought of procuring disciples* by his miracles, [as the *author* intimates, p. 49. and in many other places,] when *Jesus* did
H openly

PART I. *openly work such miracles, and once and again appealed to them, as clear proofs that the Father had sent him? For the works which the Father had given him power to do, they bore witness of him. And, therefore, though several of the Jews would not believe him, who was a person of the greatest veracity, upon his own bare word, yet he advised them to believe him for the sake of the works which he did, that they might know and believe that the Father had sent him, and bore witness of him. This was a rational and strong argument, and must have had great weight with all sober and considerate persons.*

Nay, further; *Jesus* not only worked miracles himself in great abundance, but he indued the *Apostles* with a power of *working miracles*, and sent them out to preach and exercise that power. And his behavior, during all these things, was almost as remarkable as the miracles themselves. For, while *God* thus glorified him, he lived in a mean condition, without any external pomp and splendor, and was exceeding meek and condescending in his behavior towards his disciples and all others, who resorted to him for instruction or relief;—at the same time freely declaring to all their duty; impartially correcting the faults and failings of his disciples, and with a true prophetic resolution and intrepidity reproving the hypocrisy, pride, ambition and covetousness, the false maxims and vain traditions, not only of the multitude, but of the Scribes and Pharisees, and of the greatest men in the Jewish nation both in church and state.

But, besides all the evidences he gave, during his life, he frequently referred to a more remarkable and greater evidence, which should be given after his death, viz. his own resurrection from the dead, and such an effusion of the Spirit as had never been communicated to mankind. To prepare them for this extraordinary evidence, he foretold to his *Apostles*,

Apostles, frequently, expressly, and with many circumstances, that he should die a violent death at *Jerusalem*, but that he should be raised again the third day. And, notwithstanding he knew when the time of his sufferings was to be, and foresaw the cruel treatment, which he should then and there undergo, he did not decline going up to *Jerusalem*, at that passover; nor would he use his power to make a miraculous escape, or resistance. No; he was willing to seal his doctrine with his blood, and to be as exemplary in his death as he had been in his life;—teaching his followers to suffer with the truth, rather than betray or give it up, and that life itself is no longer valuable than it is consistent with truth and the practice of righteousness. He died, therefore, as a martyr, and thereby witnessed a good confession; and he was cut off, but not for himself, giving his soul an offering for sin, and sacrificing his very life to redeem men from iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness. His sufferings and death were very public, *for these things were not done in a corner*. The *Jewish Sanhedrim*, the leading men in that nation, were his accusers. *Pontius Pilate*, the chief *Roman* magistrate in that country tried and condemned him, at the clamorous importunity of the *Jews*, though he declared him innocent. And he was crucified near one of the gates of *Jerusalem*, at the common place of execution, between two malefactors;—when that great city was full of people, and at the time of that high festival, the *passover*;—and thousands flocked out of the city to be spectators of his death. During his last sufferings, there were some remarkable testimonies given to his innocence and dignity: There was a darkness of three hours continuance over the whole land of *Judea*; the veil of the temple was rent asunder from the top to the bottom; the earth trembled and the rocks were rent;—from

The resur-
rection of
Christ, a
remarka-
ble evi-
dence.

which attestations the *Roman* officer, who attended the execution, became a convert, or concluded, *verily this was the Son of God!* The power and malice of his enemies were so great that we may be satisfied they would take care to see him quite dead. And they, likewise, took all the precautions they could to prevent his coming to life again. For they well knew he had declared that *within three days he should rise again.* But, notwithstanding the utmost precautions of his enemies, who had at their service all the power and authority of that country, early in the morning on the third day from his crucifixion and burial, he actually came to life again. Now a resurrection from the dead being an event of so uncommon and surprizing a nature, and withal so strong an evidence in his favor; and, as the *Apostles were chosen of God to be witnesses* of this grand fact to the world, they were appointed to live with him, for some time, before his death; that they might be perfectly acquainted with him, and not mistake another person, for *Jesus* come to life again, [as the body of the *Jewish* nation might possibly have been suspected to have done; suppose he had appeared as publicly after his resurrection, as before his death; and they had all acknowledged him to be the Christ. See the insinuations of the author, p. 68.] The Apostles were fully convinced (as multitudes both of his friends and enemies were) that he was actually dead and buried. They knew that a resurrection from the dead was a possible thing to the power of God; and, in the case of so innocent and extraordinary a person's being so very unjustly put to death, it was no unreasonable thing to expect some uncommon vindication of his character. There is something in human nature which creates an horror at the very thoughts of seeing a dead person come to life again.—To prepare the *Apostles*, therefore, to attend to the evidences

evidences of his resurrection, and that with due care and composure of mind, he had not only foretold his death and resurrection frequently before he suffered, but after he rose again he discovered himself gradually and by slow and easy steps. The stone was rolled away from the mouth of the tomb; —the sepulchre was found open and the body gone. An angel, in the most friendly and familiar manner, tells one of the women, who was come to the sepulchre, to look after the body, that *Jesus was risen*. Afterwards he himself appeared to her, but took on him the form of another person, and discovered himself gradually. He ordered her to go and tell the *Apostles*; but, when she told them, they gave very little credit to what she said. However, two of them ran in great surprize and with an eager curiosity to the sepulchre, to see what further discoveries they could make; and, by all the signs and tokens they could observe, the resurrection of *Jesus* appeared not improbable. Then *Jesus* appeared unto others of the *Apostles* company, and sent a like message by them, viz. *that he was risen from the dead and they should see him*. Again; he joined in company with two of the disciples going to *Emmaus*, but appeared at first in the form and habit of a stranger and traveller, and afterwards gradually discovered himself to them. And, when he had, by these and other appearances, sufficiently prepared the *Apostles* for the greatest attention, he appeared unto ten of them; and after that to all the eleven; repeating his visits, once and again, and that during the space of forty days. Nay, by a solemn and repeated appointment, he appeared unto above five hundred of his disciples, upon a mountain in *Galilee*, by which he fully convinced them all, *though some had formerly doubted*(a). And

most

(a) Mat. xxviii. 17. *οὐ δὲ ἐδίστασαν* But some doubted.] As this was one of the last appearances which *Jesus* made before his ascension;

most of these five hundred disciples, who had this full and intire satisfaction, lived many years after, to bear their testimony to this grand fact. They had known him very well before he died. The *Apostles*, in particular, must have known him intimately; for they had lived with him as his family or constant attendants. And, after his resurrection, they saw him again. They knew his face, his air, his stature, his voice, his looks, and all those features, marks and lineaments which distinguished him from other men. They talked to him, after his rising from the dead, and heard him talk, in his usual voice and manner, and upon a variety of subjects, about which they had frequently conversed, before his death. They eat with him and saw him eat. Nay they felt and handled his body, and had all possible satisfaction that it was no spectre, nor apparition, no imposture, nor delusion. They were well satisfied it was not another man, but their very Lord and Master himself, come to life again; for

ascension; it is utterly improbable that he should leave any room for *doubting*, or that the *Evangelist* should intimate any such thing. Accordingly *Grotius* has well observed that this is a wrong translation. For the words ought to be rendered, *But they had doubted; or though they had doubted*, i. e. before that time, or before such full and overbearing evidence had been afforded them. St. *Matthew* has only briefly intimated their *having doubted*, in the words here cited. The other *Evangelists* have been more particular, see Mark xvi. 11; 13, 14. Luke xxiv. 11; 21; 25; 38; 41. John xx. 9; 24; &c. and what confirms this interpretation is, that Luke xxiv. 52, there is no intimation of their *doubting*, when they worshiped him; but of their returning to *Jerusalem* with the greatest joy and satisfaction. And, Acts ii. 3. *Jesus* is said "to have made himself known to the *Apostles*, to be alive after his passion, *by many infallible signs and proofs*; being seen of them forty days, and speaking to them of the things which pertained to the kingdom of God."

Grotius has finely accounted for St. *Matthew's* taking notice, that *some had doubted*:—"This part of the history, *says he*, "is not without its importance. For, to one that duely weighs the thing, it must take away all doubt of the truth of the fact; when they were convinced, who were so difficult, or backward to believe."

for they saw and handled the scars of the wounds, which he had received on the crosse, from the nails which had been drove through his hands, and from the spear that had pierced his side;—and, in one word, they had all the evidence which they themselves desired, and which the most careful, jealous or scrupulous persons could have wished for; if they had been in their circumstances. When *Jesus* had removed all their doubts and diffidence, and by irresistible evidence proved that he was risen again,—he told the *Apostles* that *all power was given unto him both in heaven and upon earth*, and by his power he commissioned them to disciple all nations; and with a view to that great work, in which they were to be employed, he assured them that he would in a few days send down upon them the *Holy Spirit*, which he sometimes called *the promise of the Father*, and at other times *power from on high*.—In their sight he gradually ascended towards heaven; and proved, in a few days, that he was graciously accepted of his Father, by pouring down *the Spirit*, in such a plenteous effusion of *spiritual gifts* and *miraculous powers*, as was never afforded since man was first planted on the earth.

The argument from the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, hath not frequently been set in so clear a light as the subject deserves. However, a late noble author took a great deal of laudable pains, and the substance of what he hath said affords one of the strongest arguments for the truth of the Christian religion (a). It was with great propriety that the effusion of the Spirit was reserved 'till after Christ's death, that thereby the proof of his resurrection might be rendered more strong and abundant. For being able to work miracles in the name of Christ, the *Apostles* carried along with them, every where, the most bright credentials of their mission, and the most striking evidences that

The plentiful effusion of the Spirit after Christ's ascension,—a strong evidence.

(a) See *Miscel. sacra*, Essay I.

Jesus

PART I.

Jesus did not remain in the state of the dead ; but was raised to life again, and exalted to great power and dominion.—*The scriptures* distinguish between the *spiritual gifts* and *miraculous powers*. By the *spiritual gifts*, they seem to mean that inward illumination, which the disciples of *Jesus*, and especially his *Apostles*, received from the Spirit. And, by the *miraculous powers*, those extraordinary powers, by which the mighty and uncommon external effects were performed,—which frequently attended their word. They had indeed, commonly, an illumination, or impulse of the Spirit, directing them to pray, or speak, or act so and so ; and assuring them that thereupon the Spirit would work such or such a miracle. But that illumination, or impulse, terminated in that particular act of the divine power. Whereas, by the *spiritual gifts*, they were enabled to convey some knowledge, or deliver some truths, which tended to improve the minds of their hearers. By *miracles* they could rouse men

A brief account of the *spiritual gifts*.

(a) See the *History of the first planting the Christian religion*, Vol. I. p. 40, &c.

to attention. By the *spiritual gifts* they could instruct, or enlighten them. For a large and particular account of the *spiritual gifts* and *miraculous powers*, I would refer you to those who have professedly treated of them (a). I would, at present, only sum up the principal things that have been said.—By the Spirit the *Apostles* had the *word of wisdom*, or the general plan of the Christian doctrine ; and from them, or their writings, have *all Christians* received it, in all ages and nations. This they not only received at first, but it abode with them to the end of their lives. Hence it was that they could, upon all occasions, speak or write, with clearness and certainty whatever concerned the grand scheme of the Christian revelation. They had also, by the Spirit, the *word of knowledge* ; or a full and clear comprehension of the scope and design of the *law* and the *prophets* ; whereby they understood

as delivered in the Scriptures.

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derstood what confirmation the Old Testament gives to Christianity. They had, moreover, *the gift of discerning spirits*, whereby they were inabled to discern by what *spirit* any man spoke, who pretended to speak in the church by inspiration. They could, in some cases, discern the secret intentions of men's hearts, to prevent their doing harm to the Christian church: And, at other times, discern the spirits of men, or their future temper and behavior, and how fit they would be for such and such particular offices and stations in the church. They could *prophecy*, and more especially foretel some considerable events, relating to the state of *the Christian church*, in future times. They could *preach, pray, or sing psalms and hymns*, by immediate inspiration. They had, by the spirit, the *gift of tongues*, or an ability to preach the Gospel to persons of different nations, in their own language. And finally, they had *the gift of the interpretation of tongues*, or an ability readily and intelligibly to repete in another language what had been spoken, in the church, in a foreign or dead language.—As to the *miraculous powers*,—the *Apostles* had the power of striking bold and daring offenders with some diseases, and sometimes with death itself. And, when offenders became penitent, they could miraculously remove the diseases so inflicted. This some take to have been their *power of binding and loosing, remitting or retaining the sins of men*.—But, whether that be so, or no, I will not now stay to inquire. By the effusion of the spirit, the *Apostles* were indued with a greater degree of fortitude than the other Christians, or than they themselves had before. They had a *door of utterance*, or a proper resolution and freedom of mind to deliver harsh or ungrateful truths before the largest multitudes, the highest personages, or the most august assemblies. They had the power of *healing diseases* in-

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PART I.

Many
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miraculous
powers.

A rational
account of
the swift
progress
of Christi-
anity.

stantaneously and perfectly, and of doing other mighty works; and finally, in some instances they could raise the dead.—But what was still more remarkable, and more eminently distinguished the *Apostles* from all other Christians, was, that they had a power of conferring upon others some spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, by prayer, joined with the laying on of their hands. And they appear to have conferred such gifts, or powers, upon all the adult converts to Christianity, wherever they came (a). So that, either by an immediate effusion from heaven, or by the laying on of the hands of the *Apostles*, there were imparted unto other Christians, either the word of knowledge; the discerning of Spirits; the gift of faith (b); prophesying, as it signified the foretelling some lesser contingent events; or, as it was used in a larger acceptation (c), for being inspired, with a doctrine, or proper discourse to be delivered in the church when the Christians were assembled for religious worship;—with a prayer;—with a psalm or hymn;—with a tongue,—or rather with the interpretation of a tongue. Some of the inferior Christians could also work miracles, and particularly heal diseases; and thereby confirm that doctrine which the *Apostles* had received from Christ himself, or by the Spirit.—All these were highly proper, if not necessary, to plant this religion in the world, with such amazing swiftness and success; and to gather together and settle churches, in so many and such distant parts of the world. The event was just what one would have expected, upon the supposition that such miracles were really wrought, and these things afford us a clear and satisfactory account of the speedy progress of Christianity, the gathering in such multitudes of converts, and planting such a number of churches,

(a) See *Miscel. sacra*, Essay I. p. 118, &c. (b) See above, p. 6. (c) 1 Cor. xiv. 3, 4, 5; 24, &c.

churches, in that one age. But the friends of *Pyrrho* are forced to acknowledge such an effect without being able to assign any sufficient cause, or give any account of the matter, but what is merely imaginary, or the fruit of their own invention.—*The Apostles* and their fellow-laborers, before they left the world, erected churches of Christians, in most parts of the *Roman Empire*, and beyond the bounds of it;—in the countries of *Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Cyprus, Crete, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Greece, and Italy*; in the cities of *Rome, Cæsarea, Antioch in Syria, Antioch in Pisidia, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica and Rome*; and in many other cities and countries. And we find, from the hints contained in the *Acts of the Apostles* and their *Epistles*, that the Christians were indued with *spiritual gifts* or *miraculous powers* in most of those churches. How much they abounded in the church of *Corinth*, will easily appear to any one that reads *St. Paul's* two *Epistles* to that church, with any tolerable care and attention.—From *Acts* ii. 38, 39. and viii. 14, &c. and xix. 1, &c. *Rom.* i. 11. and other texts to the same purpose,—one would gather, that the adult converts in general had these *gifts* or *miraculous powers*; wherever there had been an *Apostle* to convey them, by the laying on of his hands: And that, in other churches, where there had not yet been an *Apostle*, no person (generally speaking) had the *miraculous gifts*, but such only as had come from other places where they had conversed with the *Apostles*.—Now consider, that in most of the great towns and cities, in the *Roman Empire*, and in several places beyond the bounds of it, there were, in one age, *Christian churches* planted, and that the Christians in general had either some *spiritual gifts* or *miraculous powers*.—*What a blaze of evidence was there?* The people in those several places had evidences at hand, and that in abundance, to convince them that *God was*

PART I.

The 11th
text ex-
plained.I John v.
10. See p.
54; 56.

among the Christians of a truth. How justly, therefore, and emphatically might St. *John*, when he spoke of the *witnesse of the Spirit*, which was then so common among the Christians, say; *he that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witnesse in himself. But he, that* (after all these evidences) *believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he hath not believed in the testimony, which God hath given of his Son?*

Pyrrho was surprized at the producing so much evidence, which he had scarce ever heard of, or attended to;—and said, *Theophilus*, I am now ready to doubt, on the other side; and to suspect that, if there had been all the evidence you mention, there could scarce have been one unbeliever remaining. I know (replied *Theophilus*) that you are always ready to doubt, be it on one side or the other. There is sometimes too much evidence, and sometimes too little. And it would not be an easy matter for you yourself (I believe) to say how much would just please you, and be exactly enough. However, this is the way in which the New Testament accounts for the speedy progresse of *Christianity*, upon its first appearance. These the evidences, as they are there related. Nor would any evidence be regarded by all;—as we may clearly see in numberlesse instances,—in which it is plain men judge not according to evidence, but according to inclination, interest, or some other unworthy view.—The resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and the consequent effusion of the Spirit, in such variety of *gifts* and *miraculous powers*, were such evidences as laid level to the meanest capacities. For they were *plain facts* and easily understood, which had all the marks of truth and reality, and the consequences of which were plain and obvious. Whoever, therefore, would not attend to, and imbrace truths of such great importance, which were in that signal manner taught and confirmed, plainly discovered a
vicious

vicious disposition of mind, and might be justly condemned for his *unbelief*. For it is in itself a wicked thing to reject truths of moment, when well attested, and greatly conduces to harden men more and more in their vicious courses. Whereas the *Christian Faith* was, on the other hand, a principle of virtue and piety, to those who sincerely imbraced it, and greatly tended to reform them, or render them more pious and virtuous.—When the evidences were so many and so strong, and the truths discovered of such unspeakable moment, it was said with great justnesse and propriety, *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid only to those that are lost, i. e. as the next verse clearly shews, unto those that are lost unto all sense of virtue, or given up to worldly-mindednesse and vice.* And again, with what emphasis might it be said, *how shall they escape, if they neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him;—God also bearing them witnesse both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to the divine will?*—You have in a manner confessed, *Pyrrho*, that all these things taken together amount to a most surprizing evidence. With what appearance of truth, therefore, can it be said, that *Christianity is not founded on Argument*? Were all these arguments given for no end, and to answer no purpose at all? Why all that profusion and waste of argument (if I may so expresse myself) suppose this purely imaginary and fictitious inspiration of the Spirit, communicated to every individual, was to produce faith, without any rational argument;—when so many and such distinguishing evidences were afforded? I wish that a gentleman of *Pyrrho's* good sense and great discernment would but frankly confesse how such things affect his mind, and whether they do not raise in him a sort of indignation at such writers

PART I.

The 12th
text ex-
plained.
2 Cor. iv. 3.
See p. 68.

PART I. as would so grossly impose upon him, by perverting the plainest facts, and pretending that there is no *rational* evidence, where even *Pyrrho* is ready to doubt whether there were not too much, and to conclude that greater numbers must needs have been converted, if such evidences had been actually afforded?—*Pyrrho's* color rose in his cheeks, and he seemed by his countenance to be greatly moved, when *Theophilus* thrust home and pushed him so hard. But, with a sort of a forced smile he, after some hesitation, answered, You know, *Theophilus*, that men of *our sect*, whom you call *Sceptics*, are seldom or never caught making such concessions to an adversary. It is our way to suspend and doubt on, even when we have nothing ready to object or answer. But you have one thing more to do, before you can hope to make me your convert, if ever I become such; and that is, to prove that the *books*, which record such surprizing things, are authentic and genuine. For, tho' you might have a plausible handle for triumph, if your history were clearly made out to be true; yet I would not have you triumph before a victory. You have yet a great deal of work upon your hands, and I must insist upon it that, in the next place, you show the authenticnesse of what you call *the Sacred Scriptures*; but which *my author* often insinuates to be no more than a *suspicious, precarious, and uncertain tradition*.—*Theophilus*, with a serious air, replied, I have observed, with great concern, that it is your way always to suspend and doubt on, even when the evidence seems to affect you, and you have nothing to object. That a man should suspend his judgment 'till he has examined, or evidence is laid before him, is quite reasonable, and what he ought to do. But why should not truth be received, and evidence acknowledged by you, as well as the rest of mankind? You seem to be afraid lest I should catch
you

you unawares, or surprize you, by leading you on a sudden into some snare, by making you acknowledge yourself at least *almost persuaded to be a Christian*. What interest is it of mine, that *Pyrrho* should think and act right, but only that he is my friend, and that I sincerely wish well to him and to all mankind; and should rejoice to see all attend to evidence, honestly acknowledge it, when they are convinced; and, in all respects, take the right method in thinking and acting?—I am ready to point out the genuinenesse of the *books* of the New Testament, and desire that they may be examined in the same manner that other antient books are; and see whether they do not bear all the marks of being authentic, that any books of equal antiquity can pretend to. They allowed that to be a very fair proposal; but, because they would have that part of the subject considered all at once, they agreed to defer it to their next meeting. Upon which the whole company mixing in the conversation, they spent the rest of the evening in discourse about news, politics, and several other indifferent subjects.

DIALOGUE III.

AS an introduction to the next evening's conversation, *Crito* said to *Theophilus*, You have, Sir, given us your sentiments concerning the Faith which is required of a Christian, and summed up the arguments which are to effect such a Faith. *Pyrrho* expects of you to prove the genuinenesse of the books of the New Testament, which *his author* seems, in some places, to doubt of. What have you to offer in proof of this point? You are now at liberty to speak to that part of the subject, and treat it in your own way. *Pyrrho* said, he begged leave to state the difficulty, as he had collected it from various

PART I. rious hints dispersed up and down in several parts of his *author*. *Crito* told him, the proposal was not amiss, as it would shorten the objections, when they came to consider them. He, therefore, ordered him to proceed. Then *Pyrrho* said to *Theophilus*, “ You take the books of the New Testament to contain a genuine history, which is true in itself, and ought to be believed by us. My *author* is of a contrary opinion, insinuating, p. 30. that it is a doubtful account; a testimony liable to be controverted. P. 31. It is still all but humane testimony, in its nature ever liable to error, as depending only on fallible authors. P. 52. The voice of God himself—has been dwindled long since to humane tradition. The great original attestation—is sunk with us into the uncertain traditions of fallible men, relating it one after another. P. 53. A miracle that was ocular to its contemporaries, is to us no more than uncertain hear-say. And he assures us, that this must necessarily be the consequence, when once it comes to be reported.—For we are not to believe any thing because another says, he saw it.—The light of conviction can extend no further than to the eye-witness himself, being lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted. He therefore asks, p. 59. what is there after this remaining in—these suspicious repositories of humane Testimony, that can now deserve our least notice, or be thought of consequence to engage a moment’s attention upon this subject? And p. 60, 61. He speaks with the utmost contempt of manuscript authorities and paper revelations;—which must in time come to want repair;—and must necessarily be the work of men. These and other like insinuations my *author* has thrown out, concerning the Scriptures, and the credit which we are to give to them.”—I well know, said *Theophilus*, the manner of some writers; and that, when they are pressed with a difficulty, they
can

can readily throw out some general insinuations, or call the things they dislike by some contemptuous names, and so go off with an imaginary victory. But names do not alter the nature of things. And I hope to bring such evidence as may deserve regard. But, before I offer the evidence for the authenticnesse of the books of the New Testament, I must settle one point with you, or *your author*. For he has here, as in many other cases, talked two ways;—sometimes allowing the books of the New Testament to be genuine and the history true; but withal insinuating, that no history whatever deserves any regard. In other places he drops hints of the history's being *no more than precarious and uncertain hear-say, a suspicious repository of humane testimony; an account liable to be controverted;—and the like*. Now these are quite different things, and require different answers. “If nothing but ocular
“proof deserve regard, and all history and humane
“testimony be mere uncertain hear-say;—if all evi-
“dence vanishes as soon as it comes to be re-
“ported;—and we are not to believe any thing
“because another says, *he saw it*;—if the light of
“conviction extends no further than to the eye-
“witnesse himself; but is lost and extinguished
“the first moment it is offered to be imparted;”—
then nothing can be proved, but what we ourselves
have seen. Then farewell all Faith among man-
kind! All history (which has been thought so en-
tertaining and instructive) is mere romance, and
rendered intirely precarious, if not wholly uselesse:
All trade and commerce is at an end, and all con-
versation ceases;—because nothing can be de-
pended upon. The proofs of *Christianity* have
been brought to this length, “that, if there is
“any credit to be given to the history of former
“times, *then Christianity must be true*.” Some of
those, who have wrote against *revelation*, seem to

PART I.
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Things,
which we
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have not
seen, may
be believed
upon hu-
mane testi-
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PART I. have been aware of this consequence; and rather than *Christianity* should prove true, they will deny the Faith of all antient history, and plead that nothing is to be believed, but what a man sees with his own eyes. Had I not reason, then, to say, that they are enemies to *learning* as well as *revelation*, and would reduce us to a state of ignorance and barbarity?—The testimony of credible persons has, in all ages, been regarded, not by the vulgar only, but by men of the best sense, and greatest learning and acuteness; though the persons, who related the facts, were not infallible; and theirs was no more than humane testimony. I leave you to judge with what views such men write, who would confound all truth and falsehood which depends upon humane testimony, and would wipe out all knowledge of antiquity at once, by saying, “that they were only fallible men who recorded these things; and that we are not obliged to believe any thing, because another says *he saw it*.” Probability is all the evidence we have in many cases, in which nevertheless we act, and act rationally. And the probability rises higher, in the case before us, than in most of the affairs of humane life. All our daily converse and mutual confidence in one another; all trade and commerce; almost all the determinations in our courts of judicature go upon the supposition, that a man may reasonably believe a thing which he himself never saw, and that because another says “he saw it, or knows it to be true.” And every man, in numberless instances, acts upon the testimony and credit of others; and that most rationally and without any manner of scruple. Who doubts of there being such a place as *Paris* or *Rome*? Would he not be thought quite whimsical, who should scruple trading to the *East* or *West Indies*, merely because he never saw the places? Or did ever any man in his senses say,

“ I will

“ I will not venture any cargoe thither ; because PART I.
 “ I have never been there myself, and *I am not*
 “ *obliged to believe any thing, because another sais he*
 “ *saw it, and it is not in my power to prove a negative,*
 “ *and contradict him?*” That there is such a country
 as *Italy*, or *Spain* ; that there were such persons as
Julius Cæsar, or *King Henry the VIIIth of England* ;
 —are not to be reckoned among the number of
 self-evident, or demonstrable truths. But, though
 we have nothing for them but humane testimony,
 or the reports of fallible men ; yet we as firmly and
 as rationally believe them, as we do any demonstra-
 ble or self-evident truths whatever. And it must be
 merely in the heat of controversy, or when he has
 some particular end to answer, that any man will call
 in question such clear and well attested truths. I will
 not, therefore, abuse your time and patience any
 longer in proving what no man of sense will deny.

As to the proofs of the genuinenesse of the books The books
of the New
Testament
proved ge-
nuine.
 of the New Testament, they appear to me to lie
 thus ;— those books are said to have been written
 by *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul,*
James and Jude ; i. e. either by the apostles them-
 selves, or by two of their intimate friends ;— per-
 sons, who must have understood the nature of
Christianity, and have known the truth of the facts
 there recorded, the best of any men, as being per-
 sonally concerned in most of the things which they
 relate, and as having the best intelligence as to the
 rest.— (a) The evidence of the truth of any history
 is either *internal*, or *external*. The *internal* evidence
 depends upon the probability of the things related,
 the consistence of the several parts, and the plain-
 nesse and simplicity of the narration. Every atten-
 tive reader may observe several of the *internal* marks
 of credibility of the gospel history contained in the
 New Testament ; though he may be assisted to ob-
 serve many more, by persons who are more curious

(a) As to
what fol-
lows, see
the *Pre-
face* and
Conclusion
of Mr.
Lardner's
*Credibili-
ty of the*
Gospel
History,
OF Part I.

PART I.

or judicious than himself. The *external* evidence lies not so much within the reach of the generality of mankind. But there is a most learned and use-

(a) Mr.
Lardner's
Credibility
of the
Gospel
History,
Part. II.

ful work now in hand, (a) and which is already carried on to a considerable length, the peculiar design of which is to inable persons of ordinary capacities, who for want of a learned education, or of sufficient leisure, are deprived of the advantage of reading over antient writings, to judge for themselves, concerning the *external* evidence of the facts related in the New Testament. In that performance, there are a number of passages, at full length, faithfully translated; and taken from other antient authors of good credit, who lived at or near the time in which the things are said to have happened, and who bear Testimony to the books of the New Testament, their authors, or the facts contained in them.—Other learned men among the moderns have shown that the geography of the New Testament, and many other facts, customs, and principles, are confirmed by the testimonies of antient writers. But *this author* hath, by many years hard study and indefatigable diligence and labor, shown in *the first part of his work*, that those facts, which are *occasionally* mentioned in the New Testament; and in *his second part*, that the *principal* facts, there related, are confirmed by antient writers of established credit; who were co-temporaries with *Jesus* or his *Apostles*, or who lived near that time: And he hath proved likewise that, in the succeeding ages, these books continued to be preserved and read as authentic, or genuine. It appears, from what he hath said, that there is nothing in the books of the New Testament unfutable to the age in which they are supposed to have been writ, and that these writers had a knowledge of the affairs of those times, not to be found in authors of later ages. *We are hereby assured that the*
books

books of the New Testament are genuine, and that they were writ by persons who lived at or near the time of those events, of which they have given the history.—Any one may be sensible how hard it is for the most learned, acute and cautious man, to write a book in the character of some person of an earlier age; and not betray his own time, by some mistake about the affairs of the age in which he pretends to place himself; or by allusions to customs, or principles, since sprung up; or by some phrase, or expression, not then in use. It is no easy thing to escape all these dangers in the smallest performance, tho' it be a treatise of theory or speculation. Those hazards are greatly increased, when the work is of any length; and especially if it be historical and be concerned with characters and customs. It is yet more difficult to carry on such a design in a work consisting of several pieces, writ to all appearance by several persons. Many, indeed, are desirous to deceive, but all hate to be deceived. And, therefore, though attempts have been made to impose upon the world in this way, they have never, or very rarely succeeded; but have been detected and exposed by the skill and vigilance of those who have been concerned for the truth.—The volume of the New Testament consists of several pieces. These (as hath been observed) are ascribed to eight several persons. And there are the strongest appearances that they were not all writ by an one hand, but by as many persons as they are ascribed to. There are lesser differences in the relations of some facts, and such seeming contradictions as would never have happened, if these books had been all the work of one person, or of several who writ in concert. There are as many peculiarities of temper and stile as there are names of writers; divers of which shew no depth of genius or compasse of knowlege. Here are representations

PART I.

It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have forged such books, and procured the belief of them.

PART I.

The facts,
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tions of the titles, posts, behavior of persons of higher and lower rank in many parts of the world. Persons are introduced, and their characters are set in full light. Here is a history of things done in several cities and countries; and there are allusions to a vast variety of customs and tenets of persons of several nations, sects and religions. The whole is writ without affectation, with the greatest simplicity and plainness, and is confirmed by other antient writers of unquestioned authority.—If it be difficult for a person of learning and experience to compose a small treatise, concerning matters of speculation, with the characters of a more early age than that in which he writes: It is next to impossible, that such a work of considerable length, consisting of several pieces, with a great variety of historical facts, representations of characters, principles and customs of several nations and distant countries, of persons of all ranks and degrees, of many interests and parties, should be performed by eight several persons, the most of them unlearned, without any appearance of concert.—Such a remarkable attestation to the truth of their history does arise from the facts *occasionally* mentioned by the writers of the New Testament.

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The books of the New Testament are in all twenty seven, twenty of which were received by the *Christians* as genuine, immediately upon their first publication and spread. Six of the *Epistles* were at first doubted of, viz. that to the *Hebrews*, the epistle of St. *James*, the 2d of St. *Peter*, the 2d and 3d of St. *John*, and that of St. *Jude*; and so was also the book of *Revelation*. But, when they were found to be genuine productions, and writ by the *Apostles* of our Lord; then they, likewise, were received, and have now for many centuries been by Christians in general, acknowledged to belong to the Canon of Scripture. If these seven
books

books had, upon examination, not proved genuine, there would have been sufficient evidence from the other twenty, that *Jesus was the Christ*, a prophet sent of God, to whose message men were obliged to pay regard. But that they should be received, after they had been doubted of, is to us an argument of the care and vigilance of the *primitive Christians*, who would not receive any writings as genuine and apostolic, without examination and sufficient evidence. And, though these seven contain no new doctrines or precepts, yet they help to clear up and illustrate several points, and afford a further confirmation of the truth of *Christianity*.

That the books of the New Testament are justly ascribed to the authors, whose names they bear, appears with greater clearness and certainty, and more abundant testimony, than that the poets, *Virgil* and *Horace*; or the orator, *Tully*; or the historians, *Livy*, *Dion Cassius*, *Q. Curtius*, *Suetonius* or *Tacitus*, were the authors of the books now ascribed unto them. For, as *religion* is of more importance to mankind than the subjects those authors have wrote upon, there is much more evidence for the genuineness of the *sacred* writings. For the books of the New Testament were writ in that very age, in which these remarkable facts are said to have happened, and even while many persons were alive, and many churches remained, which had the *miraculous* gifts. These writings were dispersed far and wide, even in the days of the *Apostles* themselves. They were communicated to the Christians, and sent to the churches soon after they were writ. We find expresse orders, as to some of them, that they should immediately be read publicly, not only in those churches, to which they were directed, but in other churches also. And, as *Justin Martyr* (one of the most early *fathers*) intimates, that it was the common practice to read the books
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of the New Testament publicly in their churches, in his time, it is most likely that the *Apostles* had recommended it from the beginning. These *sacred* books were even then credited by vast numbers of people, though they were not recommended by their princes, nor the belief of them enjoined by the civil magistrate. And, though they might easily have been confuted, if they had been false; yet we do not find that any persons so much as attempted a confutation of the facts. So far from any counter history's being come down to us, that we have not so much as an hint of there ever having been any such thing. On the other hand, we find that the most bitter enemies of the Christians in the first ages, and even those that professedly wrote against Christianity, who would have been glad to have intirely overturned it, and who had the fairest opportunity and full power in their hands to effect it, if possible; such as *Celsus*, *Porphry*, *Julian* and the authors of the *Jewish Talmud*, and the like;—yet none of them ever called in question the genuinenesse of the books of the New Testament; but have acknowledged the grand facts, and even allowed that *Jesus* worked miracles.—The books of the New Testament were writ in *greek*, the language then most universally understood. They were soon dispersed and read by the enemies of Christianity, as well as by its zealous friends and votaries. They have been translated into a variety of other languages. They were not only read very early in the *churches*, but expounded and preached upon. They were read also by the Christians in their families and closets;—and there are few passages but have been quoted, or alluded to, by other authors now extant, and such large quotations have been made by persons of different ranks and stations, and of all ages since they first appeared; and yet agree, in general, with what we now find in the *sacred books* themselves.

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These books have been transcribed once and again. Copies have been multiplied, and have got into various hands; and yet the copies and translations, which have been collected from various and distant parts of the world, through *Europe, Asia* and *Africa*, and collated with a most critical and minute care, are allowed, by all capable judges, to agree in all the grand points of the *Christian doctrine* and *morals*. The generality of the primitive Christians had a high veneration for these books, as looking upon them to contain an inestimable treasure of knowledge; and therefore may be supposed, of course, to have taken care that they should be preserved pure and genuine, and faithfully copied out. The *Christians* soon divided into several sects and parties; but they all, in general, appealed to *these books*, as the great *standard* of their faith and worship, and as the grand charter of their *religion*. So have the various sects of Christians, in later ages, generally speaking, appealed to the *Scriptures*, in support of their distinguishing opinions, and have all along kept a jealous eye upon one another, lest any one should make any the least alteration in the sacred records, to favor their own peculiar tenets. Thus the wise, over-ruling providence of God has turned the weakness and folly of mankind into a mean of preserving these best of books, (a very fit object of an especial care!) books which contain the best of principles, recommend and enforce the noblest and most perfect morals, were apparently writ with the best views, and have in them inimitable marks of truth and simplicity. I will not call these arguments *demonstration*, but they appear to me to be good and conclusive. For, surely, it is in the highest degree improbable and altogether incredible, that the books of the New Testament should not be genuine, inasmuch as they have those very marks and characters of being ge-

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PART I.

If such books had, in any age, been forged, they would not have gained credit.

If the history of the New Testament be true, Christianity must be true.

nuine and authentic, which any books have that are really and unquestionably so. And, *if the books of the New Testament were writ by persons, who lived before the destruction of Jerusalem, i. e. if they were writ at the time, in which they are said to have been writ, the things related in them are true.* If they had not been matters of fact, they would not have been credited by any persons near that time, and in those parts of the world, in which they are said to have been done; but would have been treated as the most notorious lies and falsehoods. Suppose three or four books should now appear among us in the language most generally understood, giving an account of many remarkable and extraordinary events, which had happened in some kingdom of *Europe*, and in the most noted cities of the countries adjoining to it; some of them said to have happened sixty or seventy years ago, others between twenty or thirty, others nearer our own time: would they not be looked upon, as the most manifest and ridiculous forgeries and impostures that ever were contrived? Would great numbers of persons, in those very places, change their religious principles and practices, upon the credit of things reported to be publickly done, which no man had ever heard of before? Or rather, is it possible that such a design as this should be conceived by any sober and serious persons, or even the most wild and extravagant? And—*If the history of the New Testament be credible, the Christian religion is true.* If the things there related to have been done by *Jesus*, and by his followers, in virtue of powers derived from him, do not prove a person to come from God, and that his doctrine is true and divine, nothing can. Will any reasonable man, after all this, pretend to say, that *Christianity* is destitute of evidence, or *not founded on Argument*? This author may call the history *human tradition*,

tradition, uncertain hear-say, and whatever names he pleases. But an history which hath such *internal* marks of truth, and which has been received as genuine in all ages, since its first publication, cannot be overturned by these and the like general insinuations. Whoever would do any thing to purpose, must bring antient and authentic histories, writ in or near the time, which contradict the facts. Or, if that cannot be done (as all learned men allow it cannot) then let him confesse that there are no such contrary histories. Whoever pleases, may try to prove that the books of the New Testament are all a forgery. The books are in every body's hands. And (to the honor of the *Christians* of the present age, and of our own nation, be it spoken) there never was a time or place, where *Christianity* was the prevailing religion, that such persons could have had more liberty to do their utmost to overthrow the truth and genuinenesse of the sacred writings; if they were capable of doing it, or the thing were possible. It is not throwing out distant hints and general insinuations, as if they had some evidence in reserve, which they are afraid to publish. There are some uncertain traditions, and some forged histories, which have been detected and proved false. But will any man dare to say that, therefore, there is no *true history*? And, if it must be acknowledged that some histories are true, then let us fairly try, by just and candid criticism, and those usual methods by which learned men would examine the genuinenesse of a *Terence*, or a *Levy*, or any other book of equal antiquity, whether the books of the New Testament have not all the marks of antiquity, truth and genuinenesse, that any books of like date can pretend to.

When *Theophilus* came to the conclusion of this *first Part* of his work; he put on the most significant look, and lifting up his voice beyond the usual

The conclusion of Part I.

PART I.

pitch, he addressed himself to *Pyrrho*, in the most friendly, and ardent manner, and said,— I have now offered as much as I think needful upon this argument; I have shewn you that *Faith* is a virtuous disposition of mind, and that the virtue of it consists chiefly in a love of truth, and a readiness to profess it, and to be influenced by it;— that Christianity abounds with evidences, both *internal* and *external*; that it is in itself a reasonable service; that it was introduced into the world by the attestation of *prophecy* and *miracle*. And, that the most signal and concluding evidence was the resurrection of *Jesus Christ* the author of this religion, and that most plenteous effusion of the Spirit which followed soon after his ascension;— that the books of the New Testament which contain this religion, together with the evidences of it, are authentic and genuine; that they were writ by the authors they are commonly ascribed to, and have all the *internal* and *external* attestations of truth and credibility. —Methinks such a complication of arguments might not only appear to the understanding, but even warm and affect the heart of my friend *Pyrrho*; however he may put on an air of indifference, or affect to expresse himself with his usual doubt or hesitation. Let me seriously ask you, *Pyrrho*, why should not you carefully inquire into these matters? Or what should tempt you to conceal your sentiments, when you are convinced? If you were a vicious man, I could easily account for your being inclined to infidelity; because the precepts of the gospel require such strict virtue, and its doctrine is so plain and expresse with respect to a righteous judgment to come, and a state of recompence after death. But I am well satisfied of your virtue, in other respects; and that you will not indulge yourself in any of those immoralities which *Christianity* condemns, and in the practice of which you would

would be rendered uneasy, if the *Christian religion* should, after all, prove true.—Can it be an affectation of thinking out of the common road, and distinguishing yourself as a wit or a genius? You have other talents and accomplishments to distinguish you; even suppose you should inquire, be convinced, and profess yourself a believer. And you must allow that *the common people are sometimes in the right*.—Is it *Priest-craft*, which terrifies you, and makes you averse to own what some ambitious, designing *Ecclesiastics* have cried aloud for, and contended so earnestly about: when instead of *Christ's kingdom*, which was *not of this world*, they have been seeking after a mere worldly kingdom; and have had very different things in view than *propagating the gospel*, or promoting the religion of our blessed Lord? You know, in other cases, how to distinguish better, and *not condemn the righteous with the wicked*. Let not, therefore, *Christianity* suffer because of the folly or wickedness of some of the teachers of it. Or finally, can it be those many absurd doctrines, and superstitious, or wicked practices, which have been represented by some as pure, sound and genuine Christianity? But why will you not do yourself and the *gospel* the justice, to take your account of it from the Scriptures themselves,—those pure and sacred fountains of truth? I am very sensible that they, who make objections against *revelation*, reap the most plentiful harvest from systems of Divinity, and the creeds, or practices of this or that church, or party; against which they argue, as if that was the pure and unmixed doctrine of Christ. But *the BIBLE, the BIBLE is the religion of Protestants*, and ought to be the religion of all Christians. For there are the articles of the Christian Faith, and the rules of worship and practice; those articles and rules, which were delivered by Jesus and his Apostles. They who have a mind
to

PART I.

to contend against unscriptural and unreasonable articles of Faith, and superstitious modes and ceremonies in worship, or against any absurd or wicked practices,—let them do their utmost, and I heartily wish them success. But let not *Christianity* itself be condemned, or suffer, because of the folly or wickedness of those who profess this excellent religion.—We have had more books writ against the *Christian religion* in our age, than perhaps, in any. The persons, who wrote against it in the early ages of the *church*, could not deny the facts, and therefore the *authors* were few, and their attempts feeble and ineffectual. At this distance of time, the facts may be more plausibly called in question, among such as do not attend to the internal marks of their truth and genuineness, or have little or no acquaintance with *antiquity*. But, when *Christianity* has been canvassed with the greatest exactness, it will appear to be proof. When it has again gone through the furnace, it will come out like pure gold, more bright and glorious. By the arguments which have been mentioned, and others of like nature, it gained ground, and made swift advances, for the first 300 years. Even then the *Christian religion* triumphed over all the opposition and malice of the world;—though the *Philosophers* did their utmost in arguing, the *Orators* harangued, the *Wits* and *Satyrists* ridiculed, and the powers of the world were its professed enemies and persecutors. *The power of truth was great and did prevail.* Pure and uncorrupt Christianity is the same excellent thing as ever, and will be victorious and triumph again. Such repeated examination can do it no harm, but greatly tends to clear up its nature, and make its evidence appear more bright and conspicuous. May truth and liberty daily gain ground, and mankind in general not abuse, but wisely improve them! For these are things of the greatest

greatest moment, and for which we must expect PART I.
to give an account to the righteous Governor and Judge of all. And I most earnestly wish that not only *Theophilus* and *Crito*, but *Pyrrho* also, and all the company, may at last be found among those who have loved truth, acknowledged its importance, imbraced it according to its worth and evidence, and been duly and steadily influenced by it.—*Theophilus* began to look round him, to see whether any more were expected from him; and observed the whole company in a sort of fixed attention, somewhat like that described by *Milton*.—


“ The angel ended, and in *Adam*’s ear

“ So charming left his voice, that he a while

“ Thought him still speaking, still stood fixt to
“ hear.”

But, when he found that, upon his making a long and solemn pause, no body spoke a word, he acquainted *Pyrrho* that he was now come to the conclusion of what he thought proper to offer by way of argument, and desired to know whether he had any remaining difficulties and objections; for he was ready to hear him speak in his turn, and to give him the best solutions he was able. Yes, said *Pyrrho*, I have several objections; too many to mention at present; and, therefore, I propose that we defer them to another time, and then enter on the second Part of our work. They all readily came into the proposal, and so the company broke up for that time.

PART II. DIALOGUE I.

PART II.  WHEN the company were come together the next evening, they entered upon the second part of their design. And *Crito*, as chairman, introduced it, by telling *Pyrrho*, that now was the time for him to produce his *objections*. But Sir (said he) I have a few things to propose to you, that we may proceed in a proper method, and bring the subject to a more speedy conclusion, viz. where *Theophilus* has already given you his solution of any of the difficulties, mentioned by your *author*, you would have recourse to that, and reserve it to be considered at your leisure; unless you have some further difficulty upon that head, which *Theophilus* has not touched upon. Another thing is, that you would chiefly restrict yourself to the objections made, or insinuated, by your *author*. Tho', if you see fit to add any other, or to try to give the objections of the *author* any additional force, we are at leisure to attend you, we will hear you with patience, and *Theophilus* will (I doubt not) do his best to give you full satisfaction. A third thing is, that, whereas your *author* has repeated the same objection, or started the same difficulty, up and down, in several parts of his book, tho' in various phrases and different manners,—you would do your best to collect the several objections, or difficulties, under their distinct heads, and mention them once for all, without returning to the same subject over and over again. *Pyrrho* consented to all these proposals, on condition *Theophilus* would, after all was finished, give him in writing the substance of the whole debate. *Theophilus* readily promised, he would. Upon which the conversation proceeded as follows,

OBJ. I.

Pyrrho having brought his *author* with him, and following his method, as far as he could consistently with *Crito's* orders, he produced what is said, p. 5. where it is asserted, in strong terms, "If once you come fairly to proving all things, be assured that you will never hold fast any thing. To the same purpose he asks this question, is it not most absurd to require a belief, if previous examination be requisite? And again, he says, if I am once left free to examine, I can by no means be tied up in the issue. P. 26. He represents a rational Faith, as always precarious. For what reason first established (says he) the same reason must ever have the power to repeal. P. 44. If a man is to be held only by his own reasonings,—what is this, but—stamping an equal mark of necessary truth upon a thousand opposite opinions? P. 96. He asserts that reason may chance to lead a man wrong, as well as right. P. 116. He insinuates that the same perspicuous proofs may determine one man to be a Christian, and may leave another as confirmed an infidel. And this is often intimated in other places. Now all these are strong objections against a rational Faith. For at this rate, a rationalist must ever remain, unsettled in any thing."

When Pyrrho had thus stated the objection, Theophilus answered, that these were some of the passages, from whence it had been inferred, that the *author* had no more regard for *natural religion* than for *reveled*. For, if *reason* be such an unfixed, uncertain, precarious thing, then *truth* and *falsehood* may be thereby equally proved, and *good* and *evil* be shewn to be alike excellent;—which is the old, *atheistic* scheme, and ends in universal confusion. Do you, therefore, apprehend it necessary, Pyrrho, to set aside all *natural religion*, in order to overthrow *Christianity*? As this objection appears to me, we must begin with first principles. I would, therefore,

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fore,

PART II.
Obj. 1.

PART II. fore, observe, that *good* has charms, of which *evil*
 is destitute; and that *truth* is attended with evi-
 dence, which *falsehood* never can have. This all
 men must perceive; they cannot, therefore, be in-
 nocent in making no distinction between *truth* and
falsehood, *good* and *evil*. The rational and examining
 believer, when he has *proved all things*, considers
 himself as obliged to *hold fast that which is good*.
 And what is *good* may, in all cases of importance,
 be readily distinguished from what is *evil*. Tho',
 therefore, he is *left free to examine*, yet he is *tied up*
in the issue;—not by the authority of men, but by
 the force of truth, by the reason of things, or by
 argument and evidence. I acknowledge that every
 man is at liberty to think and determine which
 way he pleases, with respect to men. For such
 persons, as do not interfere with the rights of civil
 society, men cannot lawfully restrain; nay, all such
 the magistrate ought to protect. But they, who
 do not honestly search, and profess and act ac-
 cording to light and evidence, must stand to the
 consequences before the bar of God and their own
 conscience, and must expect to be punished, be-
 cause they have not had the love of the truth,
 or have held it in unrighteousness. But I say
 again, that reason and evidence is that, by which
 a man ought to be determined, or resolved. *Your*
author does indeed say, *what reason first established, the*
same reason must ever have the power to repeal. Whereas
 the very reverse of this is true; and therefore a
rational Faith is of all others the least subject to
 change. A man, who has taken up his Faith
 without *reason* and *evidence*, may run from one ex-
 treme to another. *Enthusiasm* and *infidelity* are
 more nearly allied, than may at first view be ima-
 gined. For, however opposite they may appear,
 they in fact take place successively in the same man.
 He, who has for a time blindly followed the dic-
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tates of his own fancy, has, thro' the sinking of his spirits, and in a gloomy hour, doubted of every thing, for which he had once a great zeal, *but not a zeal according to knowledge*. That is, indeed, the natural effect of a mere mechanical religion, or implicate enthusiastic Faith. Having discovered some mistakes in the principles of his education, or found upon examination, that he had believed without evidence, he rashly and precipitately concludes there is no evidence; and therefore at once throws off all, and commences infidel. Whereas he, who builds upon *reason* and evidence, builds upon a rock, and is the most likely to continue in the Faith, grounded and settled. The evidence of truth, once discerned, hath the surest hold of an upright man, and is the best preservative against apostasy, or *infidelity*.

“ *Pyrrho* turned to his *author*, p. 8. and asked this question; *Can it be, by the exercise of their reason, that men can be required to think all alike?* For my *author* takes the Faith of Christians to consist in *an unity of opinion*: And *schisms* and *heresies* in holding *different opinions*, p. 65. and, p. 83, &c. he takes notice, that a *general rule of Faith* was instituted to prevent controversy, and to make all men intirely of the same mind. And, in many other places, he insinuates that *unity of opinion* is the Faith required of Christians. Now, as such a thing cannot be effected by *reason* and argument, it is ridiculous to talk of a *rational Faith*.”

Theophilus said that in this, as well as in many other things, he apprehended the *author* had contradicted himself. For he has declared, p. 76. *Though men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of one Faith, which they hold, not in unity of understanding; but as our Liturgy well expresses it, in the bond of peace, and unity of Spirit*. So that you see this inspired, infallible believer, this *author* of yours,

PART II.

who is not left liable, one moment, to a possibility of error and imposition, [see p. 60, 90.] is nevertheless found capable of contradicting himself, and of shifting his ideas, just as it will best suite his purpose. Do you imagine, *Pyrrho*, that those persons, in all ages and nations, whom *your author* represents as having Faith wrought in them, by the inspiration of the Spirit, without *reason* and without *scripture*, have all thought alike?—I know nothing of that (said *Pyrrho*.) For, though *my author* has frequently spoke of such a thing, I profess I do not understand it. And our sect in general take it to be all sneer; or put on for a mask to obscure his true design. But, whatever his design was, I apprehend that his arguments will prove that *Faith* has no foundation in *reason*; or (in other words) there is no reason for believing the Christian religion.

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points
alike.

Theophilus replied, that according to the New Testament, *Faith* did not consist in an *unity of opinion*; or in all Christians thinking in all points alike. And, indeed, as such a uniformity is in itself impossible, it cannot rationally be required. Mr. *Locke*, in his excellent treatise, of the *Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, &c. has shown that our Lord and his Apostles were so far from requiring men to think all alike, in every particular, that the one single proposition, which they have made essential to being a Christian, is, that *Jesus is the Christ*, otherwise called the *Messiah*, the Son of God, or Savior of men. Whoever, upon attending to the evidence, was convinced of this truth, acknowledged the belief of it, and took upon him the profession of this Faith by baptism, was supposed sufficiently to have acknowledged Christ's authority, and thereupon to be intitled to communion with any church, or Christian, upon the face of the earth. He had a title to all the privileges of being *within the pale*, and was looked upon as one that belonged to that
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one flock and one fold, which are united under Christ Jesus their common head and Lord. [See the *author*, p. 29 ; 44.] *Pyrrho* asked, whether the belief of that one proposition was all the Faith that was fundamental ? *Theophilus* answered, that is the Faith fundamental to being a Christian, or to the being intitled every where to Christian communion. But it is fundamental to the salvation of every man, that he be a sincere, honest, upright man ; and that he inquire and readily receive whatever he finds to be true, whether by reason or revelation. In acknowledging *Jesus to be the Christ*, he in effect takes him for head and Lord, and thereby lays himself under obligation to receive whatever truths he can find that Christ has any way reveled, as well as to practise every duty which he has enjoined. And it would be so far renouncing his allegiance to Christ, and disowning his divine mission and authority, to reject any doctrine or precept, that is stamped with Christ's authority. For that would, in all just construction, be to deny him to be the Christ, or a prophet and teacher sent from God. Believing *Jesus to be the Christ*, is believing the article that is fundamental to being a *Christian* ; and that which distinguishes *Christians* from *Jews*, *Heathens*, *Infidels*, or men of all other religions. But the knowlege, or explicate belief, of other articles of the Christian Faith, must vary, as mens capacities and opportunities vary. So that the number of *fundamentals*, in this last sense, cannot be determined ; because every Christian almost must have a distinct catalogue of *fundamentals*. Those, who have more leisure and better capacities, ought to understand and explicitly believe more ; but where lesse is given, there lesse will be required. [This is a fair and full answer to what *your author* has insinuated, p. 114.]—I would further add, that those persons, who live in *Heathen* or *Mahometan* countries, and all others, who never had the opportunity to hear of *Jesus's* being

PART II.

One article fundamental to being a Christian ; —the number of articles fundamental to salvation, undetermined.

PART II. *being the Christ*, and of seeing the evidences of that fundamental article, can be under no obligations to know, or believe it. For God requires of every man only according to their several abilities. But this does not excuse any who may know it if they please, and have sufficient opportunity for inquiring into the nature and evidence of that primary article of *Christianity*.—*Pyrrho* said, his *author* had brought some texts to prove, that all Christians ought to think exactly alike, or maintain an unity of opinion in all the articles of the Christian Faith: And he thought it better to mention them now, than to return to them hereafter.—*Theophilus* desired that the two texts, which the *author* had alleged to this purpose, might be taken as a specimen of his great understanding in the Scriptures, or of his integrity and faithfulness in the application of passages quoted from thence. In the former of them, the *Apostle* is exhorting the Christians at *Corinth* to unity in one particular point. Your *author* has left out that sentence, [*and that there be no divisions among you,*] which might have led his reader into the true meaning of the words. The case was this, St. Paul had planted that church, and when he had tarried with them about two years, he left them. Then it was that a false *Apostle* got in among them, and broke them into factions and parties, *one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; a third, I am of Cephas, or Peter; and a fourth, I am of Christ*. Now the *Apostle's* business was to reduce them all again under Christ, as their only head and Lord. And with that view he asks them, *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?* They had all been baptized into the name of Christ; and therefore should not have chosen to be called by any other person's name. And, in order to cure them of these unnatural schisms and divisions, he says (in the text we are now

con-

The 13th
text ex-
plained,
viz.

1 Cor. i.

10. See p.

65.

considering) *I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of* PART II.
our Lord Jesus Christ;—that name, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth ought to be named, that name in which all *Christians* ought to unite;—by that name I beseech you to unite; and that, in this respect, *you would all speak the same thing*, and every one of you say, *I am of Christ*, and not of *Peter*, or *Paul*, or any other man: *And that there be no divisions among you; but be perfectly joined together, upon this head, in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*—Now, is this any thing like an injunction to them to maintain an unity of opinion in all speculative points; or that, in this sense, they should think all alike?—A thing, which the Apostle knew to be impossible, as long as men see but in part, and know only in part.—The other text, which your author has brought to this purpose has no relation to unity of opinion, or their thinking all alike in all points; but relates to unity of affection, or cultivating mutual love, peace, and harmony. Some of the Christians at *Rome* had been *Jews*, others *Heathens*. The *Jewish* converts had not got rid of their scruples about that distinction of days and meats, which was enjoined by the law of *Moses*. The discourse begins, chap. xiv. 1. and is continued down to chap. xv. 13. In that discourse of the Apostle's, there are other two texts, which your author has misapplied, and which I choose now to explain as they stand in connection, and as there will be no necessity of returning to them hereafter. In The 14th
the first, your author represents the *Apostle* as saying, text explained,
that “*a novice, who might happen to be not yet quite so* Rom. xiv.
“*thoroughly in the persuasion,—[i. e. not so thoroughly 1. See p.*
“*convinced of the truth of the Christian religion,]* 41.
“*him that [in this sense] is weak in the Faith receive.*
“*Yes;—but how? Why, to instruct him better;—*
“*not by any means to confute or argue with him,—*
“*not to doubtful disputations.”* — Whereas St. Paul
did

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PART II. did not so much as suppose that either the *Jewish* or *Gentile* converts, at *Rome*, were *weak in the Faith*, as that implies any doubt of the truth of *Christianity*. But his direct design was to say, “ If a *Jewish* Christian cannot get over his scruples, with respect to that distinction of days and meats, which he hath always been taught to observe, while a *Jew*, and which is enjoined in *their law*,—though he be in this sense *weak in the Faith*, or not fully persuaded in his own mind of the lawfulness of laying aside such distinctions; do not, therefore, reject him, as if he was no Christian; but receive him in a kind and friendly manner. And, as it is a matter of indifference, do not be perpetually engaging him in disputes and controversies about it, but let him alone peaceably in his own way.” Now, here is one clear proof of the *Apostle’s* allowing variety of sentiments, and that he was far from requiring *all Christians to think alike*. For so it follows, ver. 2, &c. One man thinks this way, another that way; *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*. And again, *why dost thou judge thy brother* [for differing in opinion from thee?] *Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?* *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*; and there every one must answer for himself. And, therefore, they were not to judge, or censure, one another, for difference in opinion. The concluding ver. of that chap. runs thus, *He that doubteth is damned*, [or condemned,] *if he eat; because he eateth not of Faith*. *For whatsoever is not of Faith, is sin*. Here again *Faith* signifies the *persuasion of one’s own mind*, as ver. 1. For, if a *Jewish Christian* had eaten of meats, forbidden by the law of *Moses*, as unclean; before he had got rid of his scruples, concerning the abolishing of the ceremonial law;—he must have been justly condemned; because he did not do it *of Faith*, did not act therein according to the conviction of his own conscience. *For whatsoever is not of Faith*, [whatsoever a man doeth contrary

The 15th
text ex-
plained,
Rom. xiv.
23. See p.
16.

contrary to the conviction of his own conscience,] PART II.
is sin, i. e. offensive to God, and exposes a man to
condemnation, or punishment. This text is al-
leged by *your author*, p. 16. to prove that *good works*
done before Faith [in Christ] *have the nature of sin*.
Whereas by *Faith*, here, is not meant a man's im-
bracing the *Christian Faith*; for it was spoken con-
cerning persons, who had long ago imbraced the
Christian Faith;—but *Faith*, in this text, signifies no
more than the conviction, or full persuasion of a
man's own mind, which he should never contra-
dict in his practice. And, in the text, which led
me to say all this, the *Apostle* prays, that *the God*
of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-
minded one towards another;—not that they might
preserve an unity of sentiments, in the bonds of
ignorance; or an unity of profession, in the bonds
of hypocrisy; but an unity of affection;—that
they might live in peace and mutual love; and
neither the *Gentile Christians* despise the *Jewish* con-
verts for their scruples; nor the *Jewish Christians*
think hardly of the *Gentile* converts, who did not
think and act, in that respect, as they did; or
who did not make that distinction between days
and meats, enjoined by their law. The unity
here recommended, is otherwise expressed, ver. 2, 3.
Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to
edification; even as Christ did not please, but deny,
himself, for the good of others.

The 16th
text ex-
plained,
Rom. xv.
5. See p.
65.

Pyrrho turned to p. 4. and said, “ my author re- Obj. III.
“ presents one of your *rational* divines, as saying,
“ that *his own reason was the only guide, he could de-*
“ *pend upon, to come at the knowlege of every thing*
“ *his Maker designed he should know.* He does, in-
“ deed, in other respects, extoll the reason of
“ man; representing it, p. 1. as able to penetrate
“ *into any branch of humane science.* And, p. 86. he
“ *sais, that Mr. Boyle had already experienced a vast*
“ *reach*

“ reach and energy in humane reason, to all other pur-
 “ poses, except that of religion. But, though
 “ reason, in all other affairs, is able to do won-
 “ ders; yet he declares, p. 7. *I am fully persuaded,*
 “ *that the judging at all of religious matters is not the pro-*
 “ *per province of reason, or indeed an affair where she has*
 “ *any concern.* And, accordingly, p. 72, 73. he
 “ represents the man, who reasons the worst, as
 “ believing most; and the man, who reasons best,
 “ as believing the least. And when *reason* is im-
 “ ployed about matters of religion, he terms it *car-*
 “ *nal wisdom*, p. 84. viz. *the result of humane reason,*
 “ *every where industriously decried in the affair of believ-*
 “ *ing.* And, upon all such occasions, he speaks
 “ of our *reason*, as weak and imperfect, shallow,
 “ empty, vain and delusive; i. e. as good for
 “ nothing at all, nay, as dangerous and mischie-
 “ vous, when imployed about matters of religion.
 “ —Now, whatever views the *author* might have,
 “ in saying these and like things,—we from thence
 “ infer, that *reason has nothing to do with Faith*: Or,
 “ in other words, that, if *reason* were to be made
 “ use of in matters of religion, it would discover
 “ its flaws, and show that, at the bottom, *there*
 “ *is no reason at all to believe the Christian religion.*
 “ Thus you have *the objection*, at large; and I
 “ should be glad, *Theophilus*, to hear you give a
 “ clear and solid answer to it.”—*Theophilus* said,
 that the answer was plain and obvious; but that
 he must first settle the meaning of the objection.
 For he apprehended that the *author* had, in this,
 as well as many other particulars, misrepresented
 the *rational divines*. He has, indeed, insinuated,
 p. 4. that the *rational divines* look upon *reason*, as
 the only guide in matters of religion. So again, p. 40.
 and p. 56. as if they held, that *a man might attain to*
the belief of reveled truths, by the strength or assistance
of his natural faculties. And so, in other places.
 Whereas

Reason not
the only
guide.

Whereas the *rational divines* themselves would say, that *Reason is not the only guide*, in matters of religion: But that *Reason* and *Scripture* are both to be regarded: And that, without the Scriptures, *Reason*, or *mens natural faculties*, could never have found out many things, which are reveled in the *Bible*. They hold that, as *humane Reason* is greatly limited and imperfect, and had been exceedingly perverted and abused, *revelation* came in aid of it, and is a glorious, additional talent, for which they, who have the benefit of it, are accountable; but not those, who have no opportunity of coming acquainted with it. As to *Reason*, indeed, they cannot allow themselves to blaspheme, or speak evil of it; because they look upon it as *the candle of the Lord within them*; that gift of God, whereby they are rendered wiser than the beasts of the field, or the fowls of the air. *Reason* is the inseparable, as well as peculiar glory, of every intelligent being; which was not designed, like our clothes, to be put on and off at pleasure; but was intended for constant and perpetual use; and which we ought to make use of, not only in the affairs of this life, but much more in *religious* affairs, which are of the highest importance. By our understanding, or reason, we discern the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. By the use of our *Reason*, we find out that there is a *God*, who made the world, and presides over all; that he is indued with perfect wisdom, goodnesse and power, and therefore we may hope for a *revelation* from him. By our *Reason* we are to make trial of what is offered to us as a revelation from God: Otherwise, how could we distinguish between the *Koran of Mahomet*, and the *Bible*? By our *Reason*, we are to judge of the nature and evidence of what is proposed to us, under the notion of a *divine revelation*; that we may carefully distinguish the *true* revelation

The use of
Reason in
matters of
religion.

PART II. from all pretended and false ones. In the use of our *Reason*, or understanding, we are to study that *revelation*, and find out the scope and connection, and the meaning of the words and sentences, that we may know what is revealed, or what it contains. For, where there is no idea, there can be no assent, because that would be assenting to nothing; and assenting to nothing, is exactly the same thing with not assenting at all. Our assent can reach no further than our ideas of what we are to receive, nor properly rise higher than the proofs, or evidences, upon which we are to yield our assent. Again; by our *Reason*, or understanding, we are to distinguish between the one true interpretation of the *Scriptures*, and all such as are false and groundlesse. Thus *Reason* and *Faith* are very good friends, and never clash or interfere, never oppose, or contradict one another. Thus, though the *rational* divines are represented by *your author*, as holding *Reason to be the only guide in the affairs of religion*; and *your author* himself has contended, *that Reason has nothing to do in matters of religion*;—the *rational* divines hold neither of these opinions. They look upon *Reason* as one guide, and *Revelation* another;—not as opposed, but mutually aiding one another; both guiding them one way, and leading them to a wise conduct. The advantages of *Revelation* are many, and unspeakably great. But it is the proper province of *Reason*, or the understanding of man, to judge in religious matters; and an affair, of all others, in which *Reason* has the greatest concern. Indeed, if implicate *Faith* and blind credulity were the *Faith* that is required, then he, who reasons worst, or does not think or reason at all, would believe the most. But it is quite otherwise in that *religion*, which is *mens reasonable service*. And the New Testament commands us to *prove*, or examine *all things, that we may hold fast that which is good*:—Which is a strong presumptive proof, that there are no flaws to be discovered, that
it

it will stand the test of the most severe scrutiny, PART II. and bear the most strict examination, or, in other words, that there are sufficient reasons for believing the *Christian religion*: And the more you search and examine, the more you will find of the strength of such reasons, or of the number and goodnesse of such arguments and evidences.—As to the outcry against *Reason*, as *shallow*, *weak* and *imperfect*, and the like;—that, indeed should put us upon care and caution to guard against judging rashly and precipitately without examination and evidence; and to watch against all *false reasoning*, as subversive of *Revelation*, and of all that is excellent and good. One would, therefore, endeavor to detect and expose it in *your author*, and in all others; and by reasoning justly, set *religion* in as clear and amiable a light as one can. And as to *carnal Reason*, or *carnal Wisdom*,—that phrase, of which *your author* seems so very fond,—by that we are never in *Scripture*, to understand *the result of humane Reason*, [as he does, p. 84.] But the Reason of man trampled upon by fleshly lusts;—which is, therefore, justly termed *earthly*, *sensual* and *devilish*:—That is really vain and delusive, good for nothing, nay, dangerous and mischievous, when imployed about matters of religion. But that is, strictly and properly speaking, *no Reason* at all;—unlesse *Reason* perverted and abused by sense, appetite and passion, or *Reason* contradicted, and even destroyed, can still deserve the glorious name of *Reason*.—To sum up the answer to *this objection*;—if *your author*, by these ambiguous expressions, means, that *Reason* is looked upon, by those whom he calls *rational believers*, as *the sole guide in matters of religion*, and able to lead men to *Faith in Christ*, without a *revelation*; it is calumny and misrepresentation. If he intends to exclude the *Reason*, or understanding of man, from all concern in the affairs of *religion*; if

PART II. if we are not, by our *reasoning* from the works of creation and providence, to find out that there is a God; to inquire after a revelation from him; to try what is offered to us as a divine revelation; and to judge of the meaning, nature and evidence of it;—then indeed, the *rational* believers differ widely from him. For by what faculty can we judge of any thing; but by the *Reason*, or understanding God has given us?

Obj. IV. *Pyrrho* proceeded and said, “as to requiring and commanding men to *believe*, and threatening them for *unbelief*; which my *author* has produced as an *objection*, p. 8, &c. that I allow you have fully answered; provided your account of *Faith* be the *scriptural* account:—Concerning which I suspend my judgment, and reserve it to be considered, when you give me your arguments in writing. But there is an *objection*, p. 9. which is repeated, p. 69. and which it will require all your skill to resolve, viz. *Can a man be baptized into a rational religion? Or, where is Reason concerned, when babes accept the terms of salvation by deputy, and are intitled 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, by the Faith of their bondsmen, while as yet they have not the least share or symptom of understanding themselves; and,—they cannot well give a rational assent by proxy. Yet such is the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. And p. 69. he inquires, Can any thing be more natural, upon hearing of a rational Faith, than to interrogate, with the greatest simplicity, after our church-catechism;—why, then, are infants baptized; when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot possibly pretend to know any thing of the matter?—For they article,—without knowing it, to believe they know not what: And this act, which is properly*

“ properly no act at all, is received as something to all
 “ intents and purposes complete in itself, and comprizing
 “ the whole sum and extent of a just persuasion. Their
 “ living longer, to be capable to be informed what it is
 “ they have promised to believe, may possibly indanger,
 “ but cannot add to the terms of their contracted happi-
 “ nesse. The merits of the most finished conviction are
 “ already theirs by imputation. Their claim to heaven
 “ stands already allowed. And millions are accordingly,
 “ we know, actually saved upon the strength of the mere
 “ ceremony, without ever having had the capacity of
 “ exerting one single thought upon that, or any other sub-
 “ ject. So far are they all the while of knowing any
 “ thing why, that they do not so much as know what
 “ they believe; or, indeed, that they do believe any
 “ thing at all.—Now, is not this a most formida-
 “ ble argument against a rational Faith; inas-
 “ much as you have allowed it impossible to be-
 “ lieve without ideas, or understanding; and con-
 “ sequently impossible to give a rational assent by
 “ proxy?” Theophilus said, that the objection was
 founded on a mistaken notion of baptism; and
 therefore had no force in it. Your author, *Pyrrho*,
 knows very well that some Christians deny infant-
 baptism; and he had much better have done so,
 than have given up his understanding, and rational
 Christianity, all at once. But others, who are for
 infant-baptism, do not suppose any Faith to be re-
 quired in a child: Tho’ they would require it in a
Jew, Heathen or Mahometan, upon their coming
 over to Christianity, in riper years. The same
 ceremony may answer different ends upon different
 subjects, or in the case of different persons. Those
 in general, whom *John* baptized, confessed their
 sins, and were baptized, as penitents, for the re-
 mission of sins. And yet our Savior, who had no
 sin to confesse, nor any need for repentance, was
 baptized by *John*;—I suppose, to initiate him into
 his

No Faith
 required of
children,
 when they
 are baptiz-
 ed.

PART II.

his office, as the *great Messiah*. The circumcision of *Abraham* was to him, who was a believer; the seal of the righteousness of that Faith, which he had before he was circumcised. But could not be the seal of Faith unto infants at eight days old, to whom it was nevertheless commanded to be administered, merely as the initiating ceremony.—Many Christians argue in like manner about Christian-baptism, and suppose that it may signify some things, when applied to the adult, different from what it can signify, when applied to infants. To the last they look upon it as a mere initiating ceremony, by which a Christian parent, or sponsor, engages in a solemn manner to train up that child in what he apprehends to be a *rational religion*. By that external rite such a child is entered into the school of Christ, to be trained up in his religion; that he may learn the nature and evidence of it, as his understanding opens, and be taught to live in all that purity which the outward washing with water denotes, and which *Christianity* requires.—There are some, who represent baptism as absolutely necessary to salvation; who speak of persons as actually saved, upon the strength of the mere ceremony; who make children commence believers upon the imputed Faith of their bondsmen, or sureties; and make the sponsor say, *I believe*, and *it is my desire to be baptized*;—when he hath no design to be baptized himself, but hath actually been baptized many years before;—who pretend to baptize not with water only, but also with the *Holy Ghost*; or to connect with baptism the conferring of grace, or of the *Holy Spirit*; as was actually done, after baptism, by the *Apostles*; but which no other persons since have had the power of doing:—But as to those who hold such opinions, and make use of such forms,—let them answer for them.—Such things do not appear to me to be according
to

to the pleasure and ordinance of God himself in this point. PART II.

All I can do is, out of a sincere concern for *Christianity itself*, most humbly to breathe out my wishes and ardent prayers, that such stumbling-blocks may be taken out of the way; and that all parties of Christians would endeavor to cut off occasion from those who are perpetually seeking occasion to blaspheme that Holy Name, by the which we are called! However, the New Testament itself is a stranger to any such sentiments, or practices; and therefore *Christianity* is not, in the least, affected by this objection.

Pyrrho with some eagerness and impatience said, *Obj. V.* Suppose your answer to be true; yet there is another objection, which my *author* has glanced at, p. 9. but enlarged upon, p. 11, 12; 102. viz. “*If the assent required were to be a rational one, then Christianity ought not to be taught to children; for it would be highly wicked and unjust to prepossess mens tender minds in any manner, before they came to the full use of their rational faculties. Whereas parents are commanded to teach their children religion. Now, says he, this would be highly partial and unjust, even in parents themselves, upon the supposition of a rational Faith; for then the officious piety of what they call education, would be nothing else, but the undue cultivation of the most notorious and palpable prejudices. This he calls unfairly anticipating the strength of the supposed evidence,—and powerfully retaining them of a party, before the means of trial are put into their hands. Whereas, if men were to judge by their reason, this, instead of claiming gratitude for the office, could admit of no excuse or glosse for the injury. Now, is not this most acutely urged against those who plead for laying aside prejudice, cultivating free inquiry, and giving a rational assent to Christianity?*” *Theophilus* replied, Some persons, I

PART II. I am sensible, think every thing acute, which seems to support or favor *Scepticism*. However, I can find no acutenesse in the objection, but think it proceeds upon suppositions which *rational* Christians will not allow. Can it be called *prepossessing* the tender minds of children, to teach them, as their understandings open, and reason begins to exert itself, the difference between good and evil, the excellence of moral virtue, and that *revelation* comes in aid of virtue, and greatly promotes it;—to point out to them the nature and evidence of true religion, in such a plain and familiar manner as is suited to their capacities. Children may be taught to reason sooner and better than some men imagine; and those parents, who are for a rational religion, do not anticipate, but gradually lay before them, the strength of the evidence, step by step, as they are able to receive it. Bigots and Enthusiasts may dictate as infallible, and *take care to represent all future discoveries and alterations as something beyond measure heinous and detestible*, and fancy *they have been doing nothing*, unless they have done that. [See the author, p. 12.] But rational believers will inculcate upon their children, and that early and frequently, to learn to judge for themselves; and as they grow up, to *make farther search for the certainty of that knowledge in which they have been instructed*, to inquire into the grounds of their Faith, and to be ready to give unto every man, who desires it, a reason of the hope that is in them. Your author has adapted some of the arguments of the church of Rome; and, p. 82; 89. represents an absolute unacquaintance with these matters, as the most effectual security for our inviolable adherence to them; and that ignorance is, in plain terms, the mother of all devotion.—That putting out the eyes of men is certainly the only method in nature to make them see all alike. With these views, the church of Rome denies the Scripture to the common people, and will

will not allow them to read it in their mother tongue. But *rational* believers put the *Scripture* into the hands of their children, and teach them to read it betimes:— that *Scripture*, where the most rational and excellent doctrine is mixed with the strongest evidence; and the history abounds with the best examples, and the purest and noblest maxims of moral virtue and manly piety. And they not only put them upon reading the Scriptures, but caution them against the pernicious maxims of the *church of Rome*, and assert the liberty of private judgment, and the inviolable rights of conscience; recommending it to them to see with their own eyes, and judge with their own understandings: not to give a blind and implicate, but a rational assent, an assent founded upon knowledge and evidence;— *to prove, or examine, all things, and then hold fast that which is good.* This is the way in which the New Testament directs parents to bring up their children. And, if they neglect this office, *it can admit of no excuse, or glosse, for the injury.* What your author has said, p. 14. may, with a very little variation, point out the grounds and reasons of such an education. For, suppose the young and tender minds of children were wholly neglected, or left without the care and culture of a religious education,— *meanwhile the powers of darkness, and their own corrupt dispositions, will be fatally gaining ground upon them every day, long before Faith, or religion, can have raised her forces to come in to their protection, or be qualified in any degree to deal with them.* Their passions will be beforehand with their reason, in spite of all her pretensions. The habits of vice will be taking deep root the while, unless the preparations be expeditious, and the motions of those, to whose care they are committed, be watchful to oppose them; they must needs have got the start in their advances; before religion can, without a proper education and early instructions, have made any considera-

Children should be taught to reason, and to practise virtue.

ble progresse, in those salutary discoveries, which are to regulate and subdue them. Now, for want of this timely notice, and being early taught the secret of distinguishing between good and evil, they may, more than probably, have embarked in wrong measures at setting out, and be lost in the power of habit beyond recovery, before they know where they are. Unprovided of all restraining considerations, and at a losse for a better guide, they will, most probably, of course give up themselves wholly to their natural biasse, and the law of inclination. And, when they have lived the best part of their lives thus at adventure, and strayed so far without the lessons of some sage counsellor and guide, the excellent rules of Christianity will go near, when they arrive, to find them actually engaged already, and beyond the power of precept to retrieve. For want of early intelligence, and a religious education, they may be involved in the most horrible degrees of guilt, before they can be better informed: So that, if they have not the benefit of those instructions at first, it will be to very little purpose to have them at all.— Thus I think that, in this as well as many other particulars, what is said by your author in one place, may be fairly applied to overthrow what he has said in another. And I leave every one to judge on which side the strength of the argument lies.—But those you have mentioned, Pyrrho, are not the only passages in your author to that purpose. For, p. 4. he represents a rational divine as having said,— That a man could evidently never be jealous enough of opinions contracted by education;—that to shake hands fairly with all we had been taught, was the first step to be taken, if ever we meant to be fixed on any rational persuasion. P. 9. The first step towards the use of reason, is to explode, under the name of prejudice, all the effect of our education. And so, to the same purpose in other places.— From whence one would imagine that he looked upon all prepossessions in our education, in behalf of a rational

rational Faith, to be wrong ; but that there was no PART II.
 danger of contracting prejudices on the other side, and thereby obstructing a due regard to Christianity, suppose it should at last be found true:— which was the very case with respect to the *Jews* and *Heathens*, when the gospel first appeared in the world, and which rendered it difficult for many of them to see the evidence in a proper light, and to be duely influenced by it. Men will form some notions in their child-hood,— call them *prejudices* or *prepossession*s, or what you please. And a careless or wicked education is as great an obstruction to truth, as can well be supposed, especially such truth as condemns ignorance and vice. And it is of great advantage to have truth and evidence early laid before us, and to be taught to reason closely and betimes. If I had learned *Euclid's Elements* from one of my tutors, when I was young, must I needs be thought to disbelieve it all, when I set my self to examine it over again ? There is, indeed, a *complication of circumstances to be determined upon, consequences to be regularly drawn, and a summoning of evidence in the case.* And yet, notwithstanding *there are all these preliminaries to be gone through, the issue may with certainty be foretold, and I may be enjoined and prescribed to search and examine, 'till I see evidence to lead to such and such conclusions.* [And all this, notwithstanding what *your author* has said, p. 110.] Nor is suspending my judgment, 'till I have re-examined, any thing like a doubt, or disbelief, of what I had been taught ; neither is *questioning in religion* the same thing with *denying*, nor *suspending one's judgment* (*though in order to be better informed*) ever represented in *Scripture*, as a *professed and criminal opposition.* [See the *author*, p. 101.] On the contrary the *Scripture*, (as has been often observed) enjoins us to *prove, or examine, all things*, in order to *hold fast that which is good, and abstain from every*

PART II. *every kind of evil.* Pyrrho interposed and said, that

~~~~~ for the propositions in *Euclid* there was demonstration, which there was not for a *rational* Faith. And therefore the two cases were not parallel. *Theophilus* answered, That all he designed thereby was to intimate, that there might be cases put where it would be right to teach children one thing rather than another, or rather than not to teach them at all; that such an education could not be called an undue-prepossessing their minds, unless teaching them truth and evidence could be called so: That he had instanced in a clear case, but that in all other cases, where there was prevailing evidence, the argument would hold, though not so strongly: That *rational* Christians apprehend that there is prevailing and abundant evidence of the truth of Christianity; and therefore that is a sufficient warrant for them to teach it to their children. But (says *Theophilus*) I do not wonder that some persons talk in the strain they do. For, if they can persuade youth to throw off all the impressions of a religious education, they are an easy prey to them, and will readily and most implicitly become their humble disciples. Whereas, while the impressions of piety and virtue remain, which they have received from their education, it is found to be a more difficult matter to bring them over to infidelity. Well, says *Pyrrho*, But do not you allow, *Theophilus*, that a man ought to return of course to neutrality, the first moment he begins to think for himself? Will not you grant that a man can never be too jealous of opinions contracted by education? Or that the first step towards the use of reason is to explode, under the name of prejudice, all the effect of our education? You are reckoned to think more freely than many. Why, then, should not you grant these things? *Theophilus* replied, That he was in principle for mens not taking their religion upon trust, but carefully re-examining all that  
that

that had been taught them. He thought it was PART II. their duty to be *always improving* their *reason*, in order to *ratify*, or *reverse*, what their *parents* had taught them (not as they themselves pleased, or as humor and inclination led them; but) as reason, truth and evidence should fairly determine. But he apprehended there might be danger of a man's renouncing all his principles at once, and being turned adrift, without any principles for his moral and religious conduct. Do not youth owe so much deference to their parents and friends, who have manifested the tenderest and most affectionate regard to their welfare, as to examine the principles, which they instilled into their minds, one by one, and see how far they are rational and well-grounded; and which of them is destitute of evidence, and ought to be renounced? Your *author* often speaks of mere doubting, or suspending one's judgment, though in order to be informed, as commencing *infidel*. Must a man, then, needs commence *infidel*, before he has examined into the grounds and reasons of *Christianity*, and seen whether he might not have been a *rational* Christian? I am in judgment for free inquiry, and would not have men abide by any thing, but what has sufficient evidence of truth and goodnesse. But yet, it appears to me, that *a man may be too jealous and suspicious of the principles received by education*;— as well as on the other hand too carelesse and negligent about examining. Some have been educated in bigotry and implicate Faith. Their parents, or tutors, have mixed and confounded the system of a party, or their own private sentiments, with the pure gospel of Christ; or perhaps represented these things as the gospel itself. Upon finding out such mistakes, they grow *jealous and suspicious* of every thing that is called *Christianity*, and so throw off all together. Which is just like throwing away  
gold.

## PART II.



Tempta-  
tions to  
throw off  
*Christia-  
nity.*

In what  
principles  
youth are  
to be edu-  
cated, in  
order to a  
rational  
Faith.

gold, because it is mixed with some baser metal ; or concluding that there is no such thing as gold, because they have met with some counterfeit coin, which was paid them as gold, but proves not so. In such a case, a wise man would be for distinguishing the gold from the dross, and counterfeit metal. And, when they were separated, he would easily know which to part with. Again ; as throwing off Christianity sets a man at liberty from several rules, which he may (possibly) look upon as so many ties or uneasy restraints ;— the temptations from riches, ambition, or sensual pleasures, may make such impressions upon his mind, as to cause him to desire to get rid of the principles of a religious education, and from under the check and controul of the rules of the gospel ; that he may be more at liberty to follow his own course of life at pleasure, and without disturbance. From thence he is led to cavil at the gospel, and (like men that have told a lie so often, 'till at last they come to believe it themselves) he persuades himself that *Christianity* is all a fable and delusion, an unnecessary restraint upon the liberties of mankind, which ought for the future to be treated as the subject of mirth and ridicule, or as romance and fiction.— These are cases which may be supposed. Perhaps they are cases that have actually happened.— There is a real, fixed, and unchangable difference between virtue and vice, good and evil. And, if such as are the public teachers of Christianity, and all Christian parents and tutors in general, [see the *author*, p. 96 ; 99, &c.] would endeavor *fairly and fully to state the case of religion, and even of its fundamentals* ; to lay before them the nature and evidence of it ; and the principal objections, together with the solid and *rational* answers ;— Would they but inure them betimes, not to lift themselves in a party, but to keep their minds open to conviction ; —would

—would they but *assure* them of their *protection and* PART II.  
*good-will*, as long as they discovered a love to truth and virtue;— would they but instill into them an abhorrence of all bigotry, and of every kind and degree of persecution;— would they but cherish in them a sincere benevolence to all mankind;—would they thus teach them not to cavil at this, or contend for that, blindly and implicitly; but to reason fairly and honestly, and proportion their Faith to their ideas of *what* they are to believe, and the reasons and arguments *why*;— We should not see so many declare for *infidelity*, without ever having known what *Christianity* is, or having once carefully examined into the excellence of its nature, and the great strength, compass, and extent of its evidence.— P. 74. your *author* mentions the case of *Julian the apostate*, who, in the malice of his heart, prohibited the children of *Christians* from the advantages of a school-education. And one party of *Christians* were going to try the same method in order to suppress another.—Your *author* intimates that, granting them the schools, and giving them full liberty to teach philosophy and the liberal sciences, would have contributed to have ruined the *Christians*, or quite destroyed their religion. Whereas *Julian*, in that particular, judged more justly; and saw that, by liberty and free inquiry, *Christianity* gained ground and triumphed. And schools, that would promote such an education as has been mentioned, would cause it to triumph again. The *Apostle* thought fit to give the *Christians* this caution, *Be- The 17th*  
*ware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain text, or*  
*deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of Col. ii. 8.*  
*the world, and not after Christ:— Which was design- explained.*  
 ed, most probably, to guard them against the ju- See p. 74,  
 daizing *Christians*, who had blended the false phi- 75.  
 losophy of the heathens with their religion. But  
 the

the *Apostle's* caution is as applicable to guard us against all false philosophy, or the narrow principles of a party, and a blind zeal for systems and prescribed forms, with or without conviction. Bigotry, and a party spirit, as well as ignorance and vice, have the most direct tendency to render men unbelievers. But there can arise no danger to truth and virtue from a truly liberal education, or an honest, faithful inquiry and examination.—In several places your *author* seems to argue, as if a man were to give up the principles of education, even though they had been nothing but what were wise and right. But, suppose a man hath been educated in a country where the true religion prevails, and by parents and tutors who have led him into a just and rational Faith;—Must he needs look upon himself in the same situation with a *native of California*, or the *Cape*, [as your *author* argues, p. 113.] when he actually is not in such a situation? Are there no *advantages of birth and education*? There is certainly a difference between knowledge and ignorance; and it is an unspeakable advantage to be early acquainted with the former. But a propensity to cavil and wrangle, to endless distrust and contradiction, is as unphilosophical and unreasonable, as credulity is, on the other hand, or a forwardness to assent without examination.—We ought unquestionably to reverse whatever mistakes our parents, or tutors, have led us into; but let us take care not to run too fast, and rashly reverse any thing else. The advantages of a pious and virtuous education, such as rational Christians, according to their own professed sentiments, are obliged to give their children and pupils, are much preferable to any advantages which can be justly supposed to arise from leaving children without any education at all.—When *Theophilus* had answered

ed this objection, the company broke up for that time ;— after *Pyrrho* had promised to come prepared with more objections against their next meeting.

PART II.

## DIALOGUE II.

AT their next meeting *Crito* directed *Pyrrho* to *Obj. VI.* proceed, without loss of time, to such other objections as he should think proper to allege. Well then (said *Pyrrho*) let us hear what *Theophilus* can say to my *author's* objection, p. 13, &c. viz. "That a rational Faith may not come time enough to regulate our practice. We ought to believe from the first setting out in life ; Faith ought to be a constant principle of action ;— and therefore there can be no time to deliberate and examine." *Theophilus* said that the *author* had furnished him with the proper answer, in saying, p. 35. *It is, indeed, but justice due to the glorious scheme of our salvation, to shew that no such absurd and preposterous project was ever offered to be set on foot in the cause ; that the fountain of all wisdom did, indeed, never form, or amuse us with any such strange proposal as, — " Judge whether you have time or not ; judge whether you are judges or not ; judge all for yourselves, and yet judge all alike."* And, p. 93. *As long as we are thus actually employed in the search, we may make ourselves perfectly easy in that point. God will, on his part, never certainly expect more of us than he enables us to perform. A sincere desire to know and do his will must supply, 'till his good time, the deficiency of the actual knowledge.* *Pyrrho* allowed that his *author* had said these things ; but had withal intimated that they did not amount to a just and full answer to his objection. On the contrary, he had taken away the force of such replies, by what he had added, p. 15, &c. from the 13th of the 39 *Articles of the Church of England*, viz. That good

**PART II.** *works done before Faith in Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God,—but have the nature of sin.* Theophilus said that, before men are capable of understanding, no Faith can be required of them; any more than reason or virtue can be expected of infants, before they become moral agents: That Christianity does not destroy the religion of nature, but supposes and confirms it; for they perfectly accord, and give mutual help to one another: That if a man act right, according to the best light he has, *i. e.* either from a regard to the reason and fitness of things; or to the will of God, as discoverable by the light of nature; or to the gospel of *Jesus Christ*; such a conduct must be pleasing to God; but that he was likely to act best who had a regard to all these; and that it was the duty of such, as were acquainted with them all, to have a regard to them all. This, he said, appeared to him to be the voice of right reason:—That, according to the scriptural account, *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth* were both righteous before God; though Christ was not yet borne;—*Nathanael* was an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no guile, before he believed in *Jesus*, or had conversed with him:—*Cornelius* was a devout man and feared God; and his prayers and alms were acceptable to God, before he believed in Christ, or had had the gospel preached unto him. And *St Peter* hath assured us that, in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. *St. Paul*, likewise, hath declared that God will render unto every man according to his works;—unto the Jew first, and then unto the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.—And finally, some of the fathers of the Christian Church did not scruple to call such men as *Socrates* and *Aristides*, Christians, as well as *Abraham* and *Job*. *Pyrrho* intimated that his author had farther strengthened the objection, by alleging

alleging that, "if we may, with a safe conscience, PART II.  
 "suspend our judgment, 'till we have searched  
 "and got further information, we may as well  
 "continue to doubt on, and suspend all our lives.  
 "But, suppose death should overtake us, before  
 "we have finished our inquiry, what apologie can  
 "we make? or what have we to trust to?"

*Theophilus* replied, that, as to that question, *If suspending one's judgment be justifiable any one moment of our lives, who shall tell me what moment it ceases to be so?* The answer was easy and obvious, viz. As soon as you have sufficient evidence, you cease to be justifiable, or innocent, in rejecting it. Suppose such persons, as have made an honest use of their reason, and any other advantages afforded them, should die before the nature and evidences of *Christianity* have been laid before them, or they have had any opportunity to come acquainted with them;—the want of Faith could not be imputed unto such persons as a crime. Every man, in being formed a rational creature, has the law of *The 18th*  
*God writ upon his heart*; which arises, not from his *text ex-*  
 being inspired, as your author contends; but, as *plained.*  
*St. Paul* hath explained himself, by having consci- *Rom. ii.*  
 ence planted in him. From whence the heathens, *14, 15.*  
 who had no written reveled law, like the *Scriptures*, were led by nature to do the things contain- *See p. 60.*  
 ed in the law. So that they, having no such law, were a law unto themselves; and showed the work of the law to be written upon their hearts, when their consciences accused them for doing wrong, but applauded them for behaving well. As every man has that *law of nature* writ upon his heart in creation, every man ought to attend to it, or regard the dictates of his own conscience. And when they, who have only that light, attend to it, it is all that can be required at their hands. But, when a man may be acquainted with the na-  
 ture

## PART II.



The 19<sup>th</sup>  
text ex-  
plained,  
viz. 1 Joh.  
iii. 20, 21.  
See p. 4.

ture and evidence of *Christianity*, he cannot be innocent in neglecting to attend to, and examine it; or in refusing to believe and imbrace, and be influenced by it, according to the evidence and importance of it. 'Till then, a man's own heart must condemn him, and much more God, who is greater than his heart, and knows all things. But, when a man has taken due pains to examine, and acts sincerely and uprightly in consequence of such an inquiry, then he may hope for the Divine approbation: *For if our hearts condemn us not, we must needs have a just confidence towards God.*

## Obj. VII.

*Pyrrho* went on and said, "If natural religion be sufficient, unto such as have no opportunity to come acquainted with the gospel, *what are become, in the mean time, of all the privileges of the pale? Where are the mighty advantages of insisting in the chosen flock; if this heaven be once presumed thus equally capable of admitting out-lyers upon the same footing, and allowed a common receptacle for the Partisans on both sides of the question?*" [See the author, p. 44, &c.] And he said upon this supposition, *there had been very little need of the expence of a miracle for the reducing of St. Paul to the state of Christianity and Apostleship, who might, according to this account, have succeeded just as well in the quality of Saul the persecutor.* And he returns to this objection again, p. 94. and says, *If we can disbelieve (as they term it) with a safe conscience, we shall do as well without it, as with it.*" *Theophilus* answered, that tho' the blind are not obliged to see; yet those who have good eyes, and shut them against the light, or neglect to make a right use of them, are culpable. In like manner, those, who labor under *invincible ignorance*, or any *natural impediment*, are quite out of the case, and may be justly reckoned among the *sincere unbelievers*, who have *just exceptions* to any Faith's being required

required of them. But all those who reject the gospel, when fairly laid before them, and the evidences stated in a clear and distinct manner, must be reckoned among *the wilfully obstinate and disobedient*. I do not pretend to determine, as to particular persons, which ought to be ranked among the one sort, or the other. But God is judge of the case; and will not admit *Partisans* of the last sort, when he comes to dispense rewards to every man according to his deeds. He will then make a remarkable distinction between such as have embraced truth and attended to evidence, and such as have hated the light, and turned away their eyes from it.—*Saul the persecutor verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*. And, as far as he acted according to the present dictates of his own conscience, he did right. But it was his great crime, that he did not first examine into the truth and evidence of the gospel, before he engaged in persecuting the professors of it. It was, indeed, a considerable mitigation of his crime, that *he did it ignorantly, and in unbelief*. Had he done it maliciously and contrary to his own conscience, I do not suppose that a miracle would have been worked for his conversion. But, as it was, *the expence of a miracle* was highly proper, and the consequences of his conversion very considerable. For he thereby, instead of a plague, became an unspeakable blessing, to mankind. And, as to himself, *his first zeal* and behavior was far from being *equally meritorious*; since it was a zeal without knowledge, and therefore defective in a grand point.—Though he was prevailingly sincere, yet not intirely so; his happiness, therefore, must have been greatly diminished by such a draw-back upon his virtue, or so great a blemish in his character.—The privileges of being *within the pale*, are evident, if it be allowed to be an advantage

PART II.

The danger of infidelity.

The 20th text explained, viz. Acts xxvi. 9, &c. See P. 46.

The conversion of Saul.

## PART II.

tage to be educated, in this country or family, rather than that; or to have good instructions, and pious and virtuous examples, rather than the contrary. Have not *Christians* plainer rules and better instructions than the rest of mankind? And, are not these excellent rules enforced by the most rational motives and the strongest sanctions? By becoming a Christian, *Saul* was convinced of the great evil of persecution, he saw his duty in a clearer manner, and was enabled to make a much greater progress in true holiness, and consequently was prepared for a more exalted state in glory. For, though in every nation, he who feareth God and worketh righteousness, will be accepted of him; yet the *Christian heaven* will be sufficiently distinguished, if Christians, in proportion to their superior advantages, excel in knowledge and virtue. In that case, they *could not do as well without* the Christian revelation, *as with it*; because that, well improved, will of course prepare them for higher degrees of glory and felicity in the future state of recompence.

The Christian happiness more exalted.

Obj. VIII. My author (said *Pyrrho*) has another formidable objection, p. 10, &c. "concerning men's praying for the obtaining, confirming, and increasing their Faith;—and asks this question, *In what light must a rationalist regard all application to heaven, by prayer, for such a purpose?* For, if Faith is to be obtained and confirmed by the use of our reason, he insinuates that all prayer is vain and ridiculous. Or, if we are to pray for the increase of our Faith,—there is a strong presumption that our labors of every other kind were to be spared throughout the whole progress; and that it was to be introduced after a like manner, by methods purely divine, and without any of our assistance, or any endeavors and pains of our own."—*Theophilus* observed, that some *Enthusiasts* had pretended, that God was to do all for them, without any labors, endeavors,

indeavors, or care of their own. But *rational* PART II. Christians have discouraged such an opinion, and earnestly recommended it to mankind to use the powers and faculties which God hath given them, and likewise to pray for successe and a blessing from God; in whose hand, and at whose disposal, all events are. Nor do they disavow all future use of reason for their security, but desire the continuance of their reasonable powers, and that with a full purpose and resolution ever to make use of them. However he said, he believed that many Christians, as well as others, had mistaken the notion of *Prayer*, and the great end and design of it;—though *Christianity* itself is quite innocent, and gives no grounds for such a mistake. We ought to consider that when we pray, it is not for the sake of any benefit of God's, but our own. We do not pray to inform him, or to move him to depart from any of his wise measures of conduct. But our design ought to be to cultivate in ourselves such a temper of mind and course of life, as may render us most acceptable to the Deity. (a) *The Apostles* said unto their Lord, Increase our Faith. He had, in the preceding verses, been endeavoring to increase their charity. And, after *Jesus* had worked several miracles himself, and given the *Apostles* power also to work miracles, yet they very unreasonably continued to doubt, ever now and then, of his power to work any more miracles; upon which he had, before this, very justly reprov'd them as persons of little Faith: They being conscious of this, and perhaps fearing such another reproof, addressed themselves to him to the following purpose, "Now you have taught us our duty in that respect, and increased our charity; Lord, increase our Faith also." If, by *Faith*, be here signified a mere act of the understanding, or the bare assent of the mind, then *increase of evidence*, or a

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(a) See the End and Design of Prayer. In a letter to a friend. 2d edition.

The 21<sup>st</sup> text explained, Luke xvii. 5. See p. 10.

## PART II.

more clear perception upon a greater attention to the evidence already afforded, *is the only accession to be made to a rational persuasion*: And it is very probable that this was their meaning, “ Lord, “ exert your divine power in giving us some further evidence of your being able to assist us in “ working miracles.” *Jesus* by his answer intimated that, if they duely attended to the evidence he had already afforded them, it was sufficient to induce them to believe he could enable them to perform the greatest miracles. Though he did not say, he would grant them no more. On the contrary, he afterwards worked many more miracles, in their presence, and thereby answered their petition, and *increased their Faith*. This seems to have been the sense in which the *Apostles* prayed, *Lord, increase our Faith*. But, suppose we were to make use of the same petition, we might do it very rationally, and that to the following purpose, “ Lord, “ preserve us in the right use of our faculties, continue to us our reasonable powers, and the means “ of knowledge and conviction which we already “ have, that we may examine more carefully the “ nature and evidence of all true religion, and “ more clearly perceive their force and excellence. “ Or grant us what further evidences thou shalt “ see proper, either from the continued vigor “ and right use of our own faculties, the instructions of pious and learned men, or by any other “ gracious assistance that is consistent with thy “ wise method of governing moral agents, or “ which thou shalt see proper for us in our present state of trial and imperfection. Deliver us “ from all criminal prejudices, from all biasse of “ wrong affections, from an undue regard to “ men, or to the things of this present world, and “ from all that aversion to truth which arises from “ a love to vice. May we love truth and search “ after

We may  
rationally  
pray,  
*Lord, in-  
crease our  
Faith.*

“ after it, with care and diligence, as for hid trea-  
 “ sure; may we readily imbrace it, boldly and  
 “ steadily professe it, and be influenced by it in all  
 “ our ways. And may we continually be grow-  
 “ ing in this virtuous and amiable disposition of  
 “ mind, ’till at last we attain the end of our Faith,  
 “ even the salvation of our souls.” Now, what  
 is there ridiculous in such a prayer? Or how is it  
 any way inconsistent with the use of our reason, or  
 with our own labor and diligence in reading the  
 Scriptures, and searching into the grounds of our  
 Faith, that we may not only believe, but be con-  
 firmed and established therein more and more?

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My *author*, sais *Pyrrho*, has an objection, p. 46. *Obj. IX.*  
 which will shake one of *your strong holds*, *Theophilus*.  
 “ I remember you talked so much and so plausibly  
 “ about the *miracles* worked by *Jesus Christ* and his  
 “ Apostles, and represented them as so many in num-  
 “ ber, so various in their kinds, and performed in so  
 “ many different places; you set the evidence of  
 “ Christ’s resurrection in so lively a manner before  
 “ mine eyes; and placed the argument from the  
 “ great and astonishing plenty of spiritual gifts,  
 “ miraculous powers, after Christ’s ascension, in  
 “ so strong a point of light; that, if I had not  
 “ been professedly of the *doubting sect*, I should  
 “ have been moved to pay some regard to such  
 “ evidence. But my *author* has made me easy,  
 “ by saying, *that miracles have, time out of mind,*  
 “ *been undoubtedly performed, as well in favor of*  
 “ *false doctrines; and therefore can never be singly, and*  
 “ *of themselves alone, any certain marks of a true.* This  
 “ the Scripture itself confesses, when it warns us of lying  
 “ wonders and false Christs, &c.” *Theophilus* ob-  
 served that the *author* was very often sanguine without  
 evidence, and apt to doubt where the evidence was  
 abundant. He roundly affirms *that miracles have,*  
*time out of mind, been undoubtedly performed in favor*

*of false doctrines.* As judicious men have very much doubted of the truth of that fact, multitudes of the pretended miracles of the *church of Rome* have been found out, and shown to be mere impostures and delusions. And Dr. Sykes, in his late discourse on *miracles*, hath made it appear that *Moses* never ascribes what the *Magicians of Egypt* did, to evil spirits, or to any invisible and miraculous power. Nor will your *author's* quotations from *Scripture* prove what he asserts, to be undoubted. \*For by *lying wonders*, the Apostle meant pretended miracles. And as to *false Christs* and false prophets, they did arise and delude the people. But that theirs also were *lying wonders*, will easily appear from consulting *Josephus* and other authors. —*Pyrrho* asked, “whether there was not sufficient

The 22d  
and 23d  
texts ex-  
plained.  
2 Theff. ii.  
9. Mat.  
xxiv. 24.  
See p. 46.

“historical evidence for several such miracles?” *Theophilus* said, the evidence did not appear any thing like so full and satisfactory to him, as that for the miracles of *Jesus* and his Apostles. They were neither so clearly predicted, nor so fully confessed by adversaries, nor attended with such remarkable circumstances. But, suppose there were a case, in some respects so circumstanced, as that we could not come at the bottom of it, this ought not to invalidate the evidence for all the miraculous operations ascribed to *Jesus* and his Apostles;—any more than a court of judicature could wisely and justly reject the evidence of several faithful witnesses; because one or two, who had by others been accounted faithful and credible men, had proved guilty of perjury (a).—*Pyrrho* inquired further, “whether particular institutions both in *Paganism* and *Popery* had not been introduced, or “supported, by miracles?” *Theophilus* said that the cases were by no means parallel. For, how different a thing is it to carry on such pretensions, where the magistrate and the power of a nation favors them,

(a) See  
Bp. But-  
ler's Ana-  
logy, &c.

them, and it is dangerous to pry and examine too closely;—in comparison of a number of poor men, not educated in the schools, nor acquainted with the world, gaining credit all their lives after, and bringing over numerous converts, in opposition to all the malice of the *Priests*, the ridicule of men of wit, and the power of the lords and rulers of the earth; who were all disposed to have discovered the cheat, if there had been any; and who had sufficient power to have examined things to the bottom? How did the *French* prophets dwindle away, when Dr. *Emms* failed to rise again, as they had pretended he would? And what better could *Jesus* or his *Apostles* have succeeded, if their miracles had not been real? The *Roman* magistrate was as jealous, and the *Jews* more malicious against them; and yet they could not prove one cheat among such a number of miracles as were ascribed to *Jesus* and his disciples.—As to what your *author* alleges of miracles not being singly, and of themselves alone, any certain marks of a true doctrine;—'tis an hard matter to know to what purpose he has said that;—when he soon after confesses, that it is, indeed, the most, that their strongest advocates insist upon, in behalf of their weight and interest in the question, that they concur only in contributing their part with other evidences. And rational divines do not teach men to rest on one argument, singly and alone, for the foundation of their Faith;—but assert that it is sufficient if two, or three, or all the arguments in conjunction produce, or effect, a rational assent to Christianity. There is one thing, which your *author* has mentioned in this place, that seems to contradict the main design of his book, viz. that the *Scripture* sends us to trace analogies, and consult more known relations, &c. to have recourse to a surer standard, and even to call in the aid of moral

## PART II.

*ral considerations.* Surprising! That the Scripture, which never appeals to our understandings, should send us to trace analogies, &c. That, though the judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of reason, or indeed an affair where she has any concern; yet we must judge of analogies, and consult more known relations; have recourse to a surer standard, and even call in the aid of moral considerations.—And that the Scripture sends us to do all this.—Surely, the good man had forgot himself; and other people will, even from his concessions, be ready to conclude, that the Scripture directs men to *reason* upon evidence and recommends a *rational* Faith. But these things, I suppose, slipped from him unawares, and proceeded from his great eagerness to overthrow the evidence of *miracles*, which *Christians* generally look upon, to be very considerable.

Object. X.

Then *Pyrrho*, with some confusion in his countenance, went on thus; “ My author, p. 47. has represented miracles as *natural effects of gospel-benevolence*: And says, that *all this wonderful and miraculous evidence—was indeed, in strictness, but the natural effect of their doctrine*: [i. e. the doctrine of *Jesus* and his Apostles,] *instead of any supernatural proof of its veracity*. Now, from hence I would willingly form an objection against the proof of Christianity, which you deduce from miracles. But really I am here quite at a loss, and cannot conceive what my author means. For suppose the *casting out demons*, and the *healing of the sick*, to be things of the *most beneficial tendency, and futable instances of that universal benevolence they were recommending*; yet, what then!—If they miraculously cast out demons, and healed the sick, *Theophilus* will allege, they must have had such a power, otherwise their benevolence could not have produced such effects, nor could such benefits have risen

“ to

“ to any. And, if they had such a miraculous PART II.  
 “ power, and exerted it in such a number and  
 “ variety of instances, I know, you will further  
 “ infer, that it must needs have greatly tended to  
 “ establish their mission and doctrine.—So that I  
 “ here give up my *author*, as too refined for me ;  
 “ or, to speak plainly, quite unintelligible.”—*The-*  
*ophilus* said, let your *author* mean what he will, I  
 am well satisfied it could not affect the truth of  
 Christianity, or overthrow a *rational* Faith. But I  
 am not obliged to find out a meaning for a man  
 who writes so obscurely ; and especially where his  
 friend *Pyrrho*, who has studied him so much, has  
 given him up. But this I will observe that, A connec-  
 though I do not understand how *miracles* of any tion be-  
 kind could be *the natural effects of any doctrine*, how tween the  
 rational and *benevolent* forever ; yet it is evident doctrine  
 there is a propriety in our Lord’s miracles, and a and mira-  
cles of  
Jesus.  
 remarkable connection between them and the doc-  
 trine he taught. He, who professed to cure the  
 diseases of mens minds, actually cured the diseases  
 of their bodies. He, who came as a light unto the  
 world, and to give light to the understandings of  
 those who sate in darknesse, miraculously opened  
 the eyes of the blind. He, who came to rouse  
 mens attention to the best things, actually un-  
 stopped the ears of the deaf. He, who brought  
 glad tidings of great joy, and preached the gospel  
 of peace, worked many beneficent miracles as *the*  
*Prince of Peace*, who came to *save mens lives, and not to*  
*destroy*. He, who declared he had power on earth  
 to forgive sins, cured the diseases that had been  
 caused by sin : and it was all one, in that case, to  
 forgive the sin which had been the cause of the  
 disease, or to cure the disease which had been the  
 punishment of the sin. He, who assured them  
 that he had power to raise all mankind from the  
 dead at the last day ; and in that sense, and upon  
 that

PART II. that account, *was the resurrection and the life*;—  
 did, as the most proper proof and specimen, actually raise several dead persons to life again.—These were, indeed, proofs and effects of very great and extensive benevolence; but they were withal, at the same time, the clearest proofs of his having an extraordinary and miraculous power;—to which he often and justly appealed in proof of his divine mission and doctrine.

Obj. XI. *Pyrrho* proceeded to another topic, on which sceptical men generally take care to declaim. His *author* had but just touched upon it, but that was sufficient to give him an handle to enlarge, from what he had heard, or read, elsewhere. “I find, says he, that my *author*, p. 61. has some doubts arising from the various readings, and insinuates that the Scriptures are corrupted. He intimates that such *manuscript authorities and paper revelations want repairs*; that *multiplied transcripts are only copies and representations at second hand*; that such a work *must be liable, from a thousand causes, to fall short, and deviate from its great exemplar*. And, that we might not misunderstand him, he adds, *the opposers of the gospel say, indeed, that this is the case; and insist strongly that the sacred text has been actually much adulterated:—and he will not take upon him to contradict them*. I remember, *Theophilus*, that, towards the conclusion of the first part of our design, you were very earnest in proving the truth and necessity of the books of the New Testament; but you did not touch upon the objection arising from the various readings.” *Theophilus*, replied, that he did not take that to be any objection, but the contrary. The matter (as it appears to me, says he) is plainly this.—Printing was not invented till many hundred years after Christ; and therefore the books of the New Testament (like all other

other antient books) were transcribed, that copies might be multiplied, and various churches and particular persons might have these books to peruse as they wanted, or chose. Now, from any books being frequently transcribed, various readings will arise of course. And it is said, that Dr. *Mill* collected above 30,000 various readings, in the books of the New Testament.—What then!—The more frequently any book is transcribed, the further it spreads, and the better it is known, so much the more easily might it be proved to be false and counterfeit, if it were really such. To bring this as an objection against Christianity, or against the books of the New Testament, appears to me to be quite ridiculous. The vast number of copies, collected with so much expence and industry, and collated with so laudable a curiosity and diligence, instead of weakening, ascertains the truth of *Christianity*, and establishes it beyond all reasonable doubt. We find, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14. That, in the days of king *Josiah*, *Hilkiab the priest found, in the house of the Lord, a book of the law of the Lord, given by Moses*. The adversaries of revelation have been ready to triumph upon this, as if the whole was a forgery of *Hilkiab*. (a) It is very probable, indeed, that copies of the law were then very scarce, and that this found by *Hilkiab* was, to his surprize, an authentic and original copy. But that the whole should have been, at that time, a forgery of *Hilkiab's*, is evidently impossible; because the very being and polity of the nation, as well as their religion, was founded upon the acknowledgment of the law of *Moses*. And, to confirm these observations, we find that, in a foregoing reign, 2 Chron. xvii. 7, &c. the king sent to the princes—to teach in the cities of *Judah*, and with them he sent Levites;—and they taught in *Judah*, and had the book of the law of

PART II.

The various readings in the New Testament confirm the genuineness of the books.

(a) See Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures, p. 424.

**PART II.** *the Lord with them ; and went about, throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.* If it could have been proved that there was only that one copy of the *books of Moses*, at that time ; how would our adversaries have insinuated, or rather roundly affirmed, that it was all a forgery of some crafty priest, or some artful, designing man?—though that could not have been certainly, or justly concluded from thence. The like objection would have been equally applicable to the New Testament if, when printing was invented, there had been found but one copy. Then, indeed, there would have been no *various readings* : But notwithstanding that, the true friends of *revelation* would have wished and inquired for a second copy, and a third, and so on ; to give more authority to the *sacred books*, and to render the text more secure and exact. For it might have been asked, “ if these were the books which contained the religion of the Christians, and Christianity had such a vast spread all over the then known world, how came it to pass that they had so few copies of their grand charter ? ” The number of copies and antient versions, collected from various and distant parts of the world, from *Europe, Asia, and Africa*, is the most effectual answer to such an objection. This is so apparent that they would gladly raise an objection from the very great number of copies,—which (instead of an objection) must certainly turn out greatly in favor of *Christianity*.—*Pyrrho* interposed here, and said, “ does not such a vast variety of readings render the *text* of scripture precarious ? ” *Theophilus* answered, that *Crito* had promised to help him out, where *critical* learning was required ; and therefore he begged of him, that he would give them an account of what he had observed in that respect. *Crito* would have excused himself, by pleading that he was in the chair,

chair, and that it did not become him to meddle, PART II. any further than to keep order. But *Pyrrho* thought this one of his *strong holds*, and wanted *Crito's* opinion concerning it. And, as they seemed both so desirous that he should give them his sentiments, he was willing to gratify them, and said,—He had spent some of his leisure hours in examining into that matter, and had not only observed what some others had done in that affair; but had consulted all the various readings, which *Dr. Mill* and *Kuster* had collected upon nine of the books of the New Testament, and designed to go through all the rest. I find, says he, that *Dr. Mill* has not only collated several *antient manuscripts*, but has also collected a multitude of various readings from the *Greek* and *Latin Fathers* for 500 years after Christ; as likewise from several *antient versions*, and some *printed copies*. As to the *Fathers*, they seem frequently to have quoted texts of Scripture by memory; or merely to have alluded to such and such passages; or to have given the sense, without being scrupulous about the words. The various readings not so many, as has been thought. As to the *translations*, *Dr. Mill* has confessed, that he did not understand four of the most celebrated *oriental versions*. He therefore took the several readings in them from a *Latin* translation, which in many places is not a literal rendering of those *versions*. And it is well known that translators commonly take a liberty to expresse the sense, without a literal rendering of the words. And, therefore, we are not to infer that, when a version expresses some thought in a different manner, therefore the original itself was different from the present, or common reading; much lesse can we infer *that* from a translation of a translation. Again; it ought to be observed that either *Dr. Mill*, or his friends who collated them, have been guilty of some errors and omissions in their quot-

ing the antient *manuscripts*, *versions* and *fathers*, as well as have sometimes reckoned the same copy twice, or under two different names. Nor is it any wonder at all that, in such a long, laborious, and difficult work, there should be some slips and mistakes, considering that (a) every difference of spelling in the least word or article of speech, or in the order of placing the words, without any real change, has been industriously registered. Now take away the dubious readings which arise from the foregoing mistakes, and the number of different readings will be greatly diminished. Again; there are a multitude of various readings, mentioned by Dr. *Mill* and *Kuster*, which make little or no difference as to the sense. To give the *English* reader some notion of this, I might produce that phrase [*our Lord Jesus Christ* ;] which is in some copies *Jesus*, in others *Christ*, in others *Jesus Christ* ; some have it *Jesus Christ the Lord*, some read *our Lord* ; some, *the Lord Jesus Christ*, and some again *our Lord Jesus Christ* ; and finally, some perhaps read differently from all these. Now, consider how often that expression occurs in the New Testament, and in what a variety these words may be used, and you may easily imagine how incredible a number of different readings must arise, merely from the variation of that phrase ; and yet the sense will be much the same, take which of them you please. I could give more such instances ; but I forbear.—Other *antient authors* of a smaller size than the New Testament, would have many more various readings, if we had an equal number of *manuscripts* and *versions* of them,—as plainly appears from collating the few copies which now remain. And yet the text of those *authors* is sufficient to give the sense, in general, to the great satisfaction of learned men ;—who would, nevertheless, be glad to have more various

(a) See Dr. Bentley's *Philoleutherus Lipsiensis*, p. 64, &c.

various readings, in order to render them more correct.—Your *author* brings in the *opposers of the gospel*, as insisting strongly upon it, that the sacred text has been actually much adulterated. I apprehend that the charge is false. They ought not to talk thus in general; but point out the particular places, where such corruptions have been made. And, then, they will soon find that learned men will detect their mistakes, and settle the true reading, in all points of moment, in the same manner that is done in *Terence*, *Virgil*, or *Tully*. The New Testament is in a much better condition than the *classic authors*, and has suffered less injury, by the hand of time, than any profane *author* of equal antiquity. However, for my own part, I heartily wish that *Dr. Bentley's Greek Testament* may be published, imperfect as it is: And that *Weststein* may live to finish and publish his also. For truth can never suffer, but always gains ground, by examination. Nor ought the mere mistake of a transcriber to be termed an *adulteration*; when either the scope of the place, or the next copy you meet with, shows it to have been no more than a slip of the pen, or a mere innocent and undesigned mistake. Gentlemen do not act fairly, in going on to throw out such general insinuations. If they would do any thing to purpose, they ought to prove, by an induction of particular instances, that the various readings have rendered the sacred text so precarious, as to alter one article of Faith, or one rule of worship or practice. However the fact is, that the various readings have not extinguished the light of any one chapter, or so disguised Christianity, but that every feature of it remains the same as ever.—Since this is known to be the case by all who are acquainted with this sort of learning, the objection taken from the various readings can have no weight with men of candor and true solid learning:

PART II.

The text not adulterated; but ascertained, by the various readings.

Mistakes easily rectified.

PART II.

ing: But (as *Theophilus* hath observed) the multitude of copies and translations, wrote in various ages, and collected from many and very distant parts of the world, must be one signal evidence in favor of Christianity: And, instead of rendering the books themselves of uncertain authority, or the sacred text precarious, — the books must, on that very account, be of more established authority, and the sacred text ascertained with greater clearness and certainty. *Theophilus* thanked *Crito* for his kind assistance on this head. And *Pyrrho*, having enough of this argument, desired leave to defer the mention of any more objections till they met the next evening.

## DIALOGUE III.

Obj. XII. *PYRRHO* began this evening's conference, by saying, " that his *author* had taken notice, " p. 48. of *Jesus's* being upon the reserve, in working miracles, *whenever he happened among unbelieving company*: And, p. 68. of his being so particularly cautious of exposing his person after his resurrection to any but his friends.—I design hereafter to call upon *Theophilus* to give an account of " of these particulars. But such insinuations have " led me, at present, to make another objection, " viz. Suppose the books of the New Testament " to be genuine, and that the various readings do " not render the sacred text precarious:—Yet all " this is only the testimony of friends. And what " dependence can one have on persons who were " themselves parties, and concerned to promote " the spread of Christianity in the world? The " testimony of an enemy would be of weight; but " we ought to be upon our guard, when the parties themselves bear record to the cause which " they have espoused."—*Theophilus* had, formerly, with

with astonishment heard this objection from PART II. others; but now very coolly said to *Pyrrho*;—  
 Sir, if you had turned this as often in your mind as I have done, perhaps the difficulty would have vanished, and you would have spared me the labor of answering such an *objection*. You say, *the testimony of an enemy would be of weight*: Pray, what testimony do you expect from enemies? *Pliny*, *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and other authors mention the *Christians* as numerous in the times of the *Cæsars*, as well as afterwards; and describe them as taking their name and religion from *Jesus Christ*. *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*, the *Jewish Talmud*, and the *Coran* of *Mahomet*, all allow that *Jesus* worked *miracles*; and the last of these ascribes to him miracles of various kinds, and even acknowledges that he raised the dead. Methinks, these are very considerable testimonies from enemies. But suppose we had no such acknowledgements; must we reject all direct and positive evidence, 'till enemies will vouchsafe to bear testimony to what makes against themselves? Let us closely consider the objection.—You would have a full and faithful account of the doctrine and miracles of Christ, from his enemies;—are not you unreasonable in expecting any such thing? Would you think it necessary to your reputation, as an honest man, to have your character first attested by your enemies, before you would desire your friends should believe it? Let us suppose the things related in the *gospel* to be facts,—that *Jesus* taught such a doctrine, and worked such miracles; and could you reasonably expect a faithful history of these things from his professed enemies, continuing such? Would not that be, in effect, a man's writing an history, fairly and honestly, to condemn himself? Would not all the world be ready to cry out against him, and say, “Do you know that *Jesus* preached so excellent a doctrine,  
 “ and

None but  
*Christians*  
 could be  
 expected  
 to have  
 wrote a  
 faithful ac-  
 count of  
*Christi-*  
*anity.*

PART II. “ and do you allow him to have worked so many  
 “ and such great miracles, and yet continue not  
 “ to believe in him ; nay, even his open and pro-  
 “ fessed enemy ? ” Surely, no man of any sense  
 or modesty would write such an history, which  
 would so directly turn to his own confusion. And,  
 if the friends of *Jesus* be the most proper, nay,  
 the only persons, that can rationally be supposed  
 to have wrote such an history, who could be more  
 proper than the *Apostles* themselves, and their in-  
 timate friends and companions, who were eye and  
 ear-witnesses to many of the things which they re-  
 late ? A circumstance which cannot be affirmed of  
 many celebrated *historians*, whose histories are ne-  
 vertheleſſe of great esteem and credit ;—but this  
 circumstance ought greatly to add to the credibi-  
 lity of the gospel-history. I might also observe,  
 that the testimony of *Saul* and other persons, who,  
 from enemies and persecutors, became Christians,  
 was in some sort the testimony of enemies. And  
 further ; we have, in effect, an appeal to enemies,  
 in the Epistles of *St. Paul*, and particularly in his  
 two Epistles to the *Corinthians* (a). A letter, di-  
 rected to a whole church, has some marks of being  
 genuine, not merely beyond a letter writ to a  
 single person, but above that of an historical nar-  
 rative, left to the world at large. There was in  
 the church of *Corinth*, a false Apostle, who was a  
 bitter enemy of *St. Paul*, and had raised a conside-  
 rable party, or faction, in that church against him.  
 And the *Apostle* wrote to them, and asserted that  
 he had an Apostolic commission ; and that, as a  
 proof of it, *the signs of an Apostle had been wrought*  
*among them*, in that he performed several kinds of  
 miracles there ;—that that very church which he  
 himself had planted, abounded with *spiritual gifts*  
 and *miraculous powers*, which they had received  
 from him. These things he speaks of, as well  
 known

(a) See Bp.  
*Butler's*  
*Analogy,*  
 &c.

known facts, concerning which his *enemies* could have no doubt. He reproves them as persons who without question had such *gifts*; and had greatly abused them; he depreciates such *gifts* in comparison of *moral virtues*, and speaks of those *miraculous powers* in the same easy, assured manner, that any one would speak to another of a thing that was as familiar and as well known to them, as any thing in the world. Now, would a man of common sense have talked so among enemies, who would have taken pleasure in exposing him, and in over-turning all his labors, if these things had not been fact? The like things might be observed, as to the Epistle to the *Galatians*. Here, then, we may perceive some peculiar advantages in some of the *sacred* books being writ by way of *letters*. For, though to an inattentive person they may appear to be merely occasional writings, in which none, but those they were directed to, can have any concern:—Yet they are calculated for the most extensive and general use. And, from hence we have, in effect, the attestation of enemies, or an appeal to them, for the miraculous evidences of *Christianity*, which then abounded among them. Nor must I omit the following fine observation, viz. *That these two Epistles to the Corinthians afford a proof of Christianity detached from all the rest; which is a thing of weight, and also a proof of a nature and kind peculiar to itself.*

*Pyrrho* again objected and said, “ If the Christian  
“ religion be so excellent and rational in itself,  
“ and was attended with such abundant evidence,  
“ at its first publication, how came it to pass that  
“ it then labored under all that contempt in the eyes of  
“ the lettered world; and that some Christians, and  
“ even very learned men, have looked upon *Reason*  
“ and *Scripture* to be utterly repugnant to one ano-  
“ ther? [See this objection urged by my author,

Obj. XIII.

**PART II.** "p. 70, &c."] *Theophilus* said, he supposed that no man would dare to say but that there has always been a false philosophy and a false kind of learning, as well as a true. And, as to *the lettered world*, continued he, when the gospel made its appearance, you may call them *philosophers, orators*, or what you please; but though some few, in many respects, thought and spoke justly; yet several of them had such notions of God and providence, and a future state, as appear to be the most weak and silly, ridiculous and absurd; and were, likewise, men of very immoral characters. These were *the children of this world*, who were more tenacious of absurdities, and more assiduous in their vicious pursuits, than pious and virtuous men frequently are in adhering to truth and the practice of righteousness, which are things of infinitely more importance. And, therefore, it might be justly said,

The 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> texts explained, Luke xvi. 8. Jam. iii. 15. See p. 72, 73. *that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*—They were, indeed, *wise men after the flesh*, and theirs was *the wisdom from beneath, which is carnal, earthly, sensual and devilish.*

No wonder, therefore, that *such wisdom* should be *foolishness with God*; or that it should be said, concerning such men, that *God thinketh not as man thinketh*, inasmuch as *what is highly esteemed among men* is frequently *an abomination in the sight of God*;

—or that *the world*, by such a sort of *wisdom*, *knew not God*. For what could be more ridiculous than their absurd notions, and superstitious or wicked practices? And, though such men, by the world around them, might be thought to have the most perfect knowledge of God, virtue, and a future state,

and to bid the fairest for happiness;—and such men, as the *Apostles*, might be looked upon as *vain babblers*, in comparison of the *lettered world*; though the gospel might be termed *the foolishness of preaching*, and be thought incapable of reforming and

saving

saving mankind, or of making them to renounce PART II.  
 temporal things with a view to everlasting happi-  
 ness; — though *with men*, I say, *this was impossible*; The 29th  
*yet with God all things are possible.* He can raise up and 30th  
 men the least likely, and by them give mankind texts ex-  
 the best notions of virtue and happiness. Such plained,  
 persons, indeed, could never approve of false phi- Mat. xix.  
 losophy, false religion, or vice. No; *they had not* 26. Eph.  
*so learned Christ.* But all true, moral philosophy, iv. 20. See  
 all right notions of God, providence, and a future p. 71, 72.  
 state, fell in with the Christian revelation, and was  
 thereby supported and confirmed. But that the con-  
 ceited *philosopher*, who doated upon his idle, ground-  
 less speculations; the *orator*, who was fond of  
 words and phrases, fine cadences, and well-turned  
 periods; and in general, all that were devoted to  
 vice, and resolved to continue in it; — that such, I  
 say, should reject the gospel, is nothing wonderful.  
 Such men do not easily part with their prejudices  
 and vices. And *the lettered world* are generally  
 more prejudiced than others. Some men, who  
 have had a very great name for profound and  
 uncommon learning, have entertained as many  
 groundless notions, and lived as bad lives, as their  
 inferiors among the common people. The *wisdom*  
 of these men, therefore, must so far be *folly*; and  
 an opposition to the gospel from such principles,  
 no other than *profane and vain babling, and oppo-*  
*sition of science falsely so called.* Persons of a meaner The 31st  
 education, or of inferior, natural, or acquired talents, text ex-  
 might be much more humble and teachable, and plained,  
 have a greater relish for truth and righteousness; 1 Tim. vi.  
 and consequently be much better prepared for 20. See p.  
 embracing the gospel. — As the *philosophers* were  
 tenacious of their groundless opinions, and the  
*great men* dazzled with the pomp and grandeur of  
 the world; it is not to be admired, that *not many*  
*wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many*  
noble,

Reason and  
religion,  
not incon-  
sistent.

Lord  
Bacon.

noble, imbraced the gospel, when it was not attended with the riches, honors, and glories of this world. And some learned men among the *Christians* have talked as weakly, about the inconsistency between *reason* and *religion*, as if they had meant to betray *religion*, and give the greatest advantage to its enemies;—though I believe, that was far from their intention. Bp. *Beveridge* hath assigned it as a reason for his believing one article of Faith, that *he could not conceive, or understand it*. And of another he saith, *If I could not believe it to be true; I should, therefore, have the more cause to believe it to be so*. One of the *fathers* of the Christian church went further and said, *I believe, because it is impossible*. Lord *Bacon* hath the following most remarkable expressions, “The prerogative of God extends  
“over the whole man, and reaches both to his  
“will and his reason; so that man must absolutely  
“renounce himself and submit to God. And,  
“therefore, as we are obliged to obey the divine  
“law, though our will murmur against it; so are  
“we obliged to believe the word of God, though  
“our reason be shocked at it. For, if we should  
“believe only such things as are agreeable to our  
“reason; we assent to the matter, and not to the  
“author, which is no more than we do to a sus-  
“pected witness. But the Faith, imputed to  
“*Abraham* for righteousness, consisted in a particu-  
“lar laughed at by *Sarah*; who, in that respect,  
“was an image of the natural reason. And,  
“therefore, *the more absurd and impossible any divine*  
“*mystery is, the greater honor we do to God in be-*  
“*lieving it, and so much the more noble the victory*  
“*of Faith.*” [*De augmentis Scientiarum*, vol. I. p. 261, 262.] Dr. *Shaw*’s note on the place, is,  
“On the foundation, here laid down, it cannot  
“appear incredible that the author should write  
“the *characteristics of a believing Christian in para-*  
doxes

“ *doxes and seeming contradictions*, which makes the  
 “ *sixteenth supplement* to this general work. For  
 “ he is here expresse, that *Reason and Faith* are  
 “ *opposites*. And, if this position be allowed,  
 “ *revelation will then, perhaps, stand on its just foun-*  
 “ *dation.*” Again, your author, *Pyrrho*, has quoted  
 some of the most weak and trifling things, p. 103,  
 &c. from Bp. *Beveridge’s Private Thoughts and Reso-*  
*lutions*;—a book wrote by him in his younger days,  
 and before he had carefully studied the Scriptures,  
 and which his Lordship, during his life-time, wise-  
 ly suppressed. *His Resolutions* were, indeed, pious;  
 but *his Private Thoughts*, as Dr. *Whitby* hath very  
 justly observed, *had much better have been kept private*  
*still*. And, as to all that Lord *Bacon*, or others,  
 have said, concerning the utter inconsistency be-  
 tween *reason and religion*; believing things, *because*  
*we cannot understand them*, or *because they are impossible*,  
 and the like;—I would observe, that any of the  
 greatest absurdities, even *transubstantiation* itself,  
 might, at this rate, be proved true, and a most  
 important article of the Christian Faith. For, as  
 Archbp. *Tillotson* hath said, with the most agree-  
 able raillery and acutenesse, “ As for the contra-  
 “ *dictions contained in this doctrine*, it is but tell-  
 “ *ing the people* (as they in effect do) that con-  
 “ *tradictions ought to be no scruples in the way*  
 “ *of Faith*; that the more impossible any thing  
 “ *is*, the fitter it is to be believed; that it is not  
 “ *praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities*; but  
 “ *that this is the gallantry and heroical power of*  
 “ *Faith*; this is the way to oblige God Almighty  
 “ *for ever to us, to believe flat and downright contra-*  
 “ *dictions.*” Lord *Bacon* is acknowledged, con-  
 sidering the times and all circumstances, to have  
 been, in many respects, *a prodigy of learning*; and  
 Bp. *Beveridge* was a pious (though not the most  
 judicious) man. But their notions are nothing to  
 us,

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Bp.  
Beveridge.

Archbp.  
Tillotson.

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us, any further than they are supported by *Reason* or *Scripture*. We call no man master upon earth; we allow no man to have dominion over our Faith. Churches and councils, fathers and moderns, learned men and celebrated divines, have erred, and their determinations are not to be implicitly received. If human authority, or the sayings of great men, carried any argument in them, we could allege men of as great names, who have said directly the contrary to what Lord Bacon and others have said;—such as *Locke* and *Newton*,—names, whose very mention must ever carry their own weight with them, without any superfluous encomiums in their behalf. Names, that always have, and always will be heard with the greatest reverence and regard, as long as true Piety and Christianity have any remaining footsteps in the world. But we build nothing upon their authority, nor glory in their having said so and so; but that they have proved what they have said, and clearly made out the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion unto all that have eyes to see, and ears to hear.

—Your author, p. 72. has observed that, “when Christianity first appeared, it was an inquiring age;”—Suppose we allow it, as we readily do;—What then? What would he infer from that? The gospel spread in that inquiring age, when (as he asserts) reason was in the highest request and reputation;—and spread with most amazing swiftness. This, one would naturally think, was one great proof of its reasonableness and excellence;—considering the means and methods that were taken to spread it, which were all fair and equitable;—being an appeal to the reason, or understandings of men. But some authors can argue any way. If it had been an age of ignorance and thick darkness, like the ninth and following centuries, when Popery had darkened the light of the gospel, and almost demolished all learning and common sense;

Christi-  
anity first  
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sense;—then they would never have ceased haranguing upon the stupidity of the age, when *Christianity* first appeared; and how easy it must have been, at such a time, to impose upon mankind, and spread the most egregious absurdities. But, as it cannot be denied to have been an age of learning and free inquiry, above most that can be named; and, as they are forced to confess, that *Christianity* nevertheless then spread, even in such polite places as *Greece* and *Rome*, the very seats of the liberal arts and sciences, and where they most of all flourished;—they would gladly try to turn this into an objection against a *rational* Faith; though they are almost at a loss to know which way to state the difficulty. However, we glory in it, that Christianity made its appearance, and gained ground in so inquiring an age, and ascribe its great success, in such an age, to its being so rational and excellent in its own nature, and attended with such bright and illustrious evidence.

*Pyrrho* said, “That the behavior of some *divines*, and of the civil magistrate in Christian countries, plainly manifested that they did not look upon Christianity as a thing to be examined, or that a *rational* Faith was the thing required. For, as to the *divines*, my author has shown, p. 87, &c. that they do not design men should examine freely, when all their exhortations of that kind end thus: *In God’s name judge freely all of you for yourselves; but then be sure to judge all just as we do, or expect to stand to the consequences, &c.* Hence it is that they are every day venting their loud complaints against the liberty of the press, and so ready to appeal at every turn to the secular arm. Hence their loud and hideous outcries and popular charges, of affronting establishment,

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“ *lissment, innovation, and flying in the face of the laws,*  
 “ &c. Hence the cry of *heresy, and the committing*  
 “ *to the flames the pestilential writings* of those that  
 “ oppose them; *and their persons too, whenever it has*  
 “ *been in their power.* Hence it is that every can-  
 “ didate for the ministry is required to declare his  
 “ *unfeigned assent and consent* to all the established  
 “ *articles and forms,* at his first setting out, and  
 “ that immediately and without hesitation.—Though  
 “ some of them are very subtile and *mysterious,* and  
 “ he has not time, or perhaps capacity, as yet, to  
 “ understand the nature, and discern the evidence of  
 “ them.—Hence it is that young divines are frown-  
 “ ed upon, and treated very ill by their superiors, if  
 “ they manifest an inquiring temper, presume to  
 “ doubt, or show any want of due deference and  
 “ humble submission. From all which it appears,  
 “ that they look upon *questioning in religion to be the*  
 “ same thing with *denying; and that all suspending one’s*  
 “ *judgment (though in order to be better informed) is, in*  
 “ *this case, a professed and criminal opposition.*—As to  
 “ the *magistrate,* he establishes an *act of uniformity*  
 “ for the Faith and worship of all his subjects; he  
 “ imposes *tests, as the terms of society,* and disquali-  
 “ fies some of the most peaceable and loyal subjects  
 “ from serving their king and their country; un-  
 “ less they will believe, or profess to believe, and  
 “ worship, in the way that he prescribes. For it  
 “ is supposed that every man is obliged of course  
 “ to take his country’s Faith and religion for his  
 “ own. The *magistrate,* therefore, has frequently  
 “ executed the sentence of the *priests;* and the  
 “ *priest* looked upon the sword of the *magistrate*  
 “ as his best weapon and surest defence. These  
 “ practices of *princes and priests,* of our lawful su-  
 “ periors both in church and state, plainly show  
 “ that a *rational* Faith is not required; that we  
 “ ought implicitly to submit to authority, and be  
 “ directed

“ directed by our lawful superiors and guides ; PART II.  
 “ that *religion* is not a proper subject for examina-  
 “ tion and debate, nor ought to be a matter of  
 “ our understanding and choice.”—*Theophilus* said, The liber-  
 he thought *Pyrrho* had known him better than pro- ty of pri-  
 pose such an objection to him, who was in judg- vate judg-  
 ment against all such practices, whether in *magi-* ment.

*strates* or *divines*. And so is the holy *Scripture*, which is  
 our standard, and which commands us *to examine all*  
*things, in order to hold fast that which is good.* All I  
 contend for, says he, is a scriptural Christianity, and  
 that to be made out by fair reasoning, and the li-  
 berty of private judgment. I utterly detest all  
 tyranny and persecution, all force and constraint  
 in matters of religion, and would have *every man*  
*to be fully persuaded in his own mind*, as every man  
 must finally bear his own burthen, and every one give  
 an account of himself unto God, and therefore ought  
 to be left to his own master to stand, or fall. As  
 to the *magistrate*; he may argue and instruct, like  
 other men, but he ought not to interpose with his  
 power, to bribe some, and discourage others.  
 I look upon *the imposing any prescribed opinions, as*  
*the terms of society, to be the most odious and flagrant*  
*instance of absurd partiality, cruelty and oppression.*

The magistrate ought, indeed, to use his power Religion  
 to maintain the peace and liberty of all his subjects, not to be  
 'till they subvert the rights of society, or break the inforced  
 peace. But, as to *religion*, he ought to leave every one by the  
 to think for himself, because it is matter of pure un- sword.  
 derstanding and choice.—As to *divines*, I should think  
 it greatly to their honor, if they would no longer  
 insist upon candidates subscribing, instantly and  
 without hesitation, to *articles*, which they have  
 scarce read, or not duely considered;—if they  
 would carefully and coolly answer such as oppose  
 them, without ever calling in the secular arm, and  
 thereby tempting others to think that they them-

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selves

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selves suspect their own arguments, and distrust  
 their own cause. Those, who are exalted to high  
 places, and have the disposal of *church-preferments*,  
 should not frown upon *young divines*, when they  
 discover an inquiring temper, but encourage them  
 to study the Scriptures,—to search into the nature  
 and evidence of what they are to believe and  
 teach; and assure them of protection and good-  
 will, as long as they continue virtuous and sincere.  
 Even the writings of *Infidels* ought not to be com-  
 mitted to the flames, nor they themselves hurt in  
 their persons, their liberty, or their property.  
 The best way to silence them is solidly to answer  
 their arguments, and solve their difficulties and  
 objections; and (if they are ever to be brought  
 over) they must be treated with humanity. *For*  
*the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle*  
*unto all men, apt to teach; in meekness instructing those*  
*that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will grant*  
*them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth,*  
*&c.* This is our way to victory and triumph; and  
 a rational Faith can never be propagated or de-  
 fended in any other way.—*Pyrrho* said, *Theophilus*,  
 you have answered this objection by allowing it to  
 be true. But I am persuaded that it still remains an  
 objection against some *Christians*; whether *Christia-*  
*nity* itself do, or do not, condemn it;—and not-  
 withstanding you, *rational* believers, may in this  
 respect give up the cause. However, I am pleased  
 to find that we agree in a point of such moment,  
 and would propose that we part this one evening,  
 while we are agreed. For I have one objection  
 more, about which, I believe, we shall not think  
 so much alike; and it is of such moment, that it will  
 require a whole evening's conversation to discuss it  
 fully, and as it ought to be discussed. The proposal  
 was agreed to, and they determined to come together  
 the next evening to make an end of *Pyrrho's objections*.

DIALOGUE

## DIALOGUE IV.

**C**RITO begun the conversation at this time, and PART II.  
 said, *Pyrrho*, I understand that you have one objection more to propose, which it will take up the whole evening to answer;—be pleased, Sir, to propose it, that it may be thoroughly considered, and so we may conclude the *second part* of our designed work. *Pyrrho* was prepared and said, he had reserved this objection for the finishing stroke; because he apprehended that his *author* had laid the greatest stress upon it. The objection is this,—“ Suppose *Obj. XV.*

“ such learned or ingenious men, as the author of  
 “ the calculation of *Daniel’s weeks*, or of *the trial of*  
 “ *the witnesses* of Christ’s resurrection, *Mr. Locke*, *Mr.*  
 “ *Addison*, or the like, by their uncommon learning  
 “ and talents, or great application, have discovered  
 “ the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion;  
 “ yet what is that to the common people? The  
 “ bulk of mankind are forced to labor for their  
 “ bread, and are incapable of reasoning and judg-  
 “ ing. They have, therefore, absolutely no con-  
 “ cern in the affair; tho’ religion be in itself ever  
 “ so wise and reasonable.” *Theophilus* observed that  
*Pyrrho* had very concisely and justly stated the ob-  
 jection, as the author had expressed it, in several places. But (continued he) the objection, in other parts of his book, is stated very differently. For he has told us, p. 52, &c. that, *if miracles were necessary in the infancy of the gospel, they are so still, and will be to the end of the world.* For which he has not only brought that noble evidence, *that the church of Rome* is of that opinion; but hath also added what he thinks much more shrewd and formidable, viz. *whenever miracles cease, the authority of the evidence, which depended on them, ceases with them.—A miracle, that was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, is to us no more than uncertain hear-say.*

And a great deal more to the same purpose, to

PART II. *show that we are not to believe any thing, because another*  
*sais he saw it ;—and that the light of conviction can*  
*extend no farther than to the eye-witnesse himself, being*  
*lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be*  
*imparted.* As, therefore, the thing cannot possi-  
 bly be proved at all, or to any man's reasonable  
 satisfaction, what signifies all his talk of *Locke,*  
*Addison,* or any person's seeing the evidence to their  
 own satisfaction? Well might he represent it as an  
 impossibility to make the common people *rational*  
 believers, when he is of opinion that none, even  
 the most learned and studious men, can have any  
 more than *uncertain hear-say*, on which to ground  
 their Faith. Let no man, after this, wonder to  
 hear the *Scriptures* called *manuscript authorities, pa-*  
*per revelations, the suspicious repositories of human testi-*  
*mony, in which nothing remains that can deserve the*  
*least notice, or be thought of consequence enough to in-*  
*gage a moment's attention.* See p. 59. But, notwith-  
 standing his frequent insinuations that there is now  
 no *rational* proof of Christianity remaining in the  
 world, or his throwing out, at other times, some  
 salvo's, as if some learned men might be *rational*  
 believers, but no body else;—and boldly intimat-  
 ing that the Scripture *cannot deserve the least notice,*  
*or be thought of consequence to ingage a moment's at-*  
*tention;*—such *rational* believers, as are sincerely con-  
 cerned for truth, piety and virtue, will not take  
 his bare word in such a case. And, if they should  
 do it, they must answer for it at an higher tribu-  
 nal.—A man, who is to live by land, is not obliged  
 to study navigation, or a ploughman to be a pro-  
 ficient in mathematics. There are two things which  
 every man is obliged to inquire into, viz. religion,  
 and his own proper business in life. But every  
 man is not obliged to understand *music*, or any of  
 the liberal arts and sciences. However, as *eternity*  
 is of much more importance than *time*, every think-  
 ing

ing man will be of a different opinion from your PART II.  
*author*, and reckon that religion deserves some re-  
 gard from mankind in general, and is of sufficient  
 consequence to engage at least a few moments of  
 their attention.—Your *author* says that, *if miracles*  
*were necessary to the first publication of the gospel, they are so*  
*still*;—this doth not appear from any thing he hath  
 said. For miracles might be necessary to gain the atten-  
 tion of mankind, to a doctrine that was new, and con-  
 trary to the prejudices and prepossessions of the world  
 in general; and yet not be necessary to continue that  
 religion in the world. The commonness of miracles  
 would abate mens attention to them, and make  
 them as little regarded as the works of creation,  
 which might be called *standing miracles*.—Besides, an  
 authentic, credible, and well-attested history of the  
 doctrine, and the miraculous evidences, is capable  
 of conveying the notice of it down to future ages,  
 not only in the same manner that the knowlege of  
 other facts is conveyed from age to age; but in a  
 much more effectual manner;—if it be remem-  
 bered that a visible church, with a stated method  
 of instruction and manner of worship, was col-  
 lected and formed, by the *Apostles of Jesus*, in  
 which these Scriptures were to be read publicly, and  
*the body of Christ edified*, by the knowlege conveyed  
 to them from thence. (a) If Jesus Christ and his  
 Apostles had only taught, and by miracles proved,  
 the gospel to their co-temporaries, there would  
 have been great occasion for miracles in every age;  
 otherwise Christianity must soon have vanished. To  
 prevent this, appears to have been one reason why  
 a visible church was instituted,—to hold up the  
 light of revelation, and propagate Christianity  
 throughout all ages, to the end of the world. *Christi-*  
 This argument hath one great advantage above *anity may*  
 many, viz. that fact and experience confirm the *be continu-*  
 truth of it. Where Christians forsake the assemb- *ed without*  
 lings of themselves together, or neglect to read *miracles.*  
 the

(a) See Bp.  
 Butler's  
 Analogy,  
 &c.

**PART II.** the Scriptures, and inculcate the great doctrines therein contained, in such places Christianity withers and dies away: But where liberty is granted by the civil magistrate, and men are allowed not only to examine in private, but publicly to assemble, and read the Scriptures, and profess their Faith, and worship in their own way, there is no occasion for miracles, but Christianity spreads, without such renewed external attestations. And, to the continuance of it in the world, it is always supposed that men use proper care to preserve and continue it. And it is owing to nothing but the faults of mankind, that it has not spread more, in every age, since its first publication.—*Pyrrho* said, my *author* alleges that, “the common people are incapable of reasoning, thinking, or judging at all; and therefore they must be excused.” True (replied *Theophilus*) he does talk in that strain: And, if he was regarded, his discourse would, no doubt, prove a great blessing to the multitude. For it would teach them (if they could but think and reason a little, as acutely as your *author* has done) “that they have no manner of business with religion; that it is not of consequence enough to engage a few moments of their attention; that it is a thing intirely above their capacities; and therefore they can have no concern with it.” When the infidels, *those industrious ministers of darkness*, have gathered churches, set up pulpits, and established lectures, [as your *author* talks, p. 97.] I should think this might be one of the most proper subjects for the sermons and discourses [not of their *priests*;—for they must have none; but] of their preachers and most learned men;—a principal topic, which may deserve not a few moments of the people’s attention; if they could but reason at all, or were capable of going beyond a single proposition.—But has he not likewise insinuated, *Pyrrho*, that the thing

thing is not to be proved? Why then should he play double, and pretend that *Locke*, or *Newton*, or other ingenious and learned men, have discovered the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, and have believed upon evidence? *Pyrrho* observed that he might do that for a cover, and for fear of laying himself too open. However, (continued he) what do you say, *Theophilus*, to the difficulty itself? *Theophilus* answered, that the evidence was in itself the same, to whomsoever it was proposed: Tho' he allowed, all had not equal capacity of judging. But (says he) Almighty God, in giving the evidence, hath wisely considered the state of mankind, both in different ages of the world, and in different stations of life. Some evidences were granted to the primitive Christians, and others to us; tho' some are common to all. The first Christians had the prejudices of education to conquer, and therefore they saw miracles worked, or lived near the times, or places, where they were worked in great numbers. The history was fresh in every body's mouth; and no person was so hardy, as to pretend to contradict the history, or deny the facts. We are educated in the knowledge of the Christian religion, and are free from those inveterate prejudices, which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* then labored under; and which we do not know but we might have adhered to, as obstinately as they did. We have, indeed, no more than an history of this doctrine and those miraculous evidences; but then it is a credible and well-attested history. And, if there are matters of fact so well attested, at so great a distance of time and place, as that no reasonable person can in the least call them in question, the books of the New Testament, and the grand facts there recorded, have, of all other antient or distant facts, the greatest and most remarkable attestation. We have (what the primitive Christians could not have)

have) the concurrent testimony of many ages and nations;—the advantage of considering and comparing the objections of adversaries on all sides; and seeing that, in how many ways soever it is attacked, *Christianity* is still capable of a *rational* and just defence. And finally, tho' we do not see miracles worked before our eyes, as the first Christians did; yet we have some evidences which they had not; viz. we have lived to see some very remarkable prophecies fulfilled, such as that of the long and wide dispersion of the *Jewish* nation, and of the grand *apostasy* and most notorious corruption of the Christian religion, in the church of *Rome*. These are striking evidences to us, tho' they could be none to the primitive Christians.—Every body cannot write such a book as the ingenious *trial of the witnesses* of Christ's resurrection, the judicious *analogy*, &c. (for which I take this opportunity to thank the learned authors, because of the light and entertainment they have given me.) Such a production as Mr. *Locke's Reasonableness of the Christian Religion* is not the production of every age, much less of every person.—But what then? God has so wisely ordered things, that some should be men of genius and leisure, and should be able to throw light upon this or that subject, and range the arguments in proper order, to set truth before mens eyes in the most agreeable and advantageous light. And it is sufficient if others attend to evidence, when it is offered to their view, and ready prepared to their hands. But these ingenious authors, now mentioned, have not made any new evidence. Even before they favored the world with their productions, the evidences were in themselves the same, and several persons saw enough of them to be convinced of their weight and solidity.—Nor do we contend that every argument is necessary to be known, or understood, by common Christians,

Christians, or all by any one man; but the more any one understands, so much the better. The plainest man, of common sense, will at first view discern the *Christian morals* to be good, and the motives and sanctions, wise and reasonable. He will find, when he reads the Scriptures, or hears them read, that they claim regard as a divine revelation. He will find, upon examination, that the history is true, and has, by mankind in general, been allowed to be genuine: And he will readily argue (as they did in our Savior's time) *no man could have done such miracles*, as Christ and his Apostles did, *unless God had been with them*, and in an extraordinary manner assisted them.—So far a ploughman may go, and argue justly, and with great ease, as well as clearness.—Your author, p. 17. &c. asserts that *the generality of apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition*;—that *the souls of the multitude are lodged in their hands*; and therefore it would be *an injurious representation* of God to say, that he should require of them to judge aright, when he has not given them *abilities to judge at all*:—*Pyrrho* observed, from what his *author* had said, p. 42. that “ Mr. *Woolaston* had wrote a most accurate  
“ and learned book, called, *The Religion of Nature delineated*. And that Dr. *Clarke*, in the second  
“ volume of his *Boyle's Lectures*, had made use of  
“ such principles, and introduced his proof of the  
“ truth of *reveled* religion, with a long and labored  
“ account of *the religion of nature*, of the truth  
“ and fitness of things, of eternal relations, *moral differences* of actions, *moral obligations*, and the  
“ like;—that that was looked upon, as one of the  
“ best defences of Christianity; but that it was a  
“ book which the common people could not understand, neither could they be supposed to see  
“ the proofs and evidences, as he had made them  
“ out; much less could they ever have thought

PART II.  
The arguments,  
which the  
common  
people  
may understand,

PART II. “ of such things themselves. Now this (continued  
 “ *Pyrrho*) greatly strengthens my *author*’s objection,  
 “ who hath insisted upon it, p. 18. &c. that it is  
 “ not enough that the thing *be true in itself*, unlessse  
 “ it could be made *appear to the rude and short-sighted*  
 “ *understandings of many, that cannot enter sufficiently*  
 “ *into the argument, to become apprized of its merits.*  
 “ And again he saies, *it is by no means sufficient that*  
 “ *your argument be indeed conclusive in itself, unlessse*  
 “ *you can adapt it effectually to my understanding too,*  
 “ *and make it conclusive to me.* For supposing *the*  
 “ *historical facts of the gospel are most highly credible*  
 “ *and convincing to such as have the capacity to look into*  
 “ *them; yet unto such as have not, they are properly*  
 “ *neither true nor false; they are not chargeable with*  
 “ *any verdict about them, one way or the other.* So  
 “ that, if *Christianity* could be proved to be true,  
 “ yet all men are not bound to believe it; and my  
 “ *author* has, in particular, exempted the multitude  
 “ from all obligation even so much as to attempt  
 “ to understand, or judge of it, or spend one  
 “ moment of their time, and attention about it.”  
 To all this, *Theophilus* replied, that the *Apostles* were  
 most of them unlearned men; and your *author*  
 could observe this, when he thought it to his pur-  
 pose; that *to the poor the gospel was preached*, by *Je-*  
*sus Christ* and his *Apostles*;—from whence one would  
 presume that the arguments laid level to the capaci-  
 ties of the multitude. That they did not begin (as  
*Dr. Clarke* has done, in the second volume of his  
*Boyle’s Lectures*) with stating the principles of natu-  
 ral religion, *eternal relations*, and *moral differences* of  
 things; but worked miracles, to establish their  
 mission and authority, and then all they said was  
 justly regarded as a doctrine from heaven. Of this  
 manner of arguing the people were judges. For,  
 whatever difficulties may be raised in speculation  
 concerning miracles; yet in fact, whenever a per-  
 son

son appears, teaching good morals, and working many and beneficent miracles, there will be no great difficulty in determining that he is a teacher sent from God.—But you mistake the very design of the second volume of Dr. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures, and all such labored defences, which were not writ for the use of the common people; but to answer the difficulties and objections, started by unbelievers; or to lead speculative men into arguments of a more abstract kind. That was the design of the honorable Mr. Boyle, in the instituting of his lectures, which was a most noble and excellent design. And it is the glory of truth, that, in whatever way you examine it, you will be the more strengthened and established in the belief of it. Some arguments lie level to the capacities of the common people, [such as have been mentioned, viz. the goodnesse of the morals; the reasonableness of the motives, or sanctions; and that the books of the New Testament are, by mankind in general, acknowledged to have been written by the persons they are commonly ascribed to;—for, if the history be true, the religion must be true, as being the most excellent in itself, and so remarkably attested.] And, besides these obvious arguments, learned and ingenious men can set before the eyes of the people, several additional arguments and evidences, which further illustrate or confirm the truth of revelation. I suppose, *Pyrrho*, you think that many persons, who have no learning, may understand the design of your *author's* acute performance, and can perceive the force of his objections against a *rational* Faith: Now, why may not such of them as take in the objections, understand the answers also? They must needs be of a very peculiar *infidel-make*, indeed, who are capable of reading and judging on that side of the question only. But those, who have read neither

fide, who have not so much as heard of the names of *Locke* or *Clarke*, *Newton* or *Addison*, on the one side, or of *Collins*, *Tindal*, and other heroes in the noble cause of infidelity, on the other side; yet they hear the Scriptures read; those Scriptures where arguments are intermixed with the most reasonable doctrines, and the most excellent moral precepts: And they can from thence acquire a *rational* Faith; tho' further examination can bring them acquainted with more difficult arguments, and strengthen and establish them in what they have already believed.—Your author, *Pyrrho*, has a very odd turn of mind. For he intimates, that such additional discoveries rather tend to make him an infidel. Having mentioned the calculation of *Daniel's Weeks*, and the *Analogy of Reason and Revelation*, he says, p. 21. I cannot but draw to myself very different consequences from those they seem to expect from their proposal of them. Instead of availing to convince my reason of the truth of any particular religious institution, they have a just contrary effect, &c. and he concludes that a religion, thus defended, can never be designed for the bulk of mankind, or be that necessary truth, which stands in need of any such far-fetched apologies, and labored accounts, to reconcile and explain it.—Whereas he ought to have considered, that these labored defences were written against those labored and far-fetched difficulties and perplexities, which certain authors have thrown in the way of plain, honest Christians, who would never have thought of the difficulties on the one hand, nor of the answers, on the other; if speculative men had not proposed them. Christianity itself was well proved and well established in the minds of many, before these new objections, or apologies, were once thought of. Its grand evidences were co-temporary with the original institution itself, and intirely complete for the purpose,  
in

in that very age in which it was first published, PART II.  
 and so they have remained ever since. The argu-  
 ments for the truth of Christianity are various, and  
 suited to men in various situations, and of very dif-  
 ferent capacities. If you read the Scriptures, and  
 know nothing of the subtle objections of the infi-  
 dels, or the answers of learned men, you have  
 evidence sufficient to make you a *rational* believer.  
 If you go into the examination of the difficulties  
 and objections, on one side; and as carefully con-  
 sider the apologies and answers, on the other; then  
 your evidences will be more and stronger, in pro-  
 portion to the advances you make in the knowlege  
 of the subject. I cannot perceive, why any body  
 should object against setting the subject in various  
 lights, or producing all sorts of arguments? Surely  
 the evidences do not thereby lose any thing of their  
 value, but ought to be more regarded, and have a  
 more spreading influence. There is a great  
 deal of wisdom appears, at first sight, in the works  
 of creation and providence. The most plain and  
 illiterate man cannot but behold how regularly  
 seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, day  
 and night, succede one another. But surely, a  
 more curious observer can find out numberlesse  
 more proofs and instances of the astonishing wis-  
 dom and power of the creator and governor of the  
 world: And the most diligent and profound search  
 strengthens that argument; which is a proof of its  
 being a good one. A great many can understand  
*Derham* or *Ray*, who could never have made such  
 discoveries themselves. And yet these, and other  
 such authors, confirm their readers in their belief  
 of the wisdom and power of the maker and great  
 disposer of all. And would it not be a most  
 perverse way of arguing, upon reading such  
 books as these, or *Dr. Clarke on the Being and At-  
 tributes of God*, instead of being confirmed, to be  
 unhinged

The works  
 of creation,  
 the more  
 they are  
 studied,  
 appear the  
 more ex-  
 quisite.

PART II.

unhinged by their labored accounts, or to suggest (as your *author* has done, p. 81.) that *they have rather contributed to make for the other side of the question, &c?* At this rate, writing in defence of Christianity must be the way to overturn it, and the writings of the infidels must preserve and establish it.—Let us take another instance from *Christianity* itself. When a man of plain, common sense, hears the command of *Jesus*, concerning one man's having no more than one wife; and finds it enforced by that argument, that from the beginning it was so appointed of God, who originally created one man and one woman:—He can consider *Jesus* as a prophet, who worked miracles to establish his divine mission and authority, and therefore his injunctions deserve regard. He can see some inconveniencies arising from polygamy and frequent divorces; which will strengthen and confirm his regard to that precept. But, when he hears of those ingenious observations of curious and learned men, viz. that upon the most careful and exact calculation, there are only twelve females born to thirteen males; and that as *men* are employed in war, navigation, and other things, they are exposed to be cut off in greater numbers; which makes the proportion between the two sexes more exact;—surely such discoveries, such *labored accounts* and *profound calculations*, will not make him pay less regard to that precept of Christ's, and produce a quite different consequence from what such learned men seemed to expect from their proposal;—but must of course lead him to conclude, that that was the original institution; that it is a strong argument of a constant and watchful providence, that the proportion between the two sexes is so exactly preserved and continued;—that *Jesus Christ* saw deeper into human nature, and the state of mankind, than could have been imagined by a careless, inattentive

Natural  
observati-  
ons con-  
firm Chri-  
stianity.

tive person:—And, in one word, that the more PART II.  
the works of creation and providence are searched {  
into, and understood, the more they confirm the  
truth of the *Christian revelation*, and add such sup-  
ports and evidences, as could hardly have been  
expected, or believed.—From these and the like  
observations, I should think it evident that *Christi-*  
*anity* is not in a worse condition since Dr. *Clarke*  
published his *Boyle's Lectures*, or Bp. *Butler* has fa-  
vored the world with his *Analogy*, &c. For, how-  
ever things may appear to the mind of your *author*,  
I can assure him that there are persons, who have  
no learning, and who are acquainted with no lan-  
guage but their own, that read Dr. *Clarke's* defence  
of natural and revealed religion, and some other excel-  
lent apologies; and are thereby strengthened and con-  
firmed in their regard both to natural and revealed  
religion. And, if I take you and your friends right,  
*Pyrrho*, you are grieved that there are such books in  
the world, as these now mentioned; and that men  
of such great names, as *Locke* and *Newton*, and the  
like, have wrote in defence of the *Christian religion*.  
For, if you could once deprive us of such learned  
apologists; if the *Deists* might write on, and there  
were no body to oppose them; if they could per-  
suade the Christians to give up the *rational* divines  
and believers;—the rest would be an easy prey to  
them, and the glorious cause of *infidelity* might  
then flourish and triumph, and go on without con-  
troul, *conquering and to conquer*. But we remember  
the fable of the wolves, who would have persuaded  
the sheep to give up their dogs, that the *wolves*  
might protect and defend the *fold*;—when their  
evident design was to devour and destroy the *flock*,  
at their leisure, and that without any difficulty, or  
resistance.—In the *Scripture* it is supposed that,  
while the people are employed in laboring with  
their hands, to provide for themselves and for their  
families,

## PART II.

families, men of leisure and study are to prepare instructions ready to their hands; and by reading the Scriptures every Lord's Day in public, explaining those sacred writings, and applying them to the various cases of mankind, the knowledge of Christianity becomes more extensive, is more talked of, and inquired into, than if it was left merely to the private reading and observation of the people. It is also much easier to understand what is distinctly read and clearly explained, than to attain the same knowledge, without these helps. If any public teachers of Christianity have not read the Scriptures, and taken pains to understand them and interpret them faithfully; if they have employed their time chiefly in other studies, or without studying at all. If they have preached up politics, the glorious doctrines of *passive obedience* and *non-resistance*, or the *divine right of tithes*; if they have given the people mere lectures of morality, without any regard to their text, or showing how the best morals may be enforced by Christian motives; if they have contented themselves with a sermon of a quarter of an hour, consisting of a few sentences out of *Seneca*, rather than from the sacred writings; if they have laid out their zeal in inculcating mystical and allegorical divinity, or a few metaphysical, confused and unintelligible notions, taken from the *schoolmen*, and called that right *orthodox* divinity;—when it has borne no resemblance to the pure, simple doctrine of Christ and his Apostles; no wonder the people, under such *pastors*, have not been able to judge of *Christianity*. But all thinking men must see that such things are great faults in the teachers of this excellent religion: And they, who have been guilty, will have much to answer for. However, as the *Scriptures* are so common among us, and all the people are allowed freely to read them when they please, they may and ought, besides public

public instruction, to read the *Scriptures* themselves in their families, and in private; and then see whether their public instructions are agreeable thereto, or no.—Your *author*, *Pyrrho*, doth often insinuate that the common people cannot in the least argue; that *their souls are lodged in their hands*; that *their apprehensions extend not beyond a simple proposition*; and that they are thrown out at the very mention of a *medium*. If he means that they do not argue, and that there is a too general and shameful neglect of *religion*, and inattention to it;—it is too true, and ought to be lamented. But he asserts too much in saying, *they cannot in the least argue*. For, let him talk with them about their own affairs, or peculiar business, and he will find they can argue better than he, and twenty academics joined together;—that an university education, and skill in *Syllogisms*, do not qualify a man to direct them how to carry on their affairs in a more dexterous or successful manner than they commonly do already;—that they could sooner, in such things, impose upon him, than he with all his learning, could impose upon them; and that if, in any other matter, he had cheated them once, they could argue beyond a simple proposition, and would not readily suffer him to cheat them a second time. The common people have more understanding than some men will allow them to have. They may, indeed, be thrown out at the mention of a *medium*, as not understanding the meaning of the word;—they cannot express themselves in *Syllogisms*, and argue in *mood* and *figure*; they cannot range their thoughts in that exact order, or clothe them with such proper language, as an academic perhaps may, by being trained up in the schools. But they can see the force of an argument, and in many cases reason very well. Whatever he may talk of *religion's* being of no importance to the

multitude, it is certainly of the greatest. And, besides the truths, which concern their own proper business and way of life, the truths of morality and religion are almost the only truths, which the multitude are concerned to know and attend to. And it is apparent that they are able to judge of those parts of religion which are of the greatest importance, and which are the plain and practical parts. Let me propose a case in point, and see whether the people cannot argue, or whether you can impose upon them, as to plain facts, and their direct and proper consequences. Let the whole tribe of *Deists* write a book in *English*, half as large as the New Testament, and assert that there was a prophet in this nation, within these fifty or sixty years, who worked miracles in *London*, and all over the country; that he sent Apostles, not only into *Scotland* and *Wales*; but also into *France*, *Holland*, *Germany*, and all the kingdoms of *Europe*;—that they also, in his name, worked miracles; that some of them are yet living; and that they have made a number of disciples, wherever they have been;—could they persuade any body to believe them? would not the common people laugh at such a story, instead of becoming their converts? and say, “how comes it to pass that we never heard of these remarkable things before? Or where are your facts and vouchers? What evidence do you now bring?” Such a forgery could never take place. And yet, just such a forgery must have taken place, when the books of the New Testament first appeared, if there had not been facts to appeal to, and bear testimony to the things there recorded.—Christianity is built upon plain facts. And, though the people may be led into enthusiastic notions, yet facts are stubborn things, and must be real, or else the belief of them, in a country where they may be freely examined, can never spread far and wide, and continue long.

The

The people can and do argue justly in such cases; for their capacities are not inferior to those of other men, though education has made a difference; which is, indeed, very considerable. Again; the common people can argue as to the direct and proper consequences of facts. For, after Dr. Emms's resurrection failed, how did the *French prophets* come to nothing? Though several of them were, before that, deluded with their enthusiastic notions; yet the people argued justly, when they came to *facts*; and concluded that, if their miracles were not real, their prophetic mission was a groundlesse and absurd pretence. And, (I say it again) as to facts, where the people have liberty freely to examine, they can judge, and do generally argue as justly as other men; and Christianity is built upon *facts*.—What should hinder them from arguing thus, “ If Christianity is true, then there “ is a righteous judgment to come, when the “ wicked shall be punished, and good men re- “ warded? But, if the Christian religion were “ false, they would, in general, think themselves “ more at liberty to do several things, which are “ there strictly forbidden; and would conclude “ that they are not obliged to lead such pious, holy “ lives, as Christianity requires.” Nay, it is observed that many of the loose and vicious part of mankind actually become more wicked; when, upon reading of certain authors, or conversing with gay company, they are persuaded to turn *infidels*. For they, many of them, make shipwreck of a *good conscience*, together with the Christian Faith.—Would you set the common people at liberty from the laws of Christ?—Suppose they should take it into their heads, that they cannot go beyond a single proposition, and would be presently thrown out at the very mention of a medium; that the laws of the land are intricate, perplexed

Infidelity  
promotes  
vice.

**PART II.** things, about many of which even the gentlemen, that are most learned in the law, are not agreed among themselves; and that, as they cannot argue about them, they cannot possibly be under any obligation to understand or obey them;—and should thereupon conclude themselves at liberty to break the laws at their pleasure;—would any body take this for a just excuse? Or think them therefore loose from all regard to the laws of the land?—One would think that no lovers of good morals would take such indefatigable pains, as some do, to set the common people loose from all *religion*. The very hearing such excellent morals read to them every week, as are contained in the Scriptures, must be of great use. Mankind are bad enough, as it is, but, if they could once be persuaded to throw off all *religion*, and the restraints they are now under, how wicked and abandoned, how wild, savage and barbarous, would they in a little time become?—Thus, *Pyrrho*, as your *author* has laid the greatest stress on this objection, you see I have been more large and particular in my answer to it.—And now, as a *conclusion* to this second part, I would briefly sum up what has been said, *viz.* that Faith is a virtuous disposition of mind; that Christianity is reasonable and excellent in itself; and has most ample attestations from literal prophecies punctually accomplished, from numberless plain and beneficent miracles, and more especially from Christ's resurrection from the dead, and the plentiful effusion of the Spirit which followed soon after;—from the the swift progress which Christianity made, in consequence of these things, we have confirmation in abundance of the evidences then afforded. The books of the New Testament, which record these things, have all possible marks of being genuine, and containing a true history. Even the various

The conclusion of the second Part.

various readings have been shown not to weaken, PART II.  
but to corroborate the evidence. The other ob-


jections, urged by your *author*, have received a fair solution, and several of the things objected have been shown to be arguments in favor of Christianity, rather than objections against it. Can it be said, after all this, *that Christianity is not founded on Argument?* Or will any man seriously affirm that all these things put together are not sufficient to deserve one moment's attention, or the least notice and regard? If the things of *religion* deserve no regard, what can deserve regard? Are any of the little concerns of this dying world worthy our care and attention, and the momentous things of *eternity* of no importance?—When death is every moment advancing with speedy wings, is it not worth one moment's attention to inquire, whether there be not a future state of recompence; and whether the great and glorious things, which *Christianity* promises to good men, be not realities? Surely, if the people can have any concern in any thing; or if any thing can deserve their regard, *Christianity*, when fairly proposed to them with its many and striking evidences, must deserve their attention and regard. Some of the evidences lie within their view. They are not required to believe upon such evidences as they cannot understand. But it is greatly to the glory of the *Christian religion*, that the more they examine it, the more they will of course become *rational* believers; the more honest and upright they are, they will the more steddily profess it, and more constantly conform to its excellent precepts; and the more they conform to its precepts, they will become more acceptable to the Deity, more useful and beneficent to others, and more perfect and happy in themselves.

Thus ended the *second Part* of their design. What remained was the interpretation of those  
texts

PART II. texts which the *author* had misapplied. But *that*  
 they referred to the third and last Part.

### PART III. DIALOGUE I.

PART III. **W**HEN they came to enter upon this last Part of their design, *Crito* addressed himself to them both, and said.—*Gentlemen*, I would put you in mind that *Theophilus* has given the interpretation of several texts already. Such texts need not be repeted. There are other texts which the *author* hath not brought by way of proof, but alluded to them; such texts need not be mentioned, or however need not to be enlarged upon. But the texts, on which he hath rested his cause, or chiefly depended, ought to be critically examined, and carefully explained, according to the intent of the sacred writers, and the connection of the places from whence they are quoted. It is your business, *Theophilus*, to show how they are perverted; and yours, *Pyrrho*, to see that justice be done *your author*.—*Theophilus* renewed the request, which he had made at the beginning, viz. that *Crito* would undertake this part of the work. To which *Crito* answered, he would continue in the chair, which was the place assigned him; but, if any criticism of his could be of service, he would be ready to lend his best assistance. *Theophilus*, with some hesitation, ingaged in this service; and, after wishing again that *Crito* would have excused him, he said:—The interpretations, you must expect from me, are such as occur to a man of plain sense, upon a careful examination of the words, and of the scope and connection. I can make a shift to consult my Greek Testament, and to peruse some translations and expositors, and then distinguish what seems to me most agreeable to the design of the place. If there be any occasion to settle the meaning

ing of any difficult word, or phrase, in the ori- PART III:  
ginal; I must apply to *Crito*; and I know *Pyrrho*   
has that opinion both of his skill and integrity, as  
to pay great deference to his decisions.—Then *Pyrrho* The 32d  
asked, “whether *Jesus* had not plainly condemned text ex-  
“that free inquiry, which rational believers plead plained,  
“for, by expressly assuring us, that he looks upon a Mat. xii.  
“seeker as an *antichrist* professed, in saying, *he that is* 30. or  
“*not with me, is against me?*” *Theophilus* replied, 23. See  
that seemed to him to be a sort of proverbial speech p. 6.  
among the *Jews*, which in *English* we should ex-  
press thus, *neuters are commonly looked upon, as ene-*  
*mies.* *Jesus* hath twice made use of this proverb;  
and such as have harmonized the four gospels, have  
shown that, though there are in them many like  
phrases and expressions, yet these two discourses  
were delivered some time after one another. In  
both places, the words were used upon occasion of  
the Pharisees insinuating to the people that *Jesus*  
was assisted to work miracles by some evil spirit,  
and particularly, that he cast out demons by a con-  
federacy with *Beelzebub*, the prince of demons. To  
clear himself of such an accusation, *Jesus* took  
notice, that an house or kingdom, divided against  
itself, must come to ruine; and that if *Satan* de-  
stroyed his own kingdom, that kingdom could not  
stand. Whereas, he insinuated that his kingdom  
was of a nature directly opposite to that of *Satan's*:  
And that, though *Satan*, like a strong man armed,  
kept his house; yet he, like a stronger man, plainly  
showed that he could bind him, and strip his house  
at his pleasure: And that he was actually, by  
his doctrine and miracles, turning *Satan* out of his  
house, or overthrowing his kingdom. And then,  
(in the words now under consideration) he ad-  
dressed himself to the Pharisees, his wicked and  
implacable enemies, to this effect, “You know the  
“proverb, *He that is not with me, is against me*, or  
“neuters

PART III. “neuters are commonly looked upon as enemies;—  
 “how much more, then, ought I to esteem you  
 “mine enemies, who are not inereely neuters, but  
 “most wicked opposers of me, and my kingdom of  
 “righteousnesse,—blaspheming the Spirit of God,  
 “by which I perform my miracles, and maliciously  
 “ascribing them to the prince of demons, contrary  
 “to all truth and evidence.—Wherefore I say unto  
 “you, though all other sin and blasphemy shall be  
 “forgiven; yet blaspheming the Spirit, in this man-  
 “ner, shall never be forgiven.” The proverb is  
 applied in the same manner, in St. *Luke’s* gospel.  
 Now, how doth this text, as it thus stands in con-  
 nection with our Lord’s discourse, in the least in-  
 terfere with mens examining all things, in order  
 to their holding fast that which is good?

The 33d  
 text ex-  
 plained,  
 Gal. i. 8.  
 See p. 11.

*Pyrrho* inquired, “whether it was not condemn-  
 “ing all reasoning in matters of religion, for the  
 “Apostle to say, *though even an angel from heaven*  
 “*was to preach a new doctrine to us, we are not to*  
 “*give the least heed or credit to his pretensions?* For,  
 “*what is there in the utmost of reason’s assurances to*  
 “*falsify or confront such a preacher? What is there*  
 “*that the nature of any external evidence can possibly*  
 “*afford us, that hath not more than a ballance in*  
 “*such an authority?*” *Theophilus* said that the author  
 had not quoted the text fairly. The case was  
 this; St. *Paul* had, from among the idolatrous Gen-  
 tiles, collected several churches in the country of  
*Galatia*. After his departure, there got in among  
 them a false Apostle, a judaizing Christian, who  
 would have them circumcised, and become subject  
 to the law of *Moses*, as well as the gospel of *Christ*,  
 otherwise he pretended they could not be saved.  
 Now St. *Paul*, by the miracles he had worked  
 among them, and by the spiritual gifts and mira-  
 culous powers he had imparted unto them, had  
 plainly proved that he was an *Apostle, not of men,*  
 neither

neither by man, but constituted such by Jesus Christ PART III.  
 and God the Father, who had raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Having, therefore, given such clear proofs of his Apostolic mission, he wrote to them to persevere stedfast in their adherence to what he had taught and sufficiently proved. And, having expressed some surprize, that they were so soon moved from him, who had called them to be *Christians*, and taught them the truth, to another gospel, of a quite different nature ;— he acquaints them, that he was not ignorant of the cause of it, and that it was owing to nothing else, but that there had got in among them some who troubled them, and perverted the gospel of Christ. *But (says the Apostle) If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you a different thing from what we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As I have said before, so say I now again, If any man preach a different doctrine to you from what you have received, let him be accursed.* The plain and evident reason of this is added ;— *For I acquaint you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me, was not according to men ; for I received it not of man ; neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*—Now, might not the Apostle, with the highest reason and propriety, say, “ If any man “ contradicted an important, clearly proved, and “ well attested truth, let him be accursed !” None but a vicious man would contradict such truths. Such a one may perhaps pretend to be a very pious and holy man, or to have extraordinary illumination ;— but, if it were an angel from heaven, that contradicted any momentous and well attested truth, *let him be accursed*, says St. Paul. For, let him pretend to what he will, he certainly must be a very wicked person ; and, in that particular, act a very wicked part.—And I ask you, *Pyrrho*, whether you can with any reason suppose, that working a train of miracles, and imparting to great numbers  
 Y of

**PART III.** of other men some spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, would not be such external evidence, as much to over-balance the appearance of an angel, and all that authority which such an appearance could give to any contrary doctrine or message? — As to your *author*; he can make evidence strong, or weak, good for something, or good for nothing, just as may best suite his purpose; — as I design hereafter to show, with respect to the very case in hand, *viz.* the authority of such a preacher, or the evidence which would arise from the appearance of an angel.

The <sup>34th</sup> *Pyrrho* went on with the texts quoted by his *author*, and said, “ *Without some particular acknowledgments first made, there is not in all our endeavors the least room to hope for acceptance at his hands.*” For which he alleges this text, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is*; and then adds the following interpretation, *viz.* *That he hath graciously revealed his holy will to mankind, and granted them pardon of sin by the mediation of his Son; and must act only in consequence of such persuasion.* And this my *author* has confirmed by saying, *We must be provided of our creed, before we are warranted to pray so much as for Faith itself*; to prove which he brings another text, *viz.* *We must not lift up our hands to heaven with doubting.* *Theophilus* answered that, as to the former of these two texts, the *author* has said, p. 79. *He that cometh to Christ, must believe that he is*; but that there are no such words in the *Bible*. Nor have the words, [*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, &c.*] any reference to the revelation of his will to mankind, and granting them pardon, by the mediation of his Son *Jesus Christ*; — but they contain one or two of the grand principles of natural religion, *viz.* the existence of God, and his goodness, or readiness to reward those that seek him; which men must believe, before they can be expected

expected to come unto God and worship him, or receive any revelation at his hand. Now these principals of natural religion men are led to believe, by arguing from the works of creation and providence. The believing that God exists, and that he is a good Being, must needs appear, to every attentive reader, a very different thing from Faith in Christ Jesus, or in the Christian revelation.—*Pyrrho* said that some Christians, and even celebrated divines, had quoted texts in as loose a manner, and why might not his *author* have the same privilege? *Theophilus* answered, that such a way of quoting texts could prove nothing on either side; and that he was as willing to give up such quotations for Christianity, as to condemn them when levelled against it. He further said, that picking out straggling phrases, and loose independent sentences, without any regard to the design and connection, could never be the way to come at the true sense, but the contrary. And if so, then the other text you have quoted, *Pyrrho*, is as little to the purpose for which your *author* hath alleged it. *We must lift up our hands to heaven without doubting.* Some of the commentators say, that the word translated [*doubting*,] signifies [*disputation, or contention.*] I desire to know of you, *Crito*, whether that be the proper meaning of the word? *Crito* allowed it to be so, and pointed to some texts where it is so translated in our common *English* Testament. If that is the proper signification of the word, said *Theophilus*, I think it ought to have been so translated in this place. The *Jews* and *judaizing* Christians retained their fondness for the temple at *Jerusalem*; and thought that prayers, offered there, were more acceptable unto God. The Christian religion doth not confine our prayers to any one place more than another; but represents them as every where equally acceptable unto

PART III.

The 35<sup>th</sup>  
text,  
1 Tim. ii.  
8. explain-  
ed. See  
p. 16.

the Deity, if they procede from pure and upright hearts. With a view to these things, the Apostle ordered Christians to pray every where, or in any convenient place, and assured them that they might do it with equal acceptance, provided they *lifted up holy hands, without wrath and disputation; i. e.* if they took care to avoid that *wrath* and uncharitableness, those fierce *disputations* and violent contentions, of which the *Jews* and judaizing Christians were guilty, and which they were apt to mix even with their prayers and devotions.—Now what has this to do, with *our being provided of our creed, before we are warranted to pray so much as for Faith itself?* The Apostle had evidently no such thing in view, in his injunction.

Pyrrho observed that his *author*, p. 37, &c. had quoted several texts to prove that “neither *Jesus Christ*, nor his Apostles, argued with their hearers; or laid before them any reasonable evidence; but dictated and prescribed to them in the most arbitrary manner, and expected their immediate, humble submission;—looking upon *an extempore subscription as a matter of the greatest merit*. Now let us hear what you can say to such passages?” *Theophilus* readily entered upon this part of the work, as fully convinced, that both as to *Christ* himself and his *Apostles*, the very reverse of the *author's* representation was exactly and literally true. *First*, as to our Savior (says he) I have already shown above (p. 49.) that *Jesus* worked many unquestionable and beneficent miracles, and then *he taught as one having authority; and not as the Scribes*, who had no such prophetic mission or authority. Your *author* intimates, p. 48. *that Jesus had no intention to prove his own truth and character by his miracles*. That is expressly contrary to what is said, *John* x. 24, 25; 37, 38. and other places. *Matt.* xi. 2, &c. When *John Baptist* had, in prison, heard of the miraculous

lous works of *Jesus*, he sent two of his disciples, (most probably to satisfy them ; for he himself had been fully satisfied long before,) and the questions they were to ask him were, *Art thou (the Messiah) he that was to come ? Or are we to expect another ?* *Jesus*, in their presence, worked several miracles, and then said, “ Go and tell *John* what things you bear and see. The blind receive their sight ; the lame walk ; the lepers are cleansed ; the deaf hear ; the dead are raised ; and to the poor the gospel is preached ; these are the prophetic characters of the *Messiah* ; these the works which I perform, in proof of the truth of my mission and character ; and blessed is he who is not offended in me, or who is not ashamed to own such a person as I am, for the *Messiah*.” Besides these already mentioned, you may at your leisure consult the following texts, where *Jesus* appealed to his miracles, in proof of his mission, character, or doctrine ; or where miracles are intimated to have had these effects, viz. to make converts, or to confirm those that were already such. *Matt.* xi. 20,—24. and xii. 28. and xvi. 1,—4. *Mark* ii. 10. and xvi. 20. *Luke* xii. 54,—57. *John* ii. 11 ; 23. and iv. 45. and v. 19, 20 ; 30,—43. and vii. 31. and xi. 15 ; 42 ; 45. and xii. 11 ; 37. and xiv. 10, 11. and xv. 22, 23, 24. and xvi. 30. *Acts* ii. 22. and x. 38. Now can it, after all these and other like proofs, be said, with any modesty, truth, or justice, that *Jesus* had no such intention to prove his own truth, and character, by these instances of his power ?—That that was an accidental thing ? And that he had no thought of procuring disciples by the influence of the spectacle of his working miracles ? Can it be thought that the Apostles, tho’ several of them had had their education upon the water, could not reason as well in that case, as your author ; notwithstanding all the superior airs he gives himself of great acutenesse and uncommon penetration ?

**PART III.** tration? When a person worked miracles in their sight, and told them, it was *to the intent they should believe*, where was the difficulty of reasoning, or judging in such a case?—As to what is objected, concerning their *being fearful at every turn of giving offence, and incurring reproof by any farther inquiry, even at times when they did not really apprehend his mean-*

The 36th *ing.*—The case was this,—they labored under the national, *Jewish* prejudices, and had been disputing, as they went along the road, *which of them should be the greatest* in Christ's kingdom,—which they thought was to be a temporal kingdom, and was then going to be set up in *Judea*. *Jesus* was willing to rectify that mistake; in order to which he represented himself as a spiritual, suffering *Messiah*, and told them that he was to go up to *Jerusalem*, and there by wicked men *be put to a violent death; but that he would rise again the third day*. They having their heads full of a triumphant, temporal prince for their *Messiah*, who was to live for ever, understood not that plain declaration of his; and they hoped it might have some figurative meaning. But, out of fear that it should prove literal, or rather as fearing *Jesus* should discover their ambitious worldly views, *they were afraid to ask him*, any further, what his meaning was. However, *Jesus* knew their thoughts, as well as if they had spoke them out in the plainest terms; and therefore, when he was come into the house, he took up a child, and set him in the midst of them, and recommended to them the same innocence, meekness, and freedom from worldly, ambitious views; which were remarkable in such a child. Now to check that worldly spirit, and reprove them upon such an occasion, was perfectly wise and right in *Jesus*. And their being afraid of giving offence, or incurring reproof, when they had already exposed themselves by some improper conduct, was  
nothing

The 36th  
text ex-  
plained.  
Mark ix.  
32. See p.  
37.

nothing but a becoming modesty in them. What PART III. though, in some few cases, they did not really apprehend our Lord's meaning; that was owing to their criminal prejudices, their too eager desires of a temporal kingdom, and their great ambition of being exalted to the highest places at court: For *Jesus* himself spoke in the plainest terms. And, as to their continuing to believe in him, notwithstanding they did not always apprehend his meaning;—that was highly *rational*;—because they had seen enough to convince them that he was the great prophet, whom the Jews were daily expecting.—As they were abundantly convinced that he was sent of God, they depended upon his opening to them all that was proper, and wisely left it to him to do so in his own time and way.

“ My *author*, said *Pyrrho*, wants to know why *Jesus* did not gratify *Herod*, who wanted to see some miracle done by him.” *Theophilus* replied, who ever considers the whole character of *Herod Antipas*, as given briefly in the New Testament, and more at large in *Josephus*, will not be at a loss to account for our Savior's conduct towards him. He had married the daughter of *Aretas*, king of *Arabia Petraea*, and lived with her a considerable time: Then he put her away, and married *Herodias*, his brother *Philip's* wife, while his brother was yet alive. *John Baptist*, who was looked upon, by the *Jews* in general, as a prophet, told him his duty in the plainest terms. He, being a *Jew*, and knowing that these things were contrary to their law, and looking upon *John* also to be a righteous and good man, attended to him for some time, and did several things upon his admonition. But, when he came to condemn his adultery and incest, and some other very flagrant crimes, it not only touched his own conscience, but exasperated *Herodias*, who was of a most ambitious, cruel, and revengeful temper, and had

The 37<sup>b</sup>  
text ex-  
plained,  
Luke  
xxiii. 8.  
See p. 49.

**PART III.** had the intire ascendent over *Herod*. And, rather than yield to the advice of that good man, and the dictates of his own conscience, he, at the instigation of *Herodias*, first threw *John Baptist* into prison, and afterwards cut off his head;—adding this notorious instance of injustice and cruelty to all his other wicked deeds.—*Jesus* knew his character, and therefore was not surprized, when he was told that *Herod* was desirous to put him to death; but sent him word that that was not in his power. *Luke* xiii. 31, &c. *Go, tell that Fox* (says he) *that crafty and cruel man; Behold I cast out demons and perform cures, to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected; or have finished my present work in this place, and within the dominions of Herod. But it is not in his power to put me to death; for he is governor of Galilee, and it cannot be that such a prophet should be put to death, but in Jerusalem.*—Considering all these things, we may easily account for our *Lord's* behavior, when *Herod* wanted to see some miracle done by him. For *Pontius Pilate*, being very desirous to rid his hands of the affair of judging *Jesus*, as unwilling to disoblige the malicious *Jews*, or to condemn an innocent person, sent *Jesus* unto *Herod*;—because *Jesus* had lived the greatest part of his life in *Galilee*, and therefore was looked upon as one of *Herod's* subjects. And he had a fair opportunity;—for *Herod*, being a *Jew*, was then come up to the passover, to the great city *Jerusalem*. He was very glad to see *Jesus*, and had been desirous a long time to have had a sight of him; because he had heard many things about him, and hoped to see some sign [or miracle] performed by him. *Jesus* knew the man and his character perfectly well. He knew that he was very wicked, not for want of evidence, but directly contrary to knowlege and evidence. As *Jesus* knew the hearts of all men, he was also sure, that *Herod's* wanting to see some miracle done by him,

him, was no good promising symptom and mark of a PART III.  
 towards disposition for future discipleship. And his de-  
 siring such a thing from no other principle than that of  
 gratifying a light curiosity, was what Jesus very ratio-  
 nally disapproved; tho' he was solicitous to gain pro-  
 selytes by such means (as that of working miracles) and  
 conscious of having something of the kind to produce to  
 him. And the event plainly showed that Jesus  
 judged wisely. For, when Herod, had examined  
 him as to many particulars, and Jesus answered no-  
 thing (as knowing the man, and how vain a thing it  
 would have been to have made any reply) then Herod  
 with his soldiers used him with great contempt;  
 and, in the most scornful and insolent manner,  
 dressed him up in princely apparel (because he was  
 accounted by many to be *Messiah* the Prince) and  
 then sent him back to *Pilate*.—A man of virtue,  
 who had been sincerely desirous to have known the  
 truth and certainty of Jesus's doctrine, or of the  
 mighty works which were reported to have been  
 done by him, would have examined witnesses, and  
 got all the intelligence he could, and not have treated  
 Jesus in that manner merely for his silence; and  
 refusing to gratify his wanton curiosity. For he  
 might have remembered that *John Baptist*, the fore-  
 runner of Jesus, had by him been put to death, for  
 his daring to speak out, and tell him, in plain  
 terms, many harsh and ungrateful truths.

“*Pyrrho* intimated that there was a like diffi-  
 culty arose from another text, viz. when the  
 Nazarenes desired Jesus to work miracles among  
 them, he refused. Or, as the Scripture expresses  
 it, *He did not many mighty works there, because of*  
*their unbelief.*”—*Theophilus* said, the temper of  
 the Nazarenes would, in like manner, account for  
 Jesus's conduct towards them. He had been edu-  
 cated at *Nazareth*, from about two years old to  
 thirty. After he was baptized and filled with the

The 38th

text ex-  
plained,

Matt. xiii.

58. See p.

67.

## PART III.

Holy Spirit, he began to preach and to work miracles, going about for that purpose throughout all *Galilee, Judea* and *Jerusalem*. He returned through *Samaria*, and converted some of the *Samaritanes*. Then he went into other parts of *Galilee*, and acquired an extraordinary reputation, by his preaching and working miracles. After all these things, he came back to *Nazareth*, where he had been educated; and going (according to his usual custom) into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, he stood up to read the Scriptures, (which any body might do at the request, or by the permission of the rulers of the synagogue) and, having read a passage out of *Isaiab*, which he intimated to be a prophecy concerning himself,— he went on to discourse in so excellent a manner, that the eyes of the whole congregation were intensely fixed upon him; and they all bore him witness so far as to wonder at the graceful words which proceeded out of his mouth. But, tho' they applauded his eloquence, they rejected him and his doctrine, from the most idle and groundless prejudices, viz. because they had known him from a child, were acquainted with all his relations and friends, and were sure that he had had no learned education,— which was the most evident proof of his having received his extraordinary knowledge by prophetic illumination.— *Jesus* was apprized of their rooted and inveterate prejudices, and said, “ You will very likely, “ apply to me this proverb, *Physician heal thyself*; “ i. e. *work as many and as great miracles among us,* “ *your own townsmen and neighbors, as you have done in* “ *other towns and villages*. But I know it will be to “ no purpose. As, therefore, there were many “ widows in *Israel*, in the days of *Elijab*, when there “ was a famine in the land for three years and a half, “ and the prophet was not sent to relieve any of them “ by miracle, but one poor widow, who lived in Sa-  
“ *repta,*

“ *repta*, in the territory of the *Sidonians*. And, as in PART III.  
 “ the times of *Elisha*, there were many leprous per-  
 “ sons in *Israel*, and yet he miraculously cured only  
 “ *Naaman*, a *Syrian*. So, tho’ I have worked many  
 “ miracles in other places, where I had a prospect of  
 “ doing good ; yet, as I know there is no such prof-  
 “ spect among you, I do not think it proper to com-  
 “ ply with your request.”—They immediately  
 showed that *Jesus* knew their hearts. For, when they  
 heard these things, they were filled with wrath ;  
 and the whole congregation unanimously rose up,  
 seized upon *Jesus* ; and, in a violent manner, hur-  
 ried him out of the synagogue, and out of the  
 town also, with a design to throw him down the  
 precipice of that hill, on which their town stood.  
 And they would certainly in that manner have put  
 him to death, if *Jesus* had not, by miracle, sud-  
 denly rendered himself invisible, and passed through  
 the midst of them without being discerned. And  
 so, by working that one miracle, he, for the pre-  
 sent, escaped out of their hands. (See *Luke* iv. 16,  
 —30.) From that time, *Jesus* moved his stated habi-  
 tation ; and, leaving *Nazareth*, he settled not ma-  
 ny miles from them, at the town of *Capernaum*,  
 where he met with a much better reception. There,  
 and in all the neighboring towns and villages, he  
 continued to preach and work miracles ; whereby  
 the inhabitants of *Nazareth* had frequent opportu-  
 nities of hearing of his fame ; or seeing his mira-  
 cles, if they pleased ;—tho’ he did not reside  
 among them, nor as yet return to them. It is  
 reckoned to have been above a year since he had  
 been there, and they had made the attempt upon  
 his life. So long a time did he give them, to lay  
 aside their anger and criminal prejudices. And,  
 if they had had a love of truth, he now afforded  
 them another opportunity for the reception of it.  
 For, he returned to *Nazareth* ; and going into the

synagogue on the sabbath-day, he again began to teach them. But they immediately discovered the same narrow, envious spirit, the same hardened, perverse turn of mind, as before. For, tho' they were astonished at his learning and wisdom; yet as they had known *Joseph*, the carpenter, his reputed father, and still knew his other relations, who were poor people in that town, they could not be persuaded to pay any regard to his doctrine; neither were they properly affected with the evidence of those miracles, which he had wrought in all the neighboring towns and villages. Upon which he said again, as he had done before, *that a prophet is no where so little esteemed as among his own countrymen and acquaintance*;—and then the *Evangelist* brings in the words now under consideration, viz. *that he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief*.—*Theophilus* said, he wondered that the *author* had not quoted the words (as certain writers commonly do) from Mark vi. 5, 6. viz. *that he could there do no mighty works,—because of their unbelief*;—unlesse he was afraid of that expression, [*save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them.*] However, as that manner of expressing it, may be a difficulty to some, I would add, that St. *Mark* evidently means no more than that *he could not* consistently with his wisdom and goodness, or with the end and design of his going about preaching and working miracles. Thus we say very commonly, “I cannot prevail  
“with my self, or my friend, to do this or  
“that;” when we mean, not that we want power, but inclination, to do it. And this manner of speaking was very common among the *antients*. Thus, Gen. xxxvii. 4. *Joseph's* brethren, the more their father loved him, the more they hated him, and *could not speak peaceably unto him*; i. e. they did not choose to do so, for they had power to have  
spoken

spoken peaceably, or kindly, to their brother, if PART III. they had pleased. Acts iv. 20. When two of the Apostles, *Peter*, and *John*, were brought before the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and were by them charged to preach no more in the name of *Jesus*, they said, *we cannot but speak the things, which we have seen and heard.* 1 John iii. 9. "Every man, that is born of God, doth not commit sin; but the seed of a new and spiritual life remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Rev. ii. 2. *Jesus Christ* saith to the angel of the church of *Ephesus*, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and that thou canst not bear such as are wicked." In like manner, we are told that *Xenophon* hath said, "drunkards, lewd and covetous persons, cannot refrain from the objects, in which they have been accustomed to take pleasure."—In all which cases by [*cannot*] must be understood [*will not*:] Or that they do not want power to do otherwise, but that they choose to act so and so.—And it is evident that St. *Mark* did not mean, that *Jesus* had no power to have worked miracles there, at this time,—any more than St. *Matthew*; for he hath mentioned his performing some miracles, *i. e.* curing a few persons that had diseases; which was nothing to what he had done in other places, and what he could and would have done there, if he had seen it would have answered his purpose. The reason, therefore, why he did not *many* mighty works there, was their *unbelief*. He saw their spirit of perverseness, and that they were so much bent upon their own wicked ways, that all his attempts to reform them were vain and fruitless. *Jesus* always acted wisely, and never more so, than in refusing to work more miracles among a people where there was no prospect of doing any good. Tho' they had made an attempt upon his life, yet he returned to them to seek

PART III.

seek their welfare. But, when the same spirit of inveterate prejudice and intractableness discovered itself, he would not labor in vain, nor *cast pearls before swine*; who, instead of valuing them, would *turn again and rend him*. He worked no miracle by way of revenge, made no attempt upon their lives; but left them to cool and consider, or go on and perish without excuse. With what truth, or justice, could your *author*, therefore, say, that *Jesus gave them up instantly to the hardness of their hearts*;—that he would not permit them those accidental opportunities of seeing any of his miracles, which might possibly have alarmed their stubborn minds into a better state, and prompted a desire of farther instruction?—

When we are assured that he worked miracles at *Jerusalem*, at the public festivals;—that he performed miracles also in all the neighboring towns and villages; [many of which they either did see, or might have seen;] and that even at *Nazareth* itself, before the face of these his enemies, he laid his hands on some diseased persons and cured them? It was kind in him not to proceed, when he saw that it would not turn to their advantage, but to their greater condemnation. Here, therefore, was a great deal of the long-suffering character displayed in their behalf. He did not strike them dead, instantly, when they attempted to murder him. He did not return immediately, lest he should exasperate them.—No; he left them above a year, to consider the evidence of his mission and character; and then came again to seek their happiness, as being very unwilling that they should perish, notwithstanding their unrighteous and cruel treatment of him. It was not in them a *tardy genius and innocent scruples*, but obstinacy and perverseness, the most criminal and inveterate prejudices. And divine wisdom knows, in all cases, what evidence  
to

to give, and to whom; tho' all have enough to leave them without excuse. PART III.

“ *Pyrrho* observed that his *author* had alleged other texts, to prove that *Jesus* discouraged the persons, who wanted to see him work miracles, or came desirous to canvass the evidence. One was, *Jesus*’s answer, when he was applied to, for an instance of his extraordinary assistance, in favor of the nobleman’s child,—*unlesse you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.*”—*Theophilus* observed that *Jesus* had just escaped out of the hands of the *Nazarenes*, who had attempted to throw him down a precipice, and kill him. Several other of the *Galileans*, notwithstanding, received him, having seen the miracles which he had done, at the passover, at *Jerusalem*; for they had gone up to that feast. Among other places in *Galilee*, *Jesus* went again to *Cana*, where he had, publicly at a marriage feast, turned water into wine. It was some miles from *Capernaum*. And at *Capernaum*, there was a person of distinction, that belonged to *Herod*’s court, and his son lay at the point of death. When he heard that *Jesus* was come back from *Judea* into *Galilee*, he went to *Cana*, to speak with *Jesus*, and to desire him to come down to *Capernaum* and cure his son. By the miracles he had already worked, *Jesus* had given clear proofs of his divine mission, from whence the nobleman might have argued that he could have cured his son at a distance, and needed not to have gone down, from *Cana* to *Capernaum*, to effect the miracle. Some would read our Savior’s words by way of interrogation, thus, “ *unlesse you see signs and wonders, will you not believe?* i. e. Will you not believe that I am able to work this miracle, unlesse I go down to *Capernaum*, and you see me perform it there?” The nobleman (either not understanding this gentle reproof, through the grief

The 39th text, John iv. 48. explained. See p. 49.

## PART III.

grief and anxiety he was under, for his son; or questioning whether *Jesus* could cure him at so great a distance) repeated his request with more vehemence, and said, *Sir, be pleased to come down to Capernaum, and cure my son, before he dies.* *Jesus* (that he might fully explain himself, correct the man's mistake, and manifest that he approved of his Faith, and had power to work miracles at a distance) said, *Go your way, your son is recovered.* The nobleman understood *Jesus*, and then believing, or being convinced that he could work miracles at a distance, without seeing the person, or being present,—went home fully satisfied; and found, upon inquiry, that his son recovered the very moment that *Jesus* pronounced the words.—Upon which, he and all his family became from that time the disciples of *Jesus*.—Now, consider it in this view, as it really stands in the *Evangelists*, and what proof does there arise from hence, that *Jesus* discouraged such as wanted to see a miracle done by him, or came desirous to canvass the evidence? It is plain the nobleman's request was readily complied with, and his son cured immediately, without *Jesus*'s going down to *Capernaum*. This was certainly granting the nobleman greater encouragement and stronger evidence than he desired, or expected. And, instead of an objection, is a most eminent instance of the power and goodness of *Jesus*, and a most remarkable argument in favor of a rational Faith.

The 40th  
text, Mat.  
xiii. 38,  
&c. ex-  
plained.  
See p. 38;  
49.

*Pyrrho* alleged other texts to the same purpose, and asked, “ why *Jesus* checked the Pharisees for “ asking a sign, and refused to comply with their “ request?” *Theophilus* observed that there were more texts than one, referred to; and that he would explain them according to their order in the harmony of the four gospels. As to the first (says he) I have already taken notice of the story which immediately goes before it, viz. when *Jesus* had

had cured one that was thought to have had a *demon*, and who was actually both blind and dumb, the *Pharisees* gave it that perverse and malicious turn,—that he cast out demons by a confederacy with *Beelzebub*, the prince of demons. For that high act of wickedness he severely reproved them, as they deserved.—With the same spirit of perverseness, certain of the Scribes and Pharisees said, *Master, we would see a sign from thee*. The miracles he had already worked were either denied, or ascribed to evil spirits, and all that evidence had made no impression; but they were, nevertheless, demanding new evidence; not out of any love to truth, but out of a light and wanton curiosity, pure scepticism, and endless cavil. *Jesus* never refused working a miracle at the request of those who came to him, either for the sake of conviction, or for the relief of themselves or their friends;—but (knowing the hearts of all men) he knew how to distinguish, and therefore answered these *Pharisees*, “*an evil and an adulterous generation seeketh after a sign* (as if I had not hitherto worked any miracles among them) I will not now gratify their curiosity, neither will I leave them without a sufficient proof of my mission; but for the grand evidence, I refer them to my resurrection from the dead, which may be aptly compared to *Jonah’s* coming out alive, after he had been *three days in the belly of the whale*.—And take notice that others have repented, or grown more pious and virtuous, upon less evidence; who may, therefore, justly rise up in judgment against this generation and condemn them.”—The *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* are again recorded to have made a like request.—*Jesus* had already worked almost innumerable miracles, by sea and by land, in the wilderness, in the fields and high-ways, in the synagogues,

The 4<sup>th</sup> text, Mat. xvi. 1, &c. or Mark viii. 11, &c. See p. in 38; 49.

**PART III.** in villages, and in larger towns. After all which they tempted him, and desired that he would show them a sign from heaven;—that sign I suppose, mentioned, Dan. vii. 13, 14. of the Son of Man's coming in the clouds of heaven, to take upon him universal dominion. But the time was not yet come for his taking possession of all power both in heaven and earth. And, therefore, our Lord answered them, that they had evidence enough already, if they would attend to it. "You, know, saith he, a red evening is a sign that the next day will be fair; and you likewise understand that a red, lowering morning is a sign of a bad day. You hypocrites, who pretend to demand new evidence of me, as if you had a mind to become my disciples, and could not judge of the evidence you have already had. You plainly show that you do not want capacity, but honesty and candor of mind; otherwise you would easily discern the signs of the times;—you would easily perceive that this is the time, which was predicted, for the coming of the Messiah, and that by my miracles and all my behavior I am the very person." Your author hath intimated, p. 36. that our Savior himself did not lay the arguments and proofs of his mission frankly before his disciples, and then give them time calmly to consider of their force. And he hath, in other places, insinuated that Jesus never appealed to the judgments or understandings of his hearers:—Whereas, surely, here is the most plain and evident appeal to their understandings, and a clear intimation, that, if they made use of their reason in matters of religion, as they did about common occurrences, they would readily find out truth, and be led to act right. And, considering how well they reasoned about other things, and how prejudiced they were against religious truth, and the most remarkable

markable and abundant evidence,—*he sighed deeply* PART III.  
*in spirit*, and gave them the same answer, as before, }  
*viz.* that to that wicked and adulterous generation,  
 there should no sign be given, but that of his re-  
 surrection; for that was to be the grand evidence of  
 his mission and doctrine:—After that just reproof,  
 he left them, and went elsewhere.—Your *author*, in-  
 deed, is so tender of the character of those wicked  
 and perverse *Jews*, that he calls their *seeking a sign*,  
 or miracle, their *desiring a rational evidence of their*  
*discipleship*; which, *if he* [Christ] *had indeed appealed*  
*to their understandings, had been so far from any thing*  
*criminal or blame-worthy, that it had been in all reason*  
*their indispensable duty.* And then he says, with a  
 sneer, *whereas it was, it seems, in Faith, an unwar-*  
*ratable, presumptuous, and wanton curiosity.*—But I  
 would put another case, and let him try to answer  
 the same sort of difficulty;—the visible works of  
 creation and providence clearly prove that there is  
 a God. Some have, notwithstanding, denied, or  
 called in question that important truth. Now,  
 would it be any ways absurd or unreasonable, if,  
 to one that should demand further evidence, a  
 wise man should say, *an evil and perverse person seek-*  
*eth after a proof of a thing, for which there is already*  
*abundant evidence; but there shall no new evidence be given*  
*unto him:*—And should, withal, expresse some grief  
 and concern of mind, to see such a man overlook  
 the evidence already afforded? It is true (whether  
 your *author* will allow it, or no,) that there is in  
 every case a certain degree of evidence allowed  
 men, beyond which God sees not fit to go. And  
 it is great folly and perverseness to neglect the  
 evidence we already have, and to be perpetually  
 seeking after more.—There is a third text, where The 42d  
 they are said to have sought of him *a sign from* text, Luke  
*heaven*;—but, as their demand and *Jesus's* answer xi. 16; 29.  
 are exactly the same, as before;—what has been &c. See p  
38; 49.  
 said,

**PART III.** *sa*id, as to the two fore-going texts, will be sufficient for the explanation of this also.—*Pyrrho* expressed some surprize to find that *Theophilus* had so carefully studied these points. However (*sa*is he) my *author* has argued from many other texts, of which I expect your solution. But my time is now elapsed, and therefore we must defer them to our next meeting.

## DIALOGUE II.

*CRITO* put them in mind that they were considering the texts, which the *author* had quoted, and which (as *Theophilus* alleged) were perverted and abused. *Pyrrho*, you are at liberty to go on and propose any other difficulty, arising from one or more passages of *Scripture*.—My next difficulty (*sa*id *Pyrrho*) in what my *author* has mentioned, p. 49, &c. viz. “ that *Jesus* was so far from *having* “ the least thought of *procuring* disciples, from the “ influence of mens beholding his miracles, that “ a certain degree, and that no ordinary one, of previous “ confidence and persuasion, appears to have been constantly stipulated for, beforehand, to intitle them to “ have their applications at all listened to, or regarded; “ and to be the sole measure and rule of dispensing those “ occasional favors. Wherever we find them conferred, “ it was still perceiving that the patient had Faith “ to be healed. He had observed, p. 37. that the “ language of the gospel was, *believe you that I am* “ *able to do this?* And again, p. 50. he goes on “ thus, *wherever there was the least room to distrust* “ *such a preparatory provision, he seems to capitulate* “ *and guard with especial care, that a miracle should* “ *not be even accidentally a means of conversion, by* “ *dismissing the petitioner with a conditional remedy,* “ *which was to take effect, only in proportion to his* “ *present qualifications of the kind; and of which his* “ *success*

“ *success* was to be the sure test. According to your PART III.

“ Faith be it unto you, *where* [were] the terms? }

“ *As elsewhere he attributes professedly the whole efficacy*

“ *of a miracle, that had taken place, to that single*

“ *preliminary. Thy Faith (that of which I found*

“ *thee already possessed) hath made thee whole.*”—

When *Pyrrho* had thus stated the difficulty, *Theophilus* said, I want to know from whence it appears that this previous confidence and persuasion were constantly stipulated for, before-hand, with all those that would have their applications at all listened to, or regarded, &c. Your author must have some history which I know nothing of; or he must in this (as well as some other particulars) have forged history. What a number of miracles is *Jesus* said to have worked, where we read nothing of this previous stipulation? Who was required to believe before-hand, when *Jesus*, at a marriage-feast in *Cana*, turned water into wine? *John* ii. 1, &c. Or, when he drove the buyers and sellers out of the court of the temple? *John* ii. 13, &c. Or, when he performed the other miracles, which he did at that passover? *John* iv. 45. Or, when he rendered himself invisible to the *Nazarenes*? *Luke* iv. 30. Or, when he cured the lunatic, or epileptic boy, in the synagogue at *Capernaum*? *Mark* i. 21, &c. *Luke* iv. 31, &c. Or, when he cured *Peter's* wife's mother? *Matt.* viii. 14, &c. *Matt.* i. 29, &c. *Luke* iv. 38, &c. Or, when he healed the vast numbers, of whom we have no more than a general account? *Matt.* viii. 16, &c. *Mark* i. 32, &c. *Luke* iv. 40, &c. Or, how doth it appear that any Faith was stipulated for, before-hand, when *Jesus* miraculously inabled his disciples to catch that very large draught of fishes? *Luke* v. 4, &c. Or, when he went about all *Galilee*, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sicknesse, and all manner

manner of diseases among the people: By which means his fame went throughout all *Syria*, and the people voluntarily brought unto him all sick persons, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that was possessed with demons, and the lunatic, and the paralytic, and he healed them? Matt. iv. 23, 24. The leper, indeed, acknowledged the power of *Jesus* to heal him, upon which he was immediately cured, Matt. viii. 2, &c. Mark i. 40, &c. Luke v. 12, &c. but it doth not appear that *Jesus* had before-hand, *stipulated with him*, so much as to acknowledge his power. A more rational account, and an account more agreeable to the gospel-history, both with respect to him and others, who applied to our Lord upon such occasions, is, that having heard of the many miracles *Jesus* had already worked; they from thence, of themselves, concluded that he had power to work other miracles, and relieve them or their friends also.—How does it appear that there was any *Faith stipulated for, before-hand*, in the great multitude that came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities? Luke v. 15. The paralytic man was brought upon his couch by four men, and let down through the top of a flat-roofed house, into the room where *Jesus* was sitting and teaching the people;—but there is no insinuation of his having *stipulated for Faith before-hand*; or that he had ever before that seen the man, or his friends who brought him, Matt. ix. 1, &c. Mark ii. 1, &c. Luke i. 17, &c. They very rationally concluded that, as *Jesus* had cured others, he could cure this man. And their Faith was well-grounded; for *Jesus* immediately and perfectly cured him.—If your *author* has any other authentic *history*, besides that of the *four gospels*, let him produce it. But, according to that history, there was no Faith *stipulated for, before,*

before-hand, with the paralytic man, whom *Jesus* PART III. cured at the pool of *Bethesda*, in *Jerusalem*, John v. 1, &c. Nor, in the case of the man with the withered hand, whom *Jesus* cured, before a whole congregation, in the synagogue, Matt. xii. 9, &c. Mark iii. 1, &c. Luke vi. 6, &c. Nor in the great multitude that followed him, and he healed all of them, that had need of healing, Matt. xii. 15. Mark iii. 7, &c. Nor in the large concourse of people out of all *Judea* and *Jerusalem*, and from the sea-coast of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, who came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits, came also, and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all, Luke vi. 17, &c. How strongly and rationally did the *Roman* captain at *Capernaum* argue, when he desired *Jesus* to cure his paralytic servant—"If I, who am but an inferior officer, and under the command of  
 " others, can neverthelesse command the soldiers  
 " who are under me, as well as my own servants,  
 " and be readily obeyed, much more may it be expected that *Jesus*, who has such a miraculous  
 " power, can command away a disease, even without so much as going to the place, where the sick  
 " person lies?" *Mat.* viii. 5. &c. *Luke* vii. 1. &c. Here was no *Faith stipulated for, before-hand*; but *Jesus* having already worked a vast number of miracles, and even cured the nobleman's son at *Capernaum*, while he himself was at *Cana*, which was at the distance of some miles;—the *Centurion* argued very justly, that he must be able to perform this miracle, with the greatest ease, and at a distance also.—*Theophilus* proceeding to the three particular instances, which are left upon record in the gospels, of *Jesus's* raising persons from the dead, began thus;—I know (*Pyrrho*) some authors have  
 pre-


PART III.

pretended that diseased people, by having a strong Faith in *Jesus's* power to cure them, might, by their strong imaginations, help forward the cure. But pray, how could Faith be *stipulated for, before-hand*, with a dead man? Or, how could his imagination in the least conduce to his resurrection from the dead? According to the harmony of the four gospels, the first instance, that is particularly related, of *Jesus's* raising any person from the dead, was that of the widow of *Nain's* son, Luke vii. 11, &c. And, as *Jesus's* meeting the corpse, when they were carrying it out to burial, was purely casual, there was no preparatory work of any kind. *Jesus* himself was walking along the road, attended by his own disciples and a great multitude of people; and there was much people of that city, coming out of the gate, attending the funeral. Amidst such a vast concourse, — *Jesus*, without any difficulty, or preparation, went up to the bier and touched it, and raised the dead youth to life again, merely by saying, *Young man, I say unto thee, arise.* — Here was *no Faith perceived in the person*, on whom the miracle was worked; *no stipulation before-hand*, with any person, in order to *Jesus's* working this miracle; nor so much as a petition, or application, made to him by the friends of the deceased. Your *author's* account appears to be mere forgery and calumny; which, in the esteem of some hasty readers, may sully the character of *Jesus*; but, in the account of all that think and examine, must needs recoil upon the person, who hath invented it, out of his own brain. — As to the other two resurrection miracles, *viz.* that of *Jairus's* daughter, Mat. ix. 18, &c. Mark v. 22, &c. Luke viii. 41, &c. and that of *Lazarus*, John xi. 1, &c. there is no occasion to enlarge upon them; because it is evident, at first sight, that there could be no *Faith stipulated for, before-hand*, with the persons, on whom

whom these miracles were worked.—*Their friends* did, PART III. indeed, acknowledge their Faith in Christ's power, and apply to him for the miracles;—which was highly reasonable and every way becoming.—Again, there is no evidence that the persons, spoken of, *Mat. xi. 2, &c. Luke vii. 21, &c.* were previously required to believe; though, while the messengers of *John Baptist* were present, *Jesus* cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind, he gave sight. And then bid them go and tell *John* what things they had heard and seen, viz. the blind receive their sight; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear, and the dead are raised.—How doth it appear that there was any Faith stipulated for, before-hand, in those that were healed of evil spirits and infirmities, mentioned? *Luke viii. 2.* Or, in the demoniac, who was both blind and dumb, to whom *Jesus* restored both speech and sight? *Mat. xii. 22, &c.* Or, when *Jesus* miraculously appeased the storm? *Mat. viii. 23, &c. Mark iv. 36, &c. Luke viii. 22, &c.* Or, when he cured the one or two demoniacs? *Mat. viii. 28, &c. Mark v. 1, &c. Luke viii. 26, &c.* Or, in the woman that was cured of a bloody flux; who thought to have obtained a cure without *Jesus's* taking notice of it? *Mat. ix. 20, &c. Mark v. 25, &c. Luke viii. 43, &c.* There is not one word in the four gospels, of *Jesus's* stipulating for Faith, before-hand, with the demoniac, or dumb man, whom he cured, *Mat. ix. 32, &c.* Nor, when he fed five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes, in the wilderness, *Mat. xiv. 13, &c. Mark vi. 32, &c. Luke ix. 10, &c. John vi. 1, &c.* Nor, when he walked upon the waves of the sea, and afterwards stilled the raging tempest, *Mat. xiv. 24, &c. Mark vi. 47, &c. John vi. 16, &c.* Nor, when the people spread his fame, and brought the sick from all

PART III. the country round about, wherever they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets; and besought him that they might touch, if it were but the border of his garment, and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole, *Mat. xiv. 34, &c. Mark vi. 53, &c.* It doth not appear that he stipulated for Faith, before-hand, in the *Cananitish* woman; who, upon the fame of his many miracles, applied to him for the cure of her daughter, *Mat. xv. 21, &c. Mark vii. 24, &c.* Nor, when they brought unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, whom *Jesus* miraculously cured, *Mark vii. 32, &c.* Nor, when the great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others; and cast them down at *Jesus's* feet, and he healed them; insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see, *Mat. xv. 30, 31.* Nor, when he fed the four thousand men with five loaves and a few little fishes, *Mat. xv. 32, &c. Mark viii. 1, &c.* [After such astonishing numbers of miracles, worked in a great variety of times and places, and upon such multitudes of persons, how unreasonable were those perverse Jews, who wanted to see some other sign, or miracle, as a proof of his divine mission? *Mat. xvi. 1, &c. Mark viii. 11, &c.* and again, *Luke xi. 16.* But of this I have taken notice already.]—We read nothing of *Faith's* being stipulated for, before hand, in the case of the blind man, to whom *Jesus* restored sight at *Bethsaida*, *Mark viii. 22, &c.* Nor, in the three Apostles, in order to their beholding Christ's transfiguration on the mount, and hearing the voice from heaven, declaring him to be the well-beloved Son of God, *Mat.*

*Mat. xvii. 1. &c. Mark ix. 1. &c. Luke ix. 27, PART III.*  
*&c.* Nor, in the man cured at *Jerusalem*, who had been blind from his birth, *John ix. 1, &c.* Nor, in the dumb man, to whom he gave the use of speech, *Luke xi. 14.* Nor, in the woman, who had been eighteen years bowed down, whom *Jesus* cured in the synagogue, on the sabbath day, *Luke xiv. 1, &c.* Nor, in the ten lepers, that were cleansed by *Jesus*, as he went up to *Jerusalem*, *Luke xvii. 11, &c.* Nor, in any person, when he miraculously escaped from the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, as he had done before from the *Nazarenes*, *John x. 39.* Nor, in the great multitude, which followed him beyond *Jordan*, and he healed them there, *Mat. xix. 1, &c.* Nor, in *Bar-timeus*, and the other blind man, whom *Jesus* cured near *Jericho*, *Mat. xix. 29, &c. Mark x. 46, &c. Luke xvi. 35, &c.* Nor, when he drove the buyers and sellers, a second time, out of that court of the temple, called the *Court of the Gentiles*,—which I take to have been also done by miracle, *Mat. xxi. 12. Mark xi. 15, &c. Luke xix. 45.* Nor, in the blind and lame, who (soon after) came to him in that court of the temple, and were healed by him, *Mat. xxi. 14.* With whom did *Jesus* stipulate, before-hand, for Faith, when he cursed the barren fig-tree? *Mat. xxi. 17, &c. Mark xi. 12, &c.* And finally, how doth it appear that Faith was stipulated for, with any person, either before or after, when *Jesus*, by a touch, healed the ear of *Malchus*, one of the persons that was sent to apprehend him; whose ear *Peter*, in his rash zeal, had cut off with a sword? *Luke xxii. 49, &c.*—Must it not procede from grosse ignorance, or something worse, for any man roundly to assert, that previous confidence and persuasion appear to have been constantly stipulated for, before-hand, &c. when, in the gospel-history, no such thing appears? For, from that history, it plainly appears to

PART III.  have been so far from being *constantly so*, that it was so but in a very few instances.—*Pyrrho* seemed astonished at the evidence which *Theophilus* produced, in opposition to his *author's* strong and confident assertion, and began to doubt of his *author's* veracity. At least, says he, he must have read the four gospels very cursorily, and not be much skilled in these things.—And then he ought not to have ventured writing upon such a subject, 'till he had examined. Upon which *Crito* observed, that one had need to be upon their guard, in perusing an *author*, who had attempted to impose so grossly upon his readers; and that there was occasion closely to examine, and detect his misrepresentations.—However (said *Pyrrho*) I hope, *Theophilus*, you will allow that there were some cases, where *Faith was previously required*. For I confesse, I now doubt of its being constantly so. Yes (replied *Theophilus*) there are a few instances; and considering the vast number of miracles which *Jesus* worked, there are really but a few. I am not afraid of acknowledging the truth; but will now produce all the instances, which even look that way; and examine them, as they rise. For I apprehend they were all wise and reasonable. As to the instance of the nobleman, whose son *Jesus* cured at *Capernaum*,—that has been considered at large already, p. 175, &c.

The 43<sup>d</sup> text, Mat. ix. 28. explained. See p. 37. The next instance is what our Lord said to the two blind men, whom he was about to cure,—*Believe you that I am able to do this?* To which they answered, *Yes, Lord*. We learn from the preceding verses that *Jesus* having cured a woman of a bloody flux, and raised *Jairus's* daughter from the dead, his fame went out into all that country. And, upon the credible report of his former miracles, these two blind men believed that *Jesus* was able to cure them also. Accordingly they applied to him for a cure. What *Jesus*, therefore, asked them  
concerning

Concerning their believing, was not a previous *stipulating for Faith*, but a desiring them to declare PART III.

that Faith, which they had already very rationally acquired. And, when they readily declared their belief in his power, he touched their eyes, and said,


*According to your Faith be it unto you.* Now, who- The 44th

ever considers that *Jesus* worked miracles, in order text, Mat.

to confirm his mission and doctrine, will easily ix. 29. See

discern that there was nothing unreasonable in all P. 50.

this.—The support of *Peter*, when he desired to walk upon the waves of the sea, was in proportion to his Faith, *Mat. xiv. 28, &c.* And he was justly rebuked for his want of Faith, or for his doubting of his master's power to support him, after he had seen him work so many miracles,—had received from him a power to work miracles himself; and had before this actually gone out, and exercised that power.—A fourth instance of this kind is recorded, *Mark ix. 23, 24.* A certain boy had the epilepsy, whereby he was rendered deaf and dumb,—was subject to very dreadful fits, and was almost wasted away. The father of that boy came to the disciples of *Jesus* in the absence of their master, to desire them to cure his son. But the disciples could not cure him, merely for want of a firm persuasion of *Jesus's* power to enable them to do it. Which doubting in them was very unreasonable, as he had already sent them out to preach and work miracles, and they had gone out, and by his power worked miracles. He, therefore, very justly said unto them, “ *O faithless generation, how long shall I continue with you? How many miracles shall I work? How long shall I bear with you, who are so slow of apprehension, and cannot gather, from all that I have done, how fully able I am to assist you to perform many more miracles; as easily as I enabled you to perform what you have effected?*”—Having to this effect  
child

PART III.  chid the disciples, he ordered the boy to be brought unto him. Just as he approached, he happened to fall into one of his fits, rolling upon the ground, gnashing with his teeth, and manifesting the greatest anguish. *Jesus* asked his father, how long he had been subject to this disorder? He said, he had been so from a child; and that several times he had fallen into the fire, and into the water. *And if you can do any thing* (said he) *have compassion on us, and relieve us.* *Jesus* said unto him, *If you can believe, all things are possible unto him that believeth.* And, immediately the father of that boy answered with tears in his eyes, *I believe, Lord, help mine unbelief.* When *Jesus* saw the people crouding about the boy, as he laid there in his agonies, he took him up, and easily and perfectly performed the cure.—Now, what is there unreasonable in all this? *Jesus* worked miracles to prove his prophetic mission and character, and he required of some of the persons, who came to implore his help, to acknowledge they believed he was indued with a miraculous power, and that they, or their friends, owed the benefit of their cure (not to medicine, or to chance and accident, or to the common course of nature; but) to his extraordinary power and goodness. Surely, nothing could have been more just and reasonable.—There are three instances of *Jesus's* saying to the person whom he cured, *Thy Faith hath made thee whole.* The first is recorded, *Mat.* ix. 22. *Mark* v. 34. *Luke* viii. 48. The second is found, *Mark* x. 52. *Luke* xviii. 42. The third is mentioned, *Luke* xvii. 19. They had heard of *Jesus's* numerous miracles. They from thence inferred he had power to relieve them. They accordingly applied to him for a cure. Upon which *Jesus* intimated that he approved of their Faith, and accordingly granted their request.—Your author puts in a parenthesis, by way of explanation.

The 45th  
text, Mat.  
ix. 22. See  
p. 50.

planation; and then reads the text thus, “thy Faith PART III.  
 “*(that of which I found thee already possessed)* hath  
 “made thee whole.” If he would thereby insinuate that *Jesus stipulated* that they should believe him to be the *Messiah*, before he would work a miracle at their request;—that is intirely groundlesse. That they should believe he could help them, before they came to seek relief from him, was quite natural. That they should also acknowlege their benefactor, was nothing but a becoming gratitude in them. And the curing any person, who would have refused to have made such an acknowlegement, could not have answered the end of *Jesus’s* coming, which was not to heal diseased persons, and confer merely temporal blessings, but to prove his own mission, to ascertain his great character, and to lead men to everlasting happinesse.—*Pyrrho* said to *Theophilus*, you know I am given to doubt, and to suspend my judgment, upon all occasions; but I hate misrepresentation and dishonesty in friend or enemy. And you have produced so much evidence to shew that my *author* is either dishonest, or very ignorant, that I confesse I have enough of the conversation at present, and must desire you to defer the further canvassing this subject to another opportunity.—So ended the conversation this evening.

### DIALOGUE III.

AT their next meeting *Pyrrho* produced another objection, occasioned by several texts in the four gospels;—the solution of which he required of *Theophilus*. “*It must seem strange (sais my author, p. 48.) if our Lord had any such meaning as to convince by these [miraculous] works, that he should always be so remarkably upon the reserve, in that respect, whenever he happened among unbelieving company:*  
 “*That*

PART III. “ That he should be so particularly sparing of these supposed arguments, among the very persons, who seemed  
 “ most to want them. More plainly still, that he had  
 “ no such intention to prove his own truth and character,  
 “ by these instances of his power, he often industriously  
 “ avoided that accidental consequence, and took particular care to prevent their ever coming to public notice,  
 “ by dismissing most of the company and attendants, before he began to proceed to the operation.—My author  
 “ goes on, with other difficulties of the like kind,  
 “ which I will produce, when *Theophilus* has answered what has been mentioned.”—*Theophilus* replied, that this was another proof and instance of the ignorance of the author, or something worse. And, if I was not afraid of being tedious (says he) I could go over all Christ’s miracles again, and as clearly show under this head, as I did under the last, how very far it was from being always the case. As to most of the miracles, recorded in the four gospels, there might be, and most probably were, unbelievers and enemies, as well as the friends and disciples of *Jesus*, present when they were performed.—It is plain that the paralytic man at *Capernaum*, who was let down through the top of a flat-roofed house, into the room where *Jesus* was sitting and teaching, was miraculously cured before enemies and unbelievers, as well as before the disciples of *Jesus*, *Mat. ix. 1, &c. Mark ii. 1, &c. Luke v. 17, &c.* For there were his implacable enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, and doctors of the law: And of them not a few; for they were come out of every town in *Galilee* and *Judea*, and even as far as from the city *Jerusalem*. And yet, notwithstanding the presence of so much unbelieving company, the power of the Lord was present to heal: And *Jesus* actually cured that paralytic man, openly, before them all.—The enemies of *Jesus* knew very well that the man, who was cured  
 at

at the pool of *Bethesda*, had been ill a long time, and was now well again; and they were so fully convinced that *Jesus* had cured him, that they therefore sought to take away his life, *John* v. 1. &c. The man, who had the withered hand, was cured by *Jesus* publicly in the synagogue, before both Scribes and Pharisees, who were his mortal enemies, *Mat.* xii. 9, &c. *Mark* iii. 1, &c. *Luke* vi. 6, &c. For, when they could not deny the fact, nor answer his arguments for the propriety of working that miracle on the sabbath-day, they again sought to take away his life. He therefore, for safety, withdrew from thence, and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all. And strictly charged them that they should not make him manifest;—not that he desired them to conceal his miracles, but that they should not discover the place where he was; lest his enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees, who sought his life, should pursue him.—Again; there were great multitudes present, when he pronounced the cure of the servant of the *Roman* captain, at *Capernaum*, *Mat.* viii. 5, &c. As likewise, when he raised the widow of *Nain's* son from the dead, *Luke* vii. 11, &c. As to his dismissing most of the company, when he raised the daughter of *Jairus* from the dead, there were several obvious reasons for it;—he was desirous that the house should be quiet; that the persons, he took along with him, might be sedate and composed; that they might without disturbance, or the least interruption, attend to his working the miracle; that they might have a near, perfect, and distinct view, and mind every thing that passed. There were the father and mother of the young woman, and three of the disciples, viz. *Peter*, *James* and *John*, as well as *Jesus*. There were, therefore, five witnesses; a sufficient number to attest any fact. As there was, most probably, a bed in the room,

See Mr.  
*Lardner's*  
Vindica-  
tion of  
three of  
our blessed  
Saviour's  
miracles,  
p. 68:  
102.

PART III.

on which the corpse was laid ; five persons, besides *Jesus*, might be as many as the room could hold, to stand at full ease, and view the miracle clearly, and without interruption. The persons, who were admitted, were the most proper persons of any. The father and mother, as best acquainted with the young woman's case, the most unwilling of any to admit a deceit, and to take another person, a stranger who had not died, instead of their own daughter.—Three of his disciples, who were to be witnesses of his works, and who could not have been persuaded to undertake the difficult work of preaching the gospel, after their Master's removal, without good proofs of his divine mission ; who might also assure persons of these things from their own sight.—Nor was it any improper reserve, *that he admitted no more* ;—neither did it tend to keep the miracle from public notice, or in the least prevent such a consequence as convincing the *Jews* of the truth of *Jesus's* miraculous power, or of the dignity and importance of his character. For all the people, who knew she was dead, and afterwards saw her alive again, had sufficient evidence from whence to draw the proper consequence ; and could have no reason to doubt of his having worked the miracle.—The signal miracle of raising *Lazarus*, after he had been for some days dead and buried, was performed before unbelievers and enemies, as well as friends. For though some of the *Jews*, upon seeing that astonishing miracle, were induced to believe on him ; yet others of them went their ways to the *Pharisees* at *Jerusalem*, to inform them of the miracle ; upon which they consulted how they might put him to death, John xi. 45, &c. And many more miracles were worked before *unbelieving company*. Compare Luke vii. 21. with ver. 31, &c. Matt. xi. 5, &c. with ver. 20, &c. See also Luke x. 13, &c. And, when the man, who had  
been

been blind and dumb, was perfectly, and in one moment, cured before great multitudes, the Pharisees could not deny the miracle; but they were such *unbelieving* and malicious enemies, as to ascribe it to a confederacy with *Beelzebub*, the prince of demons, rather than acknowledge that *Jesus* had performed it by the Spirit of God. The same sort of *unbelieving company* made the like objection to another of our Lord's miracles, Matt. ix. 32, &c. Again; *Jesus* cured some few diseased persons, before the *unbelieving company* at *Nazareth*, Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6. And there have been plain reasons assigned, why he did not do more mighty works in that place, and before that people.—The 5000, whom *Jesus* miraculously fed in the wilderness at one time, and the 4000 at another time, were too many to have been trusted with a *secret*, suppose they had been all of them his friends. But it plainly appears, that some of them were *unbelieving company*, who followed him for the loaves; and went back, when they found themselves detected, and their design frustrated, John vi. 26; 66. The epileptic boy was cured by *Jesus*, before his constant enemies, the Scribes, Mark ix. 14, &c. And what full evidence the *unbelieving Jews* had of *Jesus's* curing a man, who had been borne blind, appears abundantly, John ix. 13, &c. Again; he cured a dumb man before *unbelieving company*, Luke xi. 14, 15. He likewise, cured a woman in the synagogue, before his enemies, Luke xiii. 10, &c. And when some of his most constant adversaries, the Pharisees, threatened him with *Herod's* killing him, if he did not depart speedily out of his dominions,—he declared, he would work cures that day and the next, and that the third day he should have finished his present design in that place; but *Herod* could not kill him, for he was to be put to death at *Jerusalem*, Luke xiii. 31, &c.

**PART III.** Again; he cured a man that had the dropsy on the sabbath-day, tho' he knew his enemies were like spies upon him, and were then watching him, Luke xiv. 1, &c. There were great multitudes present, when *Jesus* healed *Bartimeus*, and the other blind man, near *Jericho*, Matt. xx. 29, &c. Mark x. 46, &c. The Chief-priests and Scribes, the grand opposers of *Jesus*, saw him cure the blind and the lame in one of the courts of the temple, Matt. xxi. 14, &c. And finally, the ear of *Malchus* was miraculously cured in the midst of that *unbelieving company*, which was sent to apprehend *Jesus*, in order to put him to death. For, in that case, *Jesus* was obliged to beg it as a favor, of those that had apprehended him, that they would have patience, and let him tarry 'till he had worked that miracle, John xviii. 12, &c. Luke xxii. 50, &c.—Behold here again, *Pyrrho*, the modesty and exactness of your *author*! It would not (I suppose) have answered his end, to say, that *Jesus* was sometimes upon the reserve. For every candid reader would easily have observed, there might be cases, where reserve might be prudent and highly proper. It must therefore be [*always, and remarkably upon the reserve; and whenever he happened among unbelieving company.*—I appeal to your own conscience whether, from the few short hints I have given you, it appears plain to you, that *Jesus* was so particularly sparing of these supposed arguments among (unbelievers) the very persons, who seemed most to want them;—and whether he took particular care to prevent their ever coming to public notice. A man may forge history, or pretend to have some other history; but let no man henceforth dare to say that he can gather any such thing from the four gospels. *Pyrrho* who, in his general character, was a man of strict virtue, began to dislike his *author*, when he found that he made use of such unfair methods to support

port his cause; and was so far ashamed of him as PART III.  
to make no reply.—But proceeded to the remain-

ing part of the objection, p. 48. “ My author  
“ (said he) is speaking of the conduct of Jesus,  
“ when he worked his miracles, and sais, that he  
“ was so far from retaining the grateful patients as  
“ witnesses, to communicate what they had experienced,  
“ that their mouths were by special command shut fast  
“ from the liberty of proclaiming the benefits they had  
“ received, and the strictest silence enjoined with regard  
“ to the author. See thou tell no man, was gene-  
“ rally the charge.—So far from laying hold on any  
“ miraculous occasion that offered, for matter of proof;  
“ that, when the expelled spirits were officious, of their  
“ own accord, and contrary to their own interest, to pro-  
“ claim who he was, the discovery was by no means  
“ permitted at their hands; but their tongues immedi-  
“ ately restrained, and an act of omnipotence exerted to  
“ oblige them to silence.”—Theophilus answered,  
your author’s stile is not so strong in this part of the  
objection, as in the former. See thou tell no man,  
is now represented as generally the charge;—not  
always and constantly, as before. But even this  
word [generally] is by far too strong, and contrary  
to fact. For, among the numerous miracles of  
Jesus, I have found only the following instances,

(1st.) That of the leprous man, whom our Lord  
cured, and then said unto him, “ See thou tell no  
“ man; but go thy way, show thyself to the  
“ priest, and offer the gift, which Moses hath  
“ commanded, for a testimony unto them.”

The 46th  
text, viz.  
Matt. viii.  
4. or Mark  
i. 44. or  
Luke v.

The miracle was worked in Galilee. The man  
was to travel from thence to Jerusalem.—There he  
was to go through the rites and ceremonies; which  
were appointed in the law, for the cleansing of  
a leper, Lev. xiv. 1, &c. After he had gone  
through all those ceremonies, he was to get the  
priest to pronounce him clean, or perfectly cured;

14. See p.  
48.

and

PART III. and then was to conceal the miracle no longer, but declare it publicly, *for a testimony unto them*, or as a proof of *Jesus's* miraculous power.—From hence it appears, what a strict regard *Jesus* had to the law; what a prudent method he took to get the *priests* to pronounce the man perfectly cured, before they were to know how he obtained his cure;—otherwise they might not so readily have pronounced him clean;—and (what is here more especially to be remarked) we may observe what a wise method our Lord took to avoid the bad consequences of publishing the miracle, immediately and upon the spot;—for, if the man had done as *Jesus* commanded him, the going to *Jerusalem*, performing the ceremonies of cleansing the leper, and returning to *Galilee*, would have taken up almost a fortnight. And, before that time had been expired, it is probable *Jesus* would have finished his present work in that place, and would not have been forced to retire sooner, as he was. *Jesus* did not absolutely forbid the man to publish the miracle; but ordered him to conceal it, only 'till the priest had pronounced him clean. However, the man did not mind *Jesus's* order; but published it immediately, in the most open manner, and in the neighborhood; so that *Jesus* could not go openly into the city, but remained for some time without, in desert places, lest too great a concourse should follow him, and excite the jealousy of the civil magistrate, Mark i. 45. Luke v. 16.—(2d.) Another instance is recorded, Mark iii. 11, 12, where it is said that unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him and cried, saying, *Thou art the Son of God.* And he strictly charged them that they should not make him manifest. If they were madmen, as Dr. Sykes hath, in a very learned and ingenious manner, attempted to prove;—their testimony was wisely rejected. For the testimony of madmen could

could have added nothing to the character of *Jesus*. Or, if we suppose they were impure or wicked spirits, it is not likely that, *of their own accord, and in opposition to their own interest, they should proclaim his divine character to the world.* They could not be supposed to do it, out of any goodwill to *Jesus*, or any desire to promote his kingdom.—It was, therefore, highly wise and proper in him to reject their testimony, that he might take away all grounds for that senseless accusation, which they brought against him, *viz. that he cast out demons, by a confederacy with the prince of demons.* St. *Matthew* doth much more justly ascribe such a behavior to the great modesty of *Jesus*, Matt. xii. 16, &c. A (3d.) instance of his forbidding persons to publish a miracle, was in the case of the resurrection of *Jairus's* daughter. But who was it, that *Jesus* forbade to speak of it? None but the *parents* of the damsel, Luke viii. 56. The peculiar reason of which seems to have been this, (a)—*Jairus* and his *wife* were persons of some distinction, who would have been exposed to great envy and ill-will, if they had been obliged to have spread the fame of that mighty work. Out of tenderneſſe, therefore, to their characters, and that he might not needlessly expose them to any difficulties, after he had shown them so much favor, he dispensed with the parents speaking of it. But he did not offer to forbid the great multitude to speak of it; and yet they, all of them, knew of the death of the young woman, and would soon know that she was alive again.—Neither did he charge the Apostles, *Peter, James* and *John*, who had seen him perform the miracle, not to publish it. For, as *Apostles*, it was part of their business to publish the proofs and evidences of their Master's mission and doctrine. Was there therefore, in this case, any thing like a solicitude to stifle every the least report, or shutting

(a) See  
Mr. Lard-  
ner's Vin-  
dication,  
&c. p. 67.

**PART III.** *ing fast every mouth from proclaiming the miracle? Or, injoining the strictest silence, with regard to the author of it? Or, the taking a particular care to prevent its ever coming to public notice? I would leave the man to the reproach of his own conscience, who would insinuate that the gospel-history contains any such thing.—As to the three following instances, viz. the privately curing the two blind men, and charging them to tell no man, Matt. ix. 26, &c. The privately curing the man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and charging him and his friends not to speak of it, Mark. vii. 32, &c. And the privately curing the blind man, and ordering him to go home to his own house, and not to go into the town, nor tell any person there of the miracle, Mark viii. 22, &c.—These things were all done to prevent too great crouds. And, as they none of them regarded his injunctions, but immediately blazed abroad the miracles, the consequences were, that his enemies were the more exasperated, and the concourse of people, that followed him, became so very great and frequent, that he was obliged, in a little time, in point of prudence, to leave the places, where those miracles had been performed. For, if there had happened any tumults among the vast numbers that followed him, the Roman powers would have taken umbrage; though Jesus disapproved of such tumults. And, when they would have taken him and made him a king, he bravely refused the offer.—As to the reasons of Jesus's not declaring, in plain terms, that he was the *Messiah*; and his being so reserved and cautious, upon many occasions, Mr. Locke has so well accounted for that part of his conduct, in his excellent treatise of *the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, &c. that, if your author had carefully perused that book, he would not have needed to have produced several*

of

of his objections.—As to our Lord's ordering the three Apostles, not to speak of his *transfiguration*, —it was only temporary, *i. e.* 'till the Son of Man was risen from the dead; when that and the other additional evidences would make it more credible; and his being gone from this world would take away all grounds for suspecting that he designed a temporal kingdom, to the prejudice of the civil government then in being.—That prohibition, therefore, could not be designed to prevent its ever coming to public notice. He did not injoin such strict silence, as always to stifle every the least report. For he, in effect, enjoined them to publish it after his resurrection.—I am really tired with confuting the rash and groundlesse assertions of your author, upon this head. I have produced about fifty places, out of the four gospels, where you have a distinct account of different miracles. And in about forty of these instances there was no such charge, as not to publish the miracle. Would any man, therefore, who values his reputation as an author, say, [*See thou tell no man,*] was generally the charge;—when it most evidently was generally otherwise? Or, that Jesus had any design to prevent the miracles ever coming to public notice; when he worked innumerable miracles in the most public and open manner, and before great multitudes, who flocked out to him from every quarter? Was this any thing like the being solicitous to stifle every the least report?—Surely, a cause that stands in need of such assertions, and wants such methods to support it, cannot stand long; but must come to a speedy desolation.—Pyrrho said, he was now to procede to difficulties of a different kind. Upon which Crito desired that they might be the subject of the next conversation.

PART III.

## DIALOGUE IV.

PART III.

**PYRRHO** began this evening's conversation with saying, "If the *Christian Faith was to be grounded on argument*, then he would inquire, out of his author, p. 65. *How this could be consistent with the sudden conversion of so many, upon little or no seeming evidence? Or, how could such a thing be expected, or accepted, at their hands?* For instance, *Jesus said unto Matthew, follow me; and immediately he left all and followed him. Was not that precipitately deserting a beneficial imployment, for he knew not whom or what?*"—*Theophilus* said that, as to the *Apostles*, they were evidently some of them disciples of *John Baptist*; and it is not improbable but that they were all so. Now *John* instructed his disciples as to *Jesus's* being the promised and long expected *Messiah*, *John i. 40, &c.* Some have taken *Matthew* for one of the kinsmen of *Jesus*; because he is called the son of *Alpheus*, or *Cleophas*, *Mark ii. 14.* And one of that name had married *Mary*, sister to the virgin *Mary*, who had by her four sons, that are often called the brethren, or kinsmen of our Lord. *Matthew's* being a publicane is no objection to his being the disciple of *John Baptist*; for publicanes came to him, and were baptized of him, *Luke iii. 12. Mat. xxi. 32.* The publicanes in *Judea* were generally *Jews*; and it was politic in the *Romans* to put that imployment into the hands of the natives of the country, where the taxes were levied, to throw the odium off from themselves.—Now these things will help us to account for what is said, *John i. 43, &c.* *The day following Jesus had a mind to go into Galilee, and he found Philip, and saith unto him follow me. With which call Philip complied immediately, and likewise told Nathanael,*  
they

they had found the *Messiah*, of whom *Moses* and the succeeding prophets had wrote; and that *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, the son of *Joseph*, was the very person.—The case was this, *John Baptist* had prophesied of his coming, and baptized multitudes, to prepare them for entering into the *Messiah's* kingdom; which he declared, was just at hand. He had likewise baptized *Jesus* as the *Messiah*, or the great prophet, by whom that kingdom was to be erected, and to whom it was to be in subjection. After baptism, *Jesus* also began to preach that men should repent, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The office of *John Baptist* was to be as an harbinger, or forerunner, to the great king, the *Messiah*. He was not that light himself; but he came for a witness, that all men through him should believe on *Jesus* as the Christ. And accordingly, *John* bore witness, and cried saying, “This was he, of whom I spake. He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was my prince, my superior or Lord.” And when the *Jewish Sanhedrim* sent a solemn deputation of *Priests* and *Levites* from *Jerusalem*, to inquire of *John Baptist*, whether he was the Christ? He openly declared, he was not; but baptized with water, to prepare men for the approach of the *Messiah*, who would himself shortly appear, and baptize men with the Holy Spirit and with fire; who would destroy the wicked, but reward the righteous, and make them happy.—Again; the next day *John* saw *Jesus* coming unto him; and then he publicly declared, that that was the *Lamb of God*, who taketh away the sin of the world:—intimating that it was the very person, of whom he had spoken the day before. And, as a confirmation of it, *John* said, he had seen the Spirit come down from heaven, and remaining for some time upon him; which was the token God had re-

**PART III.** veled to him, whereby to know the *Messiah*, or rather to be confirmed in the knowlege of him. —**AGAIN**; The next day *John* stood and two of his disciples with him. And seeing *Jesus* walking by, he pointed to him and said (as before) *Behold the Lamb of God!* Upon that, these two disciples followed *Jesus* to the place of his stated habitation, and tarried the whole day, to converse with him, and to inquire into the evidences of his being the *Messiah*. And, when they had inquired, they were satisfied themselves, and informed others.—Now, if we consider all these things, and remember how universally *John Baptist* was looked upon as a prophet; and that *Philip*, as well as many others, were prepared for the reception of *Jesus* as the *Messiah*, by having had him pointed out to them for such;—there is nothing so very wonderful, nor any thing unreasonable in his presently complying with that call, to follow *Jesus*, or to become his disciple.—When *Nathanael* said, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* *Philip* talked like a truly rational believer, and said, *Come and see*; i. e. “Do not condemn a man and his doctrine, without proper inquiry and examination.” This, surely, was an appeal to *Nathanael*’s understanding, and a plain intimation that *Philip* thought there was sufficient evidence.—After this *Jesus* turned water into wine, publicly at a marriage feast, in *Cana of Galilee*. And, when he had thus manifested his glory, his disciples believed on him, or were confirmed in their Faith in him. Then he went up to *Jerusalem*, to celebrate the passover; and there he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and worked other miracles, whereby he increased the number of his disciples. Having, by these things, raised the envy of the Pharisees, he left *Judea*, and departed again into *Galilee*.

Galilee, and the way thither laid through Samaria. PART III.

There he manifested his extraordinary knowlege, by laying open the secret wickedness of a woman of bad fame, in such a clear and convincing manner, as to satisfy her that he was a prophet; and by further evidence she believed him to be the Christ, as he acknowledged he was. Upon that, the woman went into the town of *Sichar*, and told her neighbors, "she had met with a stranger, who had laid before her some of the most secret and remarkable passages of her life; which none could have done but some eminent prophet." And she told the story with so many and such surprizing circumstances, that many of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman, who testified, he told me all that ever I did.—Concerning this passage your author says, *A notable foundation, truly, for confidence and conviction, and perhaps martyrdom, &c.* And afterwards calls this light intelligence. Whereas, if it be considered that the Samaritans had among them the writings of the Old Testament; and that they expected the Messiah, as well as the Jews; that it was generally thought that was the time for his coming; that discovering secrets was one signal proof of a man's being a prophet; and that in that case they had no reason to disbelieve the woman, nor reject any just evidence,—the thing has nothing so very wonderful or ridiculous in it. However, they were none of them called to be martyrs upon that evidence alone; neither was that all the evidence afforded them. For, upon Jesus's tarrying two days among them, many more believed because of his own word; and they said unto the woman, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying only; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.* After that again, Philip the Evangelist went

The 47th

text, John

iv. 39.

See p. 66.

went down to *Samaria*, most probably to the town of *Sichar*; and there he preached Christ, and worked miracles. And finally, two of the most eminent Apostles of the circumcision, *Peter* and *John* went thither, and conferred upon the Christians, in that place, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. So that they had sufficient foundation for a thorough conviction, and even for martyrdom;—tho' we read nothing of their being, any of them, called to that great and distinguishing trial.—After leaving *Samaria*, *Jesus* went about *Galilee*, and taught in their synagogues with great acceptance. And, among other things, he being at *Cana*, cured the nobleman's son at *Capernaum*. He likewise cured a demoniac, or epileptic person; and *Peter's* wife's mother, who kept her bed with a fever; and a multitude of other diseased persons. And, finally, he (by his miraculous power) assisted *Simon Peter* and *Andrew* his brother, together with *James* and *John*, to catch a large draught of fishes.—After all these things, *Jesus* walked along the shore of the sea of *Galilee*, and said unto these four fishermen, *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*, i. e. You shall, in due time, become my Apostles, and catch men in the net of the gospel, or convert them from ignorance and vice, to truth and holiness.—It is evident, from the four gospels, that these words [*Follow me*,] do not here signify, as before, *Become my disciples*. Neither was this a sudden conversion, nor any conversion at all. For they were, long before this, first the disciples of *John Baptist*, and then of *Jesus*. And having been disciples for some time, they were now called to be more constant attendants upon *Jesus*, that they might by him be trained up for the Apostolic office. And what they had already heard and seen, had that good effect upon them, as to dispose them readily to comply with this call.—Again; after that *Jesus* travelled about from place

to place, and worked a great many more miracles. PART III.

And then, passing along the shore, he saw *Matthew* sitting at the place where the *Roman* custom was

collected, and *Jesus* called him also, to follow him. *The 48th*

And he immediately left all and followed him. *We text, Mat.*

have no reason to think this was a sudden conversion, *ix. 9.*

or any conversion at all; any more than the former. *See p. 65.*

For there is no ground for supposing that *Matthew* now first became a disciple of *Jesus*. The more probable account is, that he had been the disciple of *John Baptist*, and after that of *Jesus*, like the other persons above-mentioned. And what he had seen and heard, induced him to forsake his employment, and to attend upon the person of *Jesus*, that he might be trained up for the *Apostolic* office. It is true, he left a beneficial employment; but it was not to follow a stranger, he knew not whither or wherefore. He had sufficient reason for what he did. And the more he denied himself for the public good, it was so much the more to his honor: He deserved greater esteem and gratitude from men, and will at last have a greater reward from God. It was not a word speaking, a precipitate action, or a sudden offer, that led him to such a conduct. But the attestation of antient prophecies; the testimony of *John Baptist*, whom all men accounted a prophet; and the exemplary behavior, the rational doctrine and repeated miracles of *Jesus*; which was more than a little, or mere seeming evidence, nay, even a very rational ground of conduct, and becoming the most wise and virtuous man.

*Pyrrho* said, his author had furnished him with some other queries to the same purpose, viz.

“Why were persons so severely reprov'd for the sin of infidelity, or commended for believing, when there was great reason to doubt, and even disbelieve?” *Theophilus* observed that there were four cases refer'd to, which he would consider, one by one.

PART III. one. (1.) *Zacharias's being struck dumb on the spot,*  
 for only hesitating upon what carried, according to the  
 The 49<sup>th</sup> common course of nature, the highest face of impossibility.  
 text, Luke i. 11, &c. —The scriptural account is this, when *Zacharias*,  
 explained. who was a *Jewish Priest*, was standing in the first  
 See p. 79. room in the temple, by the altar of incense; and,  
 according to his order and office, making the pro-  
 per oblation there, an angel of the Lord appeared  
 unto him. And, when the glorious appearance  
 struck him with reverence and terror, the angel  
 spoke unto him, to the following purpose, “Do  
 not be afraid, *Zacharias*, your prayer is heard, and  
 your wife *Elizabeth* shall bear you a son (though  
 you are both of you advanced in years) and you  
 shall call his name *John*. He shall cause great joy  
 to many; because he shall, as his fore-runner, pre-  
 pare the people for the great Lord, the *Messiah*.”—  
 There are no degrees of *impossibility*; but whatever  
 face of *impossibility*, this might, at first view, carry,  
 according to the common course of nature, *Zacharias*  
 must needs know that the power of God was able  
 to effect this, as well as to create man at first, or to  
 continue upon earth the succession of generations,  
 according to the usual course of nature. He had  
 no reason to doubt of the message's being delivered  
 by an angel; and he knew that that was the time  
 when the *Messiah* was daily expected.—Your author,  
*Pyrrho*, must needs blame *Zacharias* for hesitating.  
 For, (as I have observed above, p. 162.) he hath  
 represented the authority of an angel from heaven  
 so great, as to intimate, that there is *nothing in the*  
*utmost of reason's assurances to falsify or confront such a*  
*preacher; nor is there any thing, that the nature of*  
*any external evidence can possibly afford us, that hath not*  
*more than a ballance in such an authority.* See p. 11.  
 As, therefore, your author allows, that neither the  
*utmost assurances of reason, nor any external evidence,*  
 could have been of greater authority than the ap-  
 pearance

pearance of an angel from heaven, he ought to have blamed *Zacharias for hesitating*. For, of the power of God to effect this, *Zacharias* could not doubt or hesitate one moment.—However, as *Zacharias* did hesitate (not as thinking it impossible, but highly improbable; because he himself was old, and his wife beyond the usual age for having children) he wanted some sign, or miracle, as a present proof of the truth of the prediction. The angel thought that *Zacharias* could have no doubt of God's being able to do such a thing; and that he himself might have been credited; and therefore he gave him such a sign, as should be both a gentle punishment for his *hesitation*, and a token that the promise should in due time be made good. And that was that, from that time to the birth of the child, *Zacharias should be dumb and unable to speak one word*. But afterwards, to his great joy, he received both a son and his speech again.—Now, what great absurdity can your *author* find here? If he had been consistent with himself, he would have acknowledged that *the authority of an angel was greater than any external evidence, or even the utmost assurances of reason*; and, therefore, he ought to have condemned *Zacharias* for doubting. But he rather vindicates him, and *sais and unfais*, just as will best answer his own purpose; and evidence shall be great or small, or none at all, according as he is pleased to determine. — Then *Pyrrho* said, “*Theophilus*, let us procede to the (2d.) instance, which my *author* expresses thus, *With what severity does our Lord reprove the sin of infidelity in his disciples, for imagining they were going to be drowned, when their vessel was actually sinking under them; and it had been, from all appearance, a sin against common sense, to have thought otherwise?*” *Theophilus* answered, that according to the harmony of the four gospels, there are above twenty places, where *Jesus* is said to have

PART III.

The 50th

text, Mat.

viii. 23,

Ec. Mark

iv. 36, Ec.

Luke viii.

22, Ec.

See p. 79.

E c

worked

PART III.

worked miracles before this; and, therefore, the disciples, who had been eye-witnesses of most of those miracles, had just reason to think that he was able to deliver them in the greatest danger; and, that they, especially in his presence, were under the peculiar inspection and care of God, who would not suffer so great a prophet, or his disciples, that were to erect the kingdom of righteousness among men, to perish in the water, before they had accomplished their work.—The infidelity, for which *Jesus* reproved them, when he said [*Why are you so fearful, O ye of little Faith?*] was not their disbelief of the gospel, but of *Jesus's* power to preserve them at that time; after he had worked so many miracles before their eyes. For, after such repeated and incontestible proofs, it would have been *a sin against common sense*, to have continued doubting, or to have behaved otherwise than *Jesus* expected and required.—*Pyrrho* went on to the third instance, and inquired, “Why did *Jesus* say to the two poor, deluded travellers, [*O fools, and slow to believe!*] when they had no reason to believe?”—*Theophilus* replied, That on that very day, on which *Jesus* rose from the dead, he appeared unto several of his disciples. But, as the very apprehension of seeing a dead person come to life again, is apt to create an horror, suppose he was to appear in the day-time, and with circumstances of the greatest familiarity, *Jesus* did not discover himself all at once, for fear of surprising them, and making them fall into a fainting fit, instead of being able to attend to the proofs and evidences of his being risen again. Among other of his gradual appearances, this was one; there were two disciples of his going to *Emmaus*, a village about seven miles from *Jerusalem*. And, as they were walking along the road, they were talking about *Jesus's* having worked miracles, and his having given other proofs of being a prophet, mighty  
in

The 51<sup>st</sup>  
text, Luke  
xxiv. 25.  
See p. 66.

in word and deed ;—that he had been put to death at *Jerusalem* ; that they had had great and raised expectations from him ; and that a report had been spread about, that morning, of his being risen again from the dead ;—which report they had received from persons of credit among their own acquaintance, and yet they seemed to doubt the truth of it.—*Jesus*, (I say) that he might discover himself gradually to them, took on him the form of a stranger and traveller, and having joined company with them, he desired to know why they looked so anxious, and about what they conversed so earnestly ? They readily told him. And, upon observing that they hesitated, notwithstanding he had so often worked miracles before their eyes, and so frequently foretold his own death and his resurrection on the third day ; and, tho' they now had also credible testimony of the fact, to confirm the truth of those predictions ;—he very justly said unto them, *O unwise and slow of heart to believe !*—Your author would insinuate that they were only involved in the *national misapprehension, with regard to the nature of their promised deliverance* ; that they expected a *triumphant standard-bearer and a temporal prince* for their *Messiah* ;—that their mistake was natural and quite innocent, and therefore they deserved no such rebuke ;—that it was merely a want of understanding ; and that *it is not to be believed that God would reproach any of his creatures with a defective intellect, when he was pleased to give them no better.*—But all this is quite besides the purpose. For it was not for want of understanding, but of attention, and a proper candor of mind, that they were blamed. It is true, the nation expected a temporal prince for their *Messiah* ; but it is also true that their prophets had prophesied of a spiritual and suffering *Messiah* ; of one that should be *a light to enlighten the Gentiles*, as well as the glory of *Israel* ;

**PART III.** that in his days, the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the channels of the sea; that by his knowledge he was to justify many; that he was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that *Messiah* the prince was to be cut off, tho' not for himself; that he was to avenge, or repay, his grave upon the wicked, and upon the rich his death; that he was to make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and introduce everlasting righteousness. Now, were not all these plain predictions of a *spiritual, suffering Messiah*? Nor did Jesus blame them, merely for not understanding these prophecies. For they had had, according to their own confession, clear evidences of his being a *prophet mighty in word and deed, before God, and all the people*; of his having been taken for the *Messiah* by many, and his proving it to them that he was really such. As Jesus had likewise foretold his own death and resurrection, and their acquaintance had that day testified that it was actually come to passe, and that he had appeared to them, since his resurrection,—all these things rendered their disbelief quite unreasonable and criminal. It was not, therefore, a groundlesse reproach, or unjust censure, to say unto them, *O men without understanding and slow of heart to believe!*—And, to give them further satisfaction, Jesus shewed them how agreeable these things were to the antient prophecies of *Moses* and the succeeding prophets, who had foretold the coming of the *Messiah*, his being put to death, and yet his having an everlasting kingdom; which he could not have had without rising again.—Finally, he took on him his common form, spoke in his usual voice, and discovered himself to be that very Jesus, who three days ago had been crucified, but was now come to life again; and by all these things they were confirmed in their Faith in his resurrection. This was by no means imposing upon *two poor travellers*; nor reproving

proving them, without just reason for their want of Faith; or merely because they did not understand some of the mysterious prophecies of the Old Testament.—If, on the one hand, they had the determinations of their ablest Doctors and Sanhedrims; and the national expectation of a triumphant standard-bearer and a temporal Messiah;—On the other hand, they had Jesus who, by his many miracles, proved himself a prophet mighty in word and deed, and who interpreted the prophecies quite another way. And, what might have crowned all, when they came to examine, they would find the prophets themselves had foretold a spiritual and suffering Messiah.—“Pyrrho observed that the (4th.) instance was of a different kind. For his author seemed to blame Abraham the father of the faithful, not for want of Faith, but for believing too much.” Theophilus said, the promise referred to, was concerning Abraham and Sarah’s having a son in their old age;—such a promise as has been already taken notice of, in the case of Zacharias and Elizabeth. For above twenty years before that, Abraham had conversed with God, who appeared unto him in a visible glory, gave him commands which he obeyed, and made him promises which were all punctually accomplished. After such a train of evidences, he had no reason to doubt that the promise of Isaac came from God, or that Almighty power was able to accomplish it. He therefore (contrary to what could have been hoped for, in the common course of nature, and without an extraordinary promise and miraculous interposition of God) believed that God would be as good as his word. This, in the Jewish stile, is called, *Against hope believing in hope*;—which signifies no more than that, “notwithstanding it was contrary to all human probability, he firmly trusted in the power and veracity of God, having

suffi-

PART III.

The 5<sup>2d</sup>

text,

Rom. iv.

18. See p.

79.

**PART III.** sufficient reason to believe that the promise came from God." Here was, therefore, nothing unreasonable in such a Faith. No; the Patriarch reasoned very well, when he concluded that *natural impediments could not render the promised event impracticable*, as the Almighty power of God was engaged to bring it to passe.—As to what is said of "*Abraham's Faith* being, in this particular, proposed for our imitation;"—it is all groundlesse, if thereby we are to understand that we are to believe, such a miracle will be repeted, where no such promise has been made of God. But we are indeed, so far to imitate *Abraham's Faith*, in this and other instances, as to confide in God for the accomplishment of all the promises he has made to us; and to see to it, that *our Faith be made manifest by our good works*, and be in us a principle of obedience. In this respect, *the Patriarch Abraham is proposed to us, as the most laudable pattern for our imitation.*

The 53<sup>d</sup> *Pyrrho* produced a difficulty of another kind, *text, Acts* and said, "Why was *Jesus* so particularly cautious of *xxvi. 26.* exposing his person, after his resurrection, to public view; when his taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and lives of so many holy vouchers, who perished merely by the thing's being done in a corner?" *Theophilus* observed, that this was one instance of the freedom which the author took with the Scriptures. *St. Paul* sais, that *this thing was not done in a corner*. He takes upon him to contradict the Apostle, and sais expressly, that *this thing was done in a corner*, and points out (as he imagines) some of the bad consequences thereof. But (continued *Theophilus*) I have said so much concerning the public nature of *Christ's* death, and the full and abundant attestation of his resurrection; that I need not now to add any thing upon that head. Whoever considers it, will find that there were such open and  
remark.

remarkable circumstances of truth and credibility, PART III.  
 that there was then most ample evidence; and that we  
 also, at this distance, may be firmly and rationally per-  
 suaded of it. Suppose *Jesus, as a punishment upon the incre-*  
*dulous and stiff-necked Jews,* had refused to make use of  
 any more means to reform and save them,—after  
 they had rejected his doctrine and miracles, and  
 put him to so cruel a death;—your *author* would  
 not have been able to prove, that that had  
 been any way absurd, or unreasonable. For (as  
 I have often had occasion to observe) there is  
 a degree of evidence, beyond which the wisdom  
 of God sees not fit to go, or to allow men any  
 more. And they, who had had the light of  
 nature in common with the rest of mankind, and  
 the Old Testament Revelation over and above;  
 and had likewise been favored with the preach-  
 ing of *John Baptist*, and with the preaching and  
 miracles of *Jesus*, of the twelve, and of the  
 seventy; and yet refused to repent and believe,  
 might have been justly punished with some exem-  
 plary punishment. *God is strictly justifiable in with-*  
*drawing his light from such as choose to sit in darknesse,*  
*and absolutely refusing the continuance of all means of con-*  
*viction to such as, by their ingratitude and neglect, have*  
*rendered themselves unworthy of all farther sollicitation;*  
*and would, by their infidelity of Spirit, render its opera-*  
*tions, if tried, of no effect.* However, here was  
 something more of the long-suffering character displayed  
 in their behalf; some more patient degree of attendance  
 (not to a tardy genius and innocent scruples; for they were  
 not the only impediment; but) even to persons of perverse  
 and stubborn minds. For, after abusing all the above-  
 mentioned means, and putting the Lord of life  
 and glory to death, they had further means tried  
 upon them, and further evidences afforded them;  
 though in that way in which the wisdom of  
 God saw proper. It is said concerning *Jesus Christ*  
 that,

PART III. that, after he was crucified, *Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people; but unto witnesses chosen of God,—who eat and drank with him after his resurrection.* Now, suppose the enemies of Christianity should object to those chosen witnesses; let them assign some sufficient reason for their objecting to them. Was it not fit that some persons should be intimate with *Jesus* before his death, that they might know him again after his resurrection? Could strangers, or persons, who had seen him but seldom, or transiently, know him as well as his own family and most intimate friends? Or, could the testimony of such strangers have been equally valid and credible? Would it not have been said that they knew so little of him, as that they might easily take another person who resembled him, for *Jesus* come to life again? Whereas his familiar friends, who had been chosen to attend upon his person for some time before he died, could not be so easily imposed upon.—Well, but your *author* intimates, that “*Jesus* might have exposed his person to public view, after his resurrection; and that *his taking one turn in the market-place, might have spared the painful labors* of those who travelled about, to spread the story of his resurrection, and their *losing their lives*, upon that account. Or, in other words, that his resurrection would have been more credible unto us, and to the rest of mankind, if *Jesus* had appeared, not to his disciples only, but as publicly among the *Jews* after his resurrection, as he had done before.”—As to this (said *Theophilus*) I would inquire, Would your friends, *Pyrrho*, have thought it more credible, if that had been the case? Or would they then, have acknowledged his resurrection, and become his disciples? I am fully persuaded, they would not. But it is the way of sceptical and cavilling men to overlook the evidence they already have, and to require

require some which they have not. Let us suppose that *Jesus* had appeared publicly among the *Jews*, and even taken a turn in the market-place at *Jerusalem*, after his resurrection;—it is not likely that the body of the *Jewish* nation would have thereupon become his disciples; because miracles had been worked in abundance, and they had had plenty of evidence, if they had not been bent upon rejecting it. And, if they had rejected him, then it would have been said, “that the *Jews*, who (as you pretend) saw him after his resurrection, say, *they saw no such thing*; and are therefore counter evidence to the Apostles and other disciples, who have borne testimony to that fact.”—Supposing, therefore, that *Jesus* actually rose again, their unbelief, after they had seen him, would not have strengthened, but (in the opinion of most men) weakened the evidence to us. Let us now make the supposition of *Jesus*’s appearing publicly to them, after his resurrection, and that the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, or the whole nation, had thereupon, in general, become his disciples; what evidence could the rest of the world have had, but testimony only? (a) If the *Sanhedrim* had travelled about, published it in the nations, wrought miracles in his name, and laid down their lives in confirmation of the truth of that fact; they would then have done no more than the Apostles actually did. Or, if the Apostles, or any other *Jews*, had set out for foreign countries, and grounded *Christianity* upon this fact of Christ’s resurrection; and, as a proof of it, had insisted upon it, that not only they themselves, but the Chief-priests, Elders and Scribes had seen him; that *he had taken a turn in the market-place*; that *Jerusalem*, and the whole nation, were fully persuaded of the truth of it;—and had produced certificates for that purpose; under the hands and seal of the great council, or *Sanhedrim*;—

“ Would not your friends, *Pyrrho*, have made more and stronger objections to the united testimony of the *Jewish* nation? Would they not have found more room to suspect an imposture than they can now? Would they not have called it a state trick, a *Jewish fable*, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit, after they had so long talked of a *Messiah* that was to come about that time;—that they devised this story to palliate the matter, when they found they were disappointed of their grand expectation? And, as the chief men of the nation were in the plot, a fraud might be easily carried on; and that either the people, in general, fell in with it, or such as were more curious and inquisitive were intimidated by their superiors, and discouraged from making too close a scrutiny.” Upon that supposition, therefore, there would have been a greater objection against it than there is at present. And, allowing that *Jesus* actually rose again, there could not have been a wiser and more effectual method devised to make this evident unto persons of all ages and nations.—Your author says, p. 52, &c. that *whenever miracles cease, the authority of the evidence which depended on them, ceases with them; that a miracle, which was ocular proof to its co-temporaries, to us is no more than uncertain hear-say.* And afterwards intimates again, that it *was impossible in nature to have given such kind of evidence as could be transferred, &c.* They that saw might believe, but he says, *he is not obliged to believe any thing, because another says he saw it, &c.* The light of conviction, therefore, which is thus received, can extend no farther, than to the eye-witness himself, being lost and extinguished the first moment it is offered to be imparted.—He, therefore, evidently contradicts himself, when he affirms, that *Jesus’s taking one turn in the market-place might have spared both the painful labors and lives of so many holy vouchers, who perished, merely by*  
the

*the thing's being done in a corner.*—I have already PART III.  
 shewn that *Jesus* died in the most public manner; {  
 that he came to life again the third day; notwithstanding the precautions of his enemies to prevent his resurrection; that he gave the Apostles and some hundreds of other disciples, as much proof of his resurrection as they desired, as the thing was capable of, or as the most scrupulous person could have wished for, if he had been one of them; that by the plenteous effusion of the Spirit, which followed soon after, and by which the Apostles were inspired, and not only inabled to work miracles themselves, in the name of *Jesus*, but even to communicate spiritual gifts or miraculous powers to their converts; by these, I say, they carried every where along with them the strongest attestations to their testimony and mission. If the *Jews* must have been all satisfied by ocular demonstration, why not the *Gentiles* also? And, if persons in that age had a right to demand such evidence, why may not persons of every age and country as reasonably insist upon it, or expect it?—And then *Jesus Christ* must have remained always upon earth, and have gone about continually to show himself alive after his resurrection. And, in that case, how could the greatest part of mankind have been assured of his death? Testimony would have been all they could have had to trust to. And we have now abundant testimony both to his death and resurrection. What wild schemes, therefore, do these men propose? and how much preferable is the method that was taken?—When we have sufficient evidence in any one way, we ought to attend to it. But turn this affair which way you will, the method taken appears to be the wisest that could have been contrived, to spread this grand fact of *Christ's* resurrection.—Thus ended their conversation with respect to the texts which concerned the character and behavior of *Jesus*.

## DIALOGUE V.

PART III. *C*RITO put them in mind that, according to their proposed method, they were now to consider the texts, which related to the conduct of the *Apostles*. Upon which *Pyrrho* said, "My author, p. 38, &c. argues thus, viz. that reason and argument cannot be supposed to be the way to bring men over to the Christian Faith; because the *Apostles* neither did argue, nor could argue. And, if they had argued and reasoned with mankind, they could not have met with any success." *Theophilus* observed that this way of talking was all sophistry, and quite foreign to the purpose for which it was alleged. It is acknowledged (said he) that the *Apostles* were, most of them, no proficient in any science. They could (I suppose) read the Scriptures in their own language, but were otherwise no more than plain illiterate men, chosen for that purpose, that the excellence of the power, and their amazing success, might appear to be not of men, but of God. Or, as your author has expressed it, *that we might not possibly be tempted to attribute to reason's force, or impute to any personal act or acquisition of their own, an effect which was to be the sole and immediate act of the divinity; and wherein the power of God was in a particular manner to be glorified. For the same reason* St. Paul renounced all his human learning, from the first moment of his commencing Apostle, and determined to know nothing else, among his disciples, but Christ crucified, [he relied on revelation and miracles as the proper proofs to be made use of, by an Apostle:] And he would not make use of the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect, i. e. he chose to avoid the rhetorical language of the schools, that it might appear that it was owing to truth and evidence, and not to his eloquence, that he

The 55th  
and 56th  
texts,

1 Cor. ii.

2. 1 Cor. i.

17. See p.

40.

he had such successe. Notwithstanding that *sifting*, PART III.  
*inquisitive humor of the Greeks*, which your *author* has here taken notice of, it is far from being true, that *nothing would passe with them but the strictest reasoning*. For they, in numberlesse cases, and especially in matters of *religion*, reasoned very ill. I would fain know upon what strict reasoning their *idolatry* was built; or those obscene and abominable rites, which were practised in the worship of several of their Gods. Or, let him and all his brethren combined produce a *system of morals*, equal to that of the New Testament, collected from any one of those *inquisitive and sifting Greeks*;—*notwithstanding nothing would passe with them but the strictest reasoning*. If they had, in general, imbraced the Christian religion, perhaps some men would have found that they reasoned the worst of all the men that ever lived, and that they dealt most in the colorings of the rhetoricians, and in the sophistry of the schools, without a proper care to distinguish between right and wrong. But, as most of them rejected the gospel, it is sufficient to recommend them as very acute men, who carefully *sifted* and *thoroughly examined* every thing, and *would let nothing passe but the strictest reasoning*. It is freely acknowledged (and let him make the most of it) that few or none of our Lord's Apostles had ever studied such a system of moral philosophy, as the introduction to the second volume of Dr. Clarke's *Boyle's Lectures*, or Mr. Woolaston's *Religion of Nature delineated*. They did not begin with *eternal relations*, *moral differences of things*, and the like; and lay these as *the foundation of their intended superstructure*. But what then? They notwithstanding proved their point, and reasoned and argued very justly. They have not contradicted any true morals, though they took quite another method to prove the truth of Christianity. They did, indeed, make their appeals to mens understandings

**PART III.** ings and reasonable faculties ; but in a different way from any modern *apologists*, being indued with readier and more decisive means of conviction ; more suitable to the Apostolic character, to the bulk of mankind, and to their own necessary course of dispatch. They grounded Christianity upon facts ; they worked miracles before the faces of their hearers, in proof of their divine mission ; and they conferred upon their converts *miraculous* powers. These were immediate appeals to mens senses ; what the lowest of the people could judge of, and reason from,—“ No man can do such things unlesse God be with him, and in an extraordinary manner assist him. God hath set to his seal, that what such men teach is true.” He needs not argue from *eternal relations and moral differences of things*, who can prove by miracles that he is immediately commissioned and sent of God. Not that the Apostles ever attempted to overturn *natural religion*, or ever spoke against *eternal relations, moral differences, and their obligations*. No ; they supposed the *religion of nature* to be true ; they confirmed every *moral obligation* ; and strengthened by divine authority what the reason and consciences of men had before, in some measure, dictated to be right. I am persuaded, *Pyrrho*, that you are so good a mathematician as to know that the same proposition in *Euclid* may be demonstrated either by *algebra*, or in the common method of the *geometricians* ; and that the same problem may be solved, sometimes, either by *arithmetic* or *algebra*. And any man may be satisfied that there is such a place as *Paris* or *Rome*, either by going thither himself, or by the testimony of persons who have been there.—In like manner, the same doctrine, or moral precept, may be proved obligatory, either by the authority of an Apostle, or the strong reasoning of a *Clarke* or a *Woolaston* ; — more especially when the latter are favored

favored with the writings of the former. And PART III.  
 one would indeed wonder that men of letters should  
 talk so weakly, as to intimate there is any the least  
 contradiction between these things; when it is evi-  
 dent they mutually strengthen and support one  
 another. The *Apostles* themselves worked miracles;  
 they imparted also unto others the power of work-  
 ing miracles. When these *signs* of their being  
*Apostles* were made manifest, they justly claim-  
 ed regard; and dictated, like persons who had au-  
 thority, and came with a message from God;—not  
 like those who trace out all their discoveries from  
 their own reasoning, or from the writings of others,  
 whether sacred or profane. *It was qualification*  
*enough, in such a case, for a missionary to be furnished*  
*with his manifesto.* Their having such *spiritual gifts*  
 and *miraculous powers* was, in the *Apostle's* own sense,  
*being enlightened, tasting of the heavenly gift, and being* The 57th  
*made partakers of the Holy Ghost.* As their credentials text, Heb.  
 were so clear and bright, they could make great vi. 4. See  
 dispatch, and spread their excellent doctrine with p. 105.  
 amazing swiftnesse and successe. In their writings  
 they have with their doctrines and precepts inter-  
 mixed the clear proofs of their authority. And,  
 in these *latter times*, when many seek to pervert the  
 right ways of God, there arises such a genius as  
 Dr. *Clarke*, who, with indefatigable labor and the  
 most strict integrity, makes use of his great learn-  
 ing and *acumen*, to trace out *eternal relations, moral*  
*fitnesses and differences of action; and points out the re-*  
*ligion of nature and its obligations; applying all this*  
 to the proving or confirming the truth of the  
 Christian religion; and in his excellent apology,  
 shewing that he could lay *the foundation deep for such*  
*a superstructure.* Now here is no manner of incon-  
 sistency between the *Apostles* planting Christianity  
 by *miracles*, and Dr. *Clarke's* defending it in this  
 method, in our day and in our circumstances;—  
 any

any more than there is between *Euclid's* demonstrating his propositions, at first, in the *geometrical* way, and any person's afterwards shewing that some of them may be also demonstrated by *algebra*. The proofs are both good in their kind, both strictly conclusive; they do not in the least clash or contradict one another, but mutually strengthen and confirm each other. — The *Scripture* tells us that, in the days of *Noah*, there was an universal deluge. *Naturalists* have found, upon examination, that there are beds of the shells of fishes, and likewise plants and the bones of fishes, at a considerable depth in the ground, upon mountains, and at a great distance from the sea and from all rivers. — Now does this latter discovery overthrow the *Mosaic* account of the *deluge*, or confirm it? — Thus it may appear to every common reader, that though the *Apostles* did not begin and argue in the same way with some able *apologists*; yet they reasoned and argued very justly, in a way more extraordinary and striking, more suited to the bulk of mankind, and more becoming the Apostolic character and dignity. Their reasoning was more just and conclusive, and more levelled to common capacities, than the reasonings of your *author's inquisitive and sifting Greeks*; notwithstanding they were so conceited and vain as to account it *foolishness*. Thus *St. Peter* argued with the *Jews*, *Acts* ii. 14, &c. “that the *gift of tongues*, and the other miraculous powers then bestowed, were according to some antient predictions of their prophets, and proceeded from the power of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who had himself worked many miracles among them; — that same *Jesus*, whom they had a few weeks before slain; but whom God had raised again from the dead. — Therefore, saith he, all the house of *Israel* may assuredly know (or reasonably conclude) that God hath made him both Lord and Christ.” This reasoning,

reasoning, surely, was very strong, and pierced to the heart those who had consented to the death of *Jesus*. And it had the proper effect; for 3000 were converted that day;—Again, their additional preaching and miracles brought in 5000 more, within a short space; not that *they were gained over* (as your *author* says) merely by *that one hearing, or convinced by a single lecture*; but when the evidences of Christ's resurrection and the effusion of the Spirit, were added to all the former miracles of *Jesus*, and the many wonderful works which he had done, the argument was so strong as to convince numbers that he must be the Christ. So mightily, [and by such rational and striking evidences] *grew the word of God and prevailed*.—Thus the *Apostles* very wisely continued the same method of practice exactly in their turn, and trode punctually in their master's steps, in the execution of their office; insisting, and that very justly, upon the ready acknowledgement of their doctrine, which was accompanied with such evident demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.—*Pyrrho* allowed that *Theophilus* had set the matter in a different light, and what seemed more agreeable to the Scriptures. “But how do you account (says he) for the *Apostles* moving about so speedily from place to place? Did they give their hearers due time to think and deliberate sufficiently in order to their obtaining a rational, well-grounded and settled conviction?” *Theophilus* said, they did all that was sufficient; and asserted that the *author* and the *Acts of the Apostles* had given a very different account of this matter also. According to the best *chronologers*, the *Apostles* and many other Christians indued with *spiritual gifts* and *miraculous powers* tarried at *Jerusalem* about a year after Christ's resurrection. Now, consider that the ministry of *John Baptist* had been in *Judea*; that all the *Jews* accounted him a prophet; and that he declared *Jesus* to be the Christ:—That

**PART III.** there *Jesus* himself had preached and worked miracles; that he had sent out the twelve and the seventy, and that they had also, in his name, preached and worked miracles;—and all this before his death. Moreover, he had been crucified at *Jerusalem*; arose again the third day; and appeared for forty days unto many, who had been well acquainted with him before his crucifixion. There the Holy Spirit had been poured out, and miracles worked in his name, in great numbers after his death, and as a confirmation of his resurrection.—Consider all these things (I say) and take them into the account, as one in truth and justice ought to do; and then the effect will not be above what such a cause might be reasonably thought to produce;—notwithstanding their doctrine spread with astonishing swiftness and presently filled *Jerusalem*;—though fiercely opposed by the leading men in that city.—Whatever doubts or difficulties might arise in the minds of their converts, either as to the Christian doctrine or its evidences, they had so long the twelve Apostles, as so many oracles to apply to, and by them could be satisfied immediately. The tidings of such things would naturally awaken mens curiosity, and from the city spread, in a little time, into the surrounding country of *Judea*. The persecution of the Christians, which happened about the time of St. *Stephen's* martyrdom, would of course disperse the Christians and increase the spread of the gospel. From *Judea* it proceeded to *Samaria*. And whoever considers that the *Samaritanes* were generally of the *Jewish* race; that they were well acquainted with the books of the Old Testament; and that our *Savior* had lately been among them in person,—will not wonder at that step, which was the most gradual and natural. Among the *Samaritanes* miracles were worked by *Philip*; and afterwards two of the *Apostles* went down to them from *Jerusalem*;

*Jerusalem*; and, by the laying on of their hands, PART III. conferred upon the converts there, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In this way it is quite rational to think that they would make much greater dispatch, than it was possible to have done without the power of working so many and such great miracles.—*Your author*, who seldom, or never takes in all the circumstances, calls the “*Ethiopian eunuch* The 61<sup>st</sup> text, Acts viii. 26, &c. See p. 39. *the proselyte of a short stage, instructed one hour and baptized the next*:—And intimates that that was sufficient proof that there was no time to stand and deliberate, to make a proper inquiry or examination;—or that it was impossible he should be rationally convinced of the truth of that religion which he so suddenly imbraced.” But, if he had considered that the eunuch was a proselyte of righteousness to the *Jewish* religion, and well acquainted with the Old Testament prophets; that he was then reading the liiid chapter of *Isaiah*, which is a literal prophesy of Christ, and was fully accomplished in *Jesus of Nazareth*; that *Philip* could assure him, he was directed by an impulse of the Spirit, to go and attend upon him; that *Philip* would, most naturally, be led to give him an account of the life and actions, death and resurrection of *Jesus*; and likewise of the late plenteous effusion of the Spirit, and what the Apostles and others had since done in *Jerusalem* and other places; that the eunuch was now coming from *Jerusalem*, where he (most probably) had heard a great deal about *Jesus* and his disciples;—put all these things together (I say) and all the Faith, that was necessary before Christian baptism, might be rational and well-grounded. It is not to be supposed that *Philip* could go over all the articles of the Christian Faith in that one conference. The eunuch already believed in the one true God, expected a resurrection from the dead, and a righteous judgment

PART III.

to come. It was therefore sufficient, if *Philip* convinced him that *Jesus was the Christ*; that he professed his belief of that fundamental article, and became the disciple of *Jesus* by baptism.—Some men are better disposed for the reception of truth than others.—Some have that acuteness of mind, as to be able both to understand and demonstrate a proposition in *Euclid*, in less time than another must take barely to understand it. You may teach some men more in half a day, than you can others in a month.—Surely, then, *Philip* might, in such a situation, in a few hours rationally convince him of that important article, [of *Jesus's* being the *Christ*]; considering how much he might be prepared, by what he knew of the Old Testament, and what he had heard and seen of *Jesus* and his disciples.—As to what other articles *Philip* taught him, we cannot be certain. He would learn them then, or afterwards, as he had opportunity. Possibly he might come up to *Jerusalem* every year, to the passover; and there perfect his knowledge in the doctrines of *Christ*, from conversing with the Apostles, or other Christians.—Here *Crito* interposed, and said, if they would allow him, he would make one short remark, viz. that from a different reading in some manuscripts, and especially in that ancient and valuable copy, the *Alexandrian*, he gathered, that *the eunuch had the Spirit poured down upon him* from heaven, immediately after his baptism; or that he then received the miraculous gifts; whereby he might not only be further instructed and convinced himself, but able also to instruct, convert, or confirm others.—After the *Jews* in *Jerusalem*, *Judea*, *Samaria* and *Galilee* had had the gospel offered unto them; and as many as would had embraced the offer;—the next step in spreading the *Christian religion* was the preaching it to the *devout gentiles*. And the last

last step was spreading it among the *idolatrous gentiles*. All these were the most gradual and reasonable steps that could have been taken. And it is not true (which your *author* has insinuated) that the Apostles never staid long enough in a place, to convince the people of the truth of Christianity upon rational and solid evidence. For (to passe by many other proofs and instances that might be named) St. Paul was about two years at *Corinth*; and he intimates that he had been about three years at *Ephesus*, i. e. though he had made some excursions, yet he had spent the greatest part of three years among them. And by his assiduous preaching, both in public and private, and his many and signal miracles, all the people of *Asia propria* had full opportunity to be instructed in the nature of Christianity, and to have sufficient evidence of the truth of it. He was, likewise, at *Rome* two years. And, though confined in his own hired house, he had the liberty to preach there, and as many as would might go and hear him; no man forbidding him or them.—By your *author's* account, *Pyrrho*, one would imagine, that “they had not staid a week, or at furthest above a month, any where; but had made one general proclamation for the town to come in at once and become Christians, without offering them any one rational argument to convince them. And then, if they refused, *the dust was to be forthwith shaken off against them, and the doom pronounced.* For whoever would not come upon such a short warning, and snatch the critical opportunity, was for ever to stand to the losse, and never have an opportunity to hear more of the Apostles or their assistants.” Would not any person, who had never read the history of the acts of the Apostles, and was assured that in that history the facts are as your *author* has represented them, be very much surprized, upon reading that history, to find the facts

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The 62d text, Mat.

x. 14.

Luke ix.

5. and x.

11. Acts

xiii. 31.

See p. 39.

**PART III.** facts quite otherwise?—that the Apostles worked miracles of various kinds and in great numbers? that their converts worked miracles? that they grounded their doctrine upon, and appealed to, those miracles? [In proof of this, see, among many other places, *Acts* ii. 13, &c. and iv. 9, &c. and xiv. 3. *Rom.* xii. 12. *Heb.* ii. 3, 4.] that they took the most wise and rational methods that could be devised? and, finally that, as the most evident proof of their own sincerity, they chose rather to lay down their lives, than deny or even conceal such remarkable facts?—The *Apostles* reasoned and argued, and that in the most clear and convincing manner. They argued with the *Jews* and *devout Gentiles*, as persons who already believed in the one true God, and gave credit to the writings of the Old Testament, which were read to them publicly every sabbath-day. And from *prophecies* and *miracles* they proved to them that *Jesus was the Christ*. [See *Acts* ii. 14, &c. and iii. 12, &c. and iv. 10, &c. and ix. 22, 28, 29. and x. 34, &c. and xiii. 16, &c. and xvii. 2, 3, 11, 17. and xviii. 4, &c. and xix. 8. and xxii. 1, &c. and xxviii. 23.] In converting *idolatrous Gentiles*, they took another method, as the case required. They first argued with them from the works of creation and providence, to convince them of the being and perfections of the true God, and of the folly of idolatry; and then proved unto them that *Jesus* was sent of God to save mankind, as appeared from the miracles which he himself had worked, from his resurrection from the dead, and from the miracles which he had given them power to work. [See *Acts* xiv. 15, &c. and xvi. 26, &c. and xvii. 22, &c.] Thus, both *Jesus* himself, and his disciples after him, took the wisest and most effectual method to draw all men unto him. By such arguments was king *Agrippa*

*Agrippa almost persuaded to be a Christian.* And by PART III. these arguments were many others persuaded to The 63d— become the disciples of our Lord. By such 67th texts, subtle and strong arguments, adapted to the state John xii. both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they showed the 32. Acts gospel to be *a light prepared before the face of all* xxvi. 28. *people.* His mercy did they openly show in the sight of Luke ii. the *heathen* and his truth toward the house of *Israel*; 31, 32. and they took the most effectual way to induce all to John i. 7, believe on his holy name, and that all the ends of the earth 12. Psal. might see the salvation of our God. I have already xcviii. 2, taken notice of the Apostles tarrying a year or two in 3. See p. some large cities. But that was not all; they, 43, 52. moreover, left behind them every where a number of persons, to whom they had imparted the miraculous gifts, to carry on their religious worship, to spread the gospel further, and to confirm those that already believed. These were continued and standing proofs, unto the Christians, and to all other persons that would attend, of the truth of their apostolic mission. And further; the *Apostles* themselves returned to the same places, once and again, as they had leisure, and visited the churches which they had planted. They, therefore, gave opportunity for a re-hearing, and sufficient time to deliberate and consider. So that they, who were not convinced by the first visit, might be fully satisfied by a second or third.—Finally; where they could not be in person, they sent Evangelists and Prophets, their assistants, or wrote letters to such churches, or both. So that there was no lack of opportunity, or evidence, unto those that had ears to hear, and hearts to attend.—*St. Paul* first preached eight or nine years as a *prophet*; then he was made an *Apostle*. As a *prophet*, he preached at *Damascus* and *Jerusalem*: and in the countries of *Syria* and *Cilicia*, unto the *Jews*; and then spent a whole year with the church that had been devout *Gentiles*,

**PART III.** tiles, at *Antioch* in *Syria*. Then, going up to *Jerusalem*, he was made an *Apostle*. After which he made four or five apostolic journeys; which he generally begun from *Jerusalem*, from thence going down to *Antioch* in *Syria*. And then (after his first apostolic journey) returning to the places where he had been already. When he had settled affairs among his former converts, he went on further, or to other more remote places, to collect and settle churches there also. He labored above thirty years, and travelled above two thousand miles; with many sleepless nights and many fatiguing, laborious days; through hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, buffetings and stripes, stonings and repeated imprisonments, perils by sea and perils by land, and through almost continual danger of death;—through such amazing toils and difficulties, he planted the gospel in many parts of the *lesser Asia* and of *Greece*, as well as confirmed the Christians in many other places, and particularly in the grand, imperial city of *Rome*. And, in his second visit to *Rome*, he is generally thought to have suffered a violent death under that cruel and tyrannical emperor, *Nero*. But it was not enough for that excellent man to be treated in so barbarous and inhumane a manner, for above thirty years, and at last to die a martyr, purely because of his zeal to plant truth and righteousness in the earth. There are men, who do not declare for atheism, nor openly patronize vice, who can allow themselves to stab his character, and murder the reputation of so great and good, so disinterested and benevolent a man, as *St. Paul*.—It is an unaccountable thing to me, who am warmed and animated with such a glorious example of piety and public spirit, and who value the gospel for the excellent temper and sublime virtue, which it is directly calculated to promote,—to see men so zealous to blacken

blacken the characters of those that spread it, and to run down the gospel itself, as if they could get some mighty matter thereby!—and to do it by any methods, whether right or wrong; whether consistent or inconsistent with themselves. Your *author* says, *most of the Apostles were illiterate persons*. It is acknowledged. What then? Those illiterate persons did what the *pretended moral philosophers*, who are enemies to the *gospel*, cannot do with all their learning and boasted sagacity. And we say that that is a proof of the *Apostles* having the miraculous powers, which are ascribed to them. They allege that St. *Paul* had the advantage of a learned education;—we allow that too. What then? He renounced it all, and determined to learn the *gospel* purely from *revelation*, and to spread it by *miracles*. Where is the absurdity in all this reasoning? Do not Christians in general say, that the *gospel* is a matter of pure revelation? that no man, by human learning could ever have found it out?—and that there was great wisdom in the choice of the men, who were to be *Christ's Apostles*, will easily appear to any one, that will carefully peruse Mr. *Locke's Reasonableness of the Christian religion*; or *Miscellanea sacra, Essay II.*—As the *gospel* was a matter of pure *revelation*, St. *Paul* was in the right of it, not to mix his *human learning* with it, but faithfully to preach the *gospel* in that purity and simplicity, in which he had received it from *Christ*. When he could work miracles, and inable others to work miracles, he had a much shorter and more effectual method of making converts and establishing them in the Faith, than from any thing he had learned in the schools of *Tarsus*, or at the feet of *Gamaliel*, in *Jerusalem*. In renouncing his *human learning*, he did not renounce reason and common sense. But *human learning* could be of no service to an *Apostle*, to make him master of the plan of the *gospel*, or to inable


**PART III.** him to work miracles;—though it may be of great service *to us*, if it be made a right use of. The *Scriptures*, indeed, and many other excellent antient writers cannot otherwise be understood; nor the languages, the phrases and customs be otherwise explained and set in a proper light.—When one considers how much the diligent study of the *Scriptures* tends to keep alive and promote the study of other antient authors, one would not be so *barbarous*, as with great zeal to endeavor to overthrow Christianity; which is, in that view, the occasion of so much good. But, if Christianity could but be overthrown, it would greatly please some men, whatever *barbarity* was thereupon likely to insue;—even though men lost the notion of the true God, and returned again to offer human sacrifices to *Moloch*, or to any other fictitious deity, of their own absurd invention.—*Theophilus* addressing himself to *Crito*, said, He had gone through the texts, which related to the *Apostles*; and desired to know whether they thought proper at present to procede to any other? They all agreed that the evening was so far spent, that they had best not to begin a new subject till the next meeting.

## DIALOGUE VI.

**PYRRHO** began the conversation this evening with saying, “that they were now to consider those texts, on which his *author* had built his main argument, p. 56, &c. viz. That it is *the Spirit which infuses evidence and inspires conviction* into all true believers; that, *by one secret whisper, irradiates the soul at once* with the knowledge of the Christian religion, and *a thorough conviction* of the truth of it; which renders needlesse the reading of the *Scriptures* and all other books, or the hearing the sermons

sermons and instructions of divines ;—For, by making his constant residence, and being ever personally present with us, he dispenses his certain intelligences to the soul. This he calls the supernatural and all-sufficient source and origin of our Faith. To prove this he quotes several texts ; and to sum up all, he represents the Scriptures as every were asserting that the Spirit is to inspire knowlege and conviction. Concerning this he falls into the language of some modern *Entbusiasts*, and, p. 101. calls it, *that Savior which we feel*. And, p. 58. speaking of the feeling of sense and appetite, he says, *Here is feeling opposed to feeling ; a strong and palpable, internal sense to ballance all the motions of the external*. Above all, he assures us, it is of immediate influence and operates without delay. We have now no occasion to make use of our own reason, or understanding ; for by the inspiration of the Spirit, the most perfect and finished creed is produced at once. Thus instructed, we need not apply to libraries for a more competent information and discovery. What is there (says he) after this, remain in human wit, or these suspicious repositories of human testimony, that can now deserve our least notice, or be thought of consequence to ingage a moment's attention upon this subject ?—Neither do we now stand any longer in need of the credit of antient miracles, or the genuinenesse of distant records ; a very slender and insufficient ground to answer all the great purposes and insure the rigid demands of religion. Since we can vouch, in its stead, a present and standing miracle of our own, whereby we are rendered infallible all our days, or not left liable one moment to a possibility of error and imposition. After which he speaks, with disdain, of the empty notion of manuscript authorities and paper revelations, composed of perishable materials, which must in time come to want repair, and must necessarily be the work of man. He insinuates that the sacred writings have been actually much adulterated. But if God,

**PART III.** by constant miracle, had preserved the Scripture in all its original purity, he is positive that *it would still be absolutely defective and insufficient for any such revealing purpose, as they would expect.* Again; he calls the Scripture *a dead letter*, and in many places speaks of it with contempt."—*Theophilus* heard all these things with great patience, and then began to answer by saying, I have here caught this *infallible author* of yours once more contradicting himself. For, if the Scriptures are a mere human invention, and deserve no regard; if they are altered and corrupted, and are no more than *uncertain hear-say*,—how came your *author* by all this intelligence about *the Spirit*? These *manuscript authorities and paper revelations* are by no means to be depended upon. Whence, then, had he this information, *that the Spirit is to inspire us with the Christian Faith, and that the Scriptures are of no use*? Why does he quote texts and allege such a number of passages from *a suspicious book*, a book which *has actually been much adulterated*? How does he know but these very texts, which he has alleged to this purpose, are all adulterated? Or what can it signify to cite passages from *a mere human testimony*, which consists of nothing but *uncertain hear-say*;—a book which *deserves not the least notice, and cannot be thought of consequence enough to engage one moment's attention*?—Surprising and quite unaccountable, indeed! that a man of his great acuteness and uncommon penetration and sagacity, should spend so many moments, and quote so many passages from a book, the most corrupt and precarious that ever was heard of! a mere human testimony, a groundless tradition, uncertain hear-say, that cannot prove any thing to the satisfaction of any thinking, reasonable man!—Thus have I, upon his own principles, fairly set aside all his supposed proofs from texts of *Scripture*. And, unless he has had a revelation,

velation, that *the Spirit inspires conviction into every* PART III.  
*believer*, —he can have no proof of his main position. 

From *reason*, that blind guide, he will not pretend to draw any such conclusion : For he hath expressly declared, p. 7. that *judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of reason ; or, indeed, an affair where she has any concern.* And, in many other places, he has given *reason* many bitter, and hard names ; and intirely precluded himself from making any use of it, upon this subject. He likewise, represents the *Scripture* as a mere *dead letter, an empty notion of manuscript authorities, and paper revelations*, which can deserve no regard. And, if he hath had a particular *revelation* made to him, of so momentous a truth, he will not gain much credit, or make many converts to his prophetic message ; unlesse he work a miracle, or give some other proof that he is inspired, besides his mere saying so. For his own bare word will go but a little way. Nay, according to his own principles, even his working miracles would not prove the truth of his doctrine ; because *miracles have, time out of mind, been undoubtedly performed in favor of false doctrines*, as well as of the true. So that he seems to me to be set fast, and to have no way to turn himself for the support of his cause ! So unhappy a thing is it, when a man undertakes a bad cause ! So does this famous and celebrated performance come out, upon examination ! Such a contradiction in the main point is like a mill-stone hanging about its neck, which must needs sink it deep, and plunge it into utter destruction. Surely, it will not (after this) be allowed a sufficient proof either of the *author's* great talent at *reasoning*, or of his being under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit ; and what other proofs of his great abilities he has given the world, let them that know it, say !—It appears to me that he does not much matter it, if he does contradict himself, provided he can puzzle and perplex others.

But

**PART III.** But his views be to himself! For the sake of other persons, who yet retain a value for the Scriptures, I will endeavor to clear up those passages, which he hath so miserably abused and perverted. I begin with his principal text, *i. e.* *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* Now, in this and the two following chapters, the *Apostle* is most evidently speaking of the supernatural gifts and miraculous powers of the Spirit, which were, in that age, so commonly imparted unto Christians. According to the best interpreters that I have seen, the first verse should have been translated thus, *Now concerning spiritual persons, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ver. 2. You know that you were formerly Gentiles, carried away unto the worship of dumb idols, [idols, which could neither speak themselves; nor inspire you with prophecy and the gift of tongues;—but unto such dumb idols were you carried away,] even as you were led by your priests. And, as to the Jews, who say that men of their nation only have the Spirit, I inform you, verse 3. that no man speaking by the Spirit of God [sais that Jesus is an anathema, or] calleth Jesus accursed. —There is another text cited by your author; and, as it is of the same import, the same interpretation will do for them both. Another of the *Apostles* is recommending free inquiry, and a careful examination of the spirits, because many false prophets were gone out into the world. Now as to prophets, they were directed thus to judge of them, *Every spirit is of God who confesseth that Jesus, who is come in the flesh, is the Christ: But every spirit, who confesseth not that Jesus, who is come in the flesh, is the Christ, is not of God.* The meaning is, whoever comes under the character of a prophet, or inspired person, and contradicts a known and well attested truth, can never speak by the Spirit of God. For the Spirit never inspires any man with any thing*

The 68th  
text,  
1 Cor.  
xii. 3.  
explained.  
See p. 56.

The 69th  
text,  
1 John  
iv. 2, 3.  
explained.  
See p. 78.

thing but truth. And the prophet, who not only confesses, but supports truths of great importance, doth thereby give evident proofs of his being sent of God.—To return to the former text ;—St. Paul saith, *As no man can say that Jesus is an anathema, and have the Spirit; so no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, i. e. no man can say that Jesus is the Lord* [and confirm that doctrine with supernatural gifts and miracles] *but by the Holy Spirit.* This is Dr. *Whitby's* interpretation of the words; and I appeal to you, *Crito*, whether the word, here translated [*say*,] doth not sometimes signifie *to assert and prove*; or not only to *say*, but *to make good* what a man saith. *Crito* readily refered them to four places of the New Testament, where he took the word to have that signification, viz. *John* x. 25. and xii. 48, 49. and xviii. 21. *Acts* xxiv. 20. That is sufficient to my purpose, answered *Theophilus*; but in this place it must necessarily have that meaning, or the expression be *elleiptical*, and supplied as Dr. *Whitby* has done. Because any man, without the Holy Spirit, may pronounce the words, or say that *Jesus is the Lord*. But no man could have come to the knowlege of it, as the *Apostles* did, without a *revelation*; nor proved it to the world, but by *miracles*. No flesh and blood [no mortal man] could have reveled it to them; but they were all taught of God. And having thus heard and learned of the Father, they came to *Christ*. As the *Apostles* could not have known that *Jesus was the Christ*, but by the *Holy Spirit*, which was first given to *Jesus*, and then unto them;—so they could not have said, and proved it to the world, but by the *Holy Spirit*, which inabled them to work miracles, in great abundance, in confirmation of it.—In this sense, the words connect admirably well with what follows, verse 4, &c. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but all procede from one and the self-same Spirit.*

And

The 70th  
and 71st  
texts ex-  
plained,  
Matt. xvi.  
17. John  
vi. 45. See  
P. 76.

And then he reckons up the gifts themselves, some of which were peculiar to the *Apostles*, others imparted unto inferior prophets;—but those gifts I have particularly mentioned above, when I laid before you the evidences of Christianity; and would now only observe that the *Apostle* is not here speaking of the way, by which Christians in all ages should come to the knowledge and belief of *Jesus's* being the Lord;—but of the miraculous gifts, by which the *Apostles* and *Christian prophets* did then know and prove it. For he mentions *the gift of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of Spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues*, and other miraculous gifts;—and then saith, ver. 11. *All these worketh one and the self same Spirit, dividing them to every man, separately, as he pleaseth.*—After that he carefully informs them of the design and value of the several gifts, teaching them to prefer those that tended most to edification; but withal assuring them, that the *moral virtues* were preferable to them all. Now what is all this to the case of common Christians in these later ages? we may, indeed, and ought from hence to learn, what abundant evidence there was for the truth of the Christian religion, when it was first planted. But those rules, which concerned the use of the spiritual gifts, can be no rules to us, who are altogether destitute of those miraculous gifts. It is true, we may say *that Jesus is the Lord, without the Holy Spirit*; but we cannot prove it in the way the *Apostles* proved it, *i. e.* by working miracles ourselves, and imparting miraculous gifts unto others. We can, indeed, prove it from their writings, without which we could not have believed it ourselves, or proved it to others.—And, in this sense, *no man could now say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.* For, unless they, who first published it to the world, had had the Holy Spirit, there

there would not have been any rational grounds for us to have regarded them. But, as the *Apostles*, who planted this doctrine, had the Holy Spirit; and made that unquestionable, by a train of miracles;—their mission was divine, their testimony is true; and from thence we justly infer that *Jesus is the Lord*, as they asserted and proved.—Our Savior, a little before his death, told the *Apostles*, that he was shortly to leave them, upon which sorrow filled their hearts. To comfort them he promised, when he departed out of this world, he would send down the Holy Spirit, [which learned men say, he called the *Advocate*; and not the *Comforter*, as we have rendered the word]—that *that Spirit of Truth, which he would send, and which proceeded from the Father, should lead them into all truth*, necessary for understanding and spreading the Gospel;—and that *he should also shew them things to come*, or enable them to predict future, contingent events, and *testify of Christ, or glorify him*; for *he shall take of mine* (said our Lord) *and shew it unto you*. And finally, tho' he himself was to ascend and leave them; yet the *Spirit was to be in them, and to abide with them for ever; to be with them always, to the end of their lives*. After Christ's ascension, these promises were accomplished; the Spirit was poured out; supernatural gifts and miraculous powers were bestowed in the greatest plenty. Not only was the Spirit poured down upon the *Apostles*, and abode with them; but most, or all, of the adult Christians, wherever any *Apostle* came, seem to have had the miraculous gifts, as I have already intimated, p. 58, 59. Hence it was, that the *bodies* of Christians were called *temples of the Holy Ghost*; and the Spirit is said to have witnessed with [or to] *their spirit, that they were the children of God*. For, by having the Spirit of Christ, they had a proof that they were his; inasmuch as the Spirit was not imparted to any but Christ's

The 72d—  
75th texts,  
John xiv.  
16. and  
xv. 26.  
and xvi.  
13. Matt.  
xxviii. 20,  
or John  
xiv. 16.  
See p. 56,  
&c.

The 76th  
and 77th  
texts,  
1 Cor. vi.  
19. Rom.  
viii. 16.  
See p. 56.

## PART III.

disciples. The *Spirit*, therefore, was a *pledge* of their adoption, and an *earnest* of their title to the heavenly inheritance. — “*Pyrrho* inquired, why *Theophilus* omitted one of the texts mentioned in the same page?” *Theophilus* answered, Because the

The 78th text, Rom. i. 16. See p. 56. operations of the *Spirit* are no where in Scripture, termed the power of God unto salvation, as your author hath asserted. St. Paul doth indeed say, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth.” But your author can put a meaning upon the words, which (it is evident) the *Apostle* never had.—“*Pyrrho* asked, whether St. Paul had

The 79th text explained, Eph. ii. 8. See p. 57.

not said, *By grace you are saved, through Faith; and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God?*” Yes, replied *Theophilus*, he hath said so; but in a sense very different from what your author has given the words.—The Epistle was writ to a church, that had formerly been idolatrous Gentiles, and then guilty of great vices. He, therefore, puts them in mind of the grace, or favor, God had shown them, in calling them into the Christian church, and into the way of salvation. Their former, profligate lives had merited no such thing, at the hands of God. No; *by grace they were saved*; [it was the effect of free grace, or pure, undeserved favor, that they were put into the way of salvation;] —*through faith*, [or by the method prescribed in the Gospel; not by the Law of Moses, as the Jews and judaizing Christians would have persuaded them] —*And that not of themselves*, [i. e. the idolatrous Heathens could never have found out the method of salvation through Jesus Christ, by their own study, or reasoning; it being a matter of pure revelation,]—*it is the gift of God*, [who inspired the Apostles, sent them to preach the Gospel both to Jews and Gentiles; and enabled them to work miracles to rouse men to attention, and spread this important knowledge

lege among them.] — *Not of works, lest any man* PART III.  
*should boast.* [It was not owing to the works, which  
 they had done, whilst they were idolatrous Gen-  
 tiles; for then they were very wicked. God's  
 sending the Gospel among them could not, there-  
 fore, be as a reward for their works,] *lest any of*  
*them should have boasted;* [or which might prevent  
 every one of them from boasting that his former  
 life and conversation had merited such a favor, as  
 a reward at the hands of God.]—As the Gospel was  
 designed for the world in general, both *Jews* and  
*Gentiles*, *Jesus Christ* is called, *that light which came* The 80th,  
*into the world, to enlighten every man:* And it is said and 81st  
 very justly, that *the grace of God,* [that divine fa- texts,  
 vor which is reveled in the Gospel, and] *which* John i. 19.  
*bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men.* Tit. ii. 11.  
 These See p. 58.  
 things, as they stand in the *Scriptures*, are very  
 plain and evident. And such texts need not have  
 been mentioned, if they had not been made use  
 of, to a very different purpose.—It is true, though  
 all, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, had the Gospel offered  
 to them, none but the pious and well-disposed  
 imbraced it. They were the only persons *given to* The 82d  
*Christ of his Father.* And none could be admitted text, John  
 to the favor attending Christ's true disciples, but vi. 65.  
 such as the Father pleased;—*No man can come unto* See p. 57.  
*me,* (says Christ) *except it be given him of my Father;*  
 who allowed none but the well-disposed to come  
 unto him, so as finally to be accepted through him.  
 —“*Pyrrho* mentioned another text, whereby (he  
 said) his *author* had endeavored to prove that a *ra-*  
*tional Faith* could not be required; but it must be  
 an infused, or inspired Faith; *the word of Faith,* The 83d  
*put into our mouth and into our heart.”* *Theophilus* text, Rom.  
 observed that, in the passage referred to, the *Apo-* x. 16, &c.  
*stle* is speaking of the *unbelieving Jews*, whose salva- See p. 79  
 tion he most earnestly desired and prayed for; be-  
 cause *they had a zeal* (as they imagined) *for God* and

PART III. his law; but it was *not* a zeal according to knowledge;   
 it was not a wise and rational zeal, agreeable to truth and founded on evidence. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, [or of the way, in which God will accept men as righteous;—they being voluntarily ignorant of this, I say, notwithstanding it is plainly revealed in the Gospel;] and going about to establish their own righteousness, [by a conformity to the law of Moses] have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God [i. e. have not sought righteousness by the method prescribed in the Gospel; wherein the way of being justified, or of being treated as righteous by God, the Judge of all, is clearly revealed.] For [the dispensation of the law was not final; but] Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth; [or it was the end and design of the law to bring per-sons unto Jesus Christ for righteousness; that every one, that believeth in him, may be justified, or be accepted as righteous in the sight of God.] For Moses [in this manner] describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man, who doth those things, shall live by them; [i. e. the man, who obeys the law perfectly, shall have life thereby.] — The Jews expected the *Messiah* to be their Savior, or Deliverer; —and so far they argued right. But then they expected that he would in person reign among them, deliver them from their enemies round about, make them rich and honorable in the earth, or great and powerful among the nations. That was the *righteousness* they sought after. When *Jesus* appeared, their reckoning was up; and they were daily looking when the kingdom of God would appear, or the kingdom be restored to *Israel*. The miracles worked by *Jesus* concurred to persuade them that he was the *Messiah*: But several things alienated their minds from him; —his mean parentage, his poverty, his contradicting the traditions of  
 of*

of their elders, his preferring moral duties to ritual or ceremonial, his foretelling the destruction of their temple, city and nation; and, above all, his dying the ignominious death of the cross: A dead man, (they thought) could never be the *Messiah*, or the deliverer even of those that believed in him. He must come down from heaven, or rise up out of the grave, and come and reign personally among them. Whereas they had no notion of his saving them from their sins, his delivering them from their spiritual and worst enemies;—and that the believing in him, as the Christ, who was not only crucified, but raised from the dead, and ascended into heaven, was sufficient to save them, without his personal appearance among them.—These were the prejudices of the *Jews*, which *St. Paul* is here endeavoring to remove; and to that purpose he expresses himself in words taken out of their law;—*But the righteousness, which is of Faith, speaketh after this manner, [or may be thus described,] 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, [or into the grave;] that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead? [as if he was still in the grave, and not risen again.]* You quite mistake the nature of the salvation, or deliverance, to be effected by the *Messiah*. There can be no occasion to fetch him out of the grave; because he is already risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven; neither is there occasion to ascend into heaven, and bring Christ down from thence, to reign personally upon earth; inasmuch as the deliverance by him is of a spiritual nature; a deliverance from sin, and that you may be made righteous by Faith in him.—And, in order to know and obtain the benefit of that, you need not go far,—*For the word is nigh you, even in your mouths and in your hearts; [you have already been made acquainted*

**PART III.** acquainted with it, and it is the matter of your daily conversation ;] *even that word of Faith which we preach.* [The sum and substance of which is this,] *If you will confesse with your mouth that Jesus is Lord,* [i. e. openly and sincerely acknowlege him to be constituted head and Lord of all ; and as a proof thereof,] *believe in your heart* [or firmly believe] *that God hath raised him from the dead,—you shall be saved ;—or you will then be in the true way to salvation, whether you have formerly been a Jew or a Gentile : For there is, under the Gospel, no difference between them.—This is the interpretation, which I have gathered from that judicious and free inquirer, the excellent Mr. Locke. But your author has taken no notice of the Apostle's answering the objections of the unbelieving Jews, or that he is showing that their notions and expectations were groundlesse. He hath no regard to the occasion of the words, or to the scope and connection of the place ; but hath fallen into the very fault, which he has condemned in divines, p. 77. viz. from a strange misapplication of a straggling text ; some faint outline, which seemed, he fancied, to countenance such a notion, he pretends, that here is a passage, that most fully describes to us the true nature of Faith in protest opposition to that mistaken notion of a rational one, which some had, it seems, erroneously entertained.—Was it, then, a rational Faith, for the Jews to expect righteousness by the law, which said, *Cursed is every one, who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them ?* Was that a zeal of God, according to knowlege ? Or was it a rational thing for them to expect the personal reign of the *Messiah* upon earth ;—to deliver them from the *Romans*, and to exalt the grandeur of their nation ;—when (as I have plainly shown, p. 211, &c.) their own prophets had expressly predicted a *spiritual and suffering Messiah ?**

*Messiah?*—Was it not, therefore, more rational, after such clear and expresse prophecies, to expect from the *Messiah*, a spiritual salvation; and to conclude it sufficient to believe and obey him; to entertain his word in their hearts, and to be influenced by it in their lives; and, in this way, to hope for everlasting life?—*Pyrrho* said, he believed there would be texts enow still remaining, for another evening's conversation. Upon which the whole company desired they might be deferred till then.—And so, for the present, they all mixed in the conversation, and talked about indifferent subjects.

## DIALOGUE VII.

“*PYRRHO* had found some more texts, which seemed to favor his *author's* design. There were two, which he alleged to show that, though no critical and distinct account can be given of the inspiration of the Spirit; yet from the effect we may be led to the cause;—though we are not able to explain the manner; *nor to trace in any adequate degree either the cause or course of its operation.*” When *Theophilus* had found the pages referred to, he began with our *Savior's* answer to *Nicodemus*,—*The wind bloweth where it pleaseth, and you hear the sound thereof; but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is borne of the Spirit.*—Our *Savior's* conversation with *Nicodemus* is the most just and proper, provided we attend to his character, and to all the circumstances. He was a *Pharisee*, and labored under the common prejudices of the *Jews*, and as he was a ruler among them, and of a timorous temper, he came to *Jesus* by night;—however he owned his miracles, and thence inferred his divine mission;—most probably taking him for the *Messiah*. “*Jesus* let him know that coming to him by night was not sufficient;

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The 84th  
text, John  
iii. 8, 9.  
See p. 107.

sufficient; neither had he, as a *Jew*, any right to be a member of the *Messiah's* kingdom, but he must, like other *Profelytes* (in the *Jewish* phrase) *be borne again*, or publicly take upon him the profession of the Christian religion, by *baptism*; or else *he could not see the kingdom of God*, could not become a member of Christ's church, or kingdom." *Nicodemus* thought himself already one of the people of God, because he was a *Jew*. If our Saviour had told him that an *Heathen*, in order to become a *Profelyte* to the *Jewish* religion, must be *borne again*; by *baptism* and *circumcision*, he could have readily understood him; because that was their usual phraseology for the initiating of *Heathen Profelytes* into the *Jewish* religion. But that he, a *Jew*, and (as such) already one of the people of God, should have occasion for being initiated, like an *Heathen Profelyte*, was what he could not understand. He therefore, could think of no other meaning to *Jesus's* words, but the literal meaning; and yet was surprized to hear him talk of *being borne again*, in the natural sense. *Jesus* explained himself, and confirmed what he had said—assuring him that *unlesse a man* [even a *Jew*] were regularly initiated into his church, or *borne of Water and of the Spirit*, *he could not see* [or enter into] *the kingdom of God*.—And, from the history of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and their *Epistles*, we accordingly find, that that was the way, in which *Jews*, as well as other persons, were initiated into the Christian church,—being first baptized with water, and then with the Holy Spirit. [See, besides many other places, *Acts* ii. 38. and viii. 12, &c. and xix. 1, &c.] Our Saviour goes on to say, ver. 6. *Being borne of the flesh*, being a *Jew* by birth, did not initiate him into the Christian church; neither would it have done so, if it had been ever so often repeted. But *being borne of Water and of the Spirit* would initiate

uate him into the *spiritual* dispensation.—*Nicodemus*, PART III.  
 deeply tinctured with the *Jewish* prejudices, was very much astonished at *Jesus's* talk. Our Lord observed it, and said unto him, *Marvel not that I said unto you, that you [Jews] must be borne again.* And then ver. 8. he attacks another *Jewish* prejudice in *Nicodemus*, and intimated that the *Gentiles* should be called into the kingdom of God, under the *Messiah*, and should enjoy equal privileges;—*The wind bloweth where it pleaseth, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth*; [You cannot tell all the points from whence it cometh, nor to how many points it steereth its course; but it appeareth, from the sound, and other effects of it, that it bloweth to and from all points of the compass;] *so is every one that is borne of the Spirit*;—so shall men come from all parts of the world, from every point of the compass, and (by being baptized with Water and with the Spirit) be initiated as *Profelytes* to my religion: Or (as our Savior elsewhere expressed the same thing,) *They shall come from the East, and from the West, from the North, and from the South; and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.*—This additional discovery increased *Nicodemus's* surprize, and he said unto him, *how can these things be?* *Jesus*, with the greatest propriety, answered, *Are you a master in Israel, and know not these things?* Can you be ignorant of your own phrases, in which being borne again signifies *Profelytism*; and which you are every day using, concerning *Heathens* coming over to your religion? And, why cannot you understand the same phrases, when applied to *Jews* entering into my church? And, Can you [*a master in Israel*] be ignorant of God's design to accept the *Gentiles*, as his people, under the *Messiah*, when your antient prophets have, in many places and clearly, spoken of this remarkable event?"—I could easily go on

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to show you, how our *Savior* attacked some other of *Nicodemus's* prejudices;—intimating that he was to be crucified; and that they were wrong in expecting a temporal triumphant prince, when the prophets had foretold a spiritual, suffering *Messiah*;—and that the heathen world was not to be condemned, but saved, by his coming.—But enough has been said, to show that this text doth not prove that for which your *author* hath alleged it. I freely acknowledge that the inspiration of the Spirit was granted unto the disciples of *Jesus*; and that the effect was visible, though the cause was invisible, and lay hid within them;—and that *these operations of the Spirit* could not be discerned by other persons, any otherwise than by the external effects;—any more than the shifting about of the wind, from one point of the compass to another, could be perceived but by the effects which follow from its different courses.—But the former seems to me to be the true and proper interpretation of our *Savior's* words.—The other text, referred to, by your *author*, *Pyrrho*, has no relation to *inspiring conviction, infusing evidence, or these operations of the Spirit*, of which he has said so much; but relates purely to the gradual progress of the Gospel. So is the kingdom of God (says our *Savior*) as if a man cast seed into the earth, and should sleep [a little] and rise night and day, [to watch it;] and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. Now, this is a most just and beautiful comparison, to represent the gradual progress of the truth of the Gospel, and its operations upon the minds of men, which are silent, invisible, and by insensible degrees, which cannot be perceived but by time and repeated observation. But this is no illustration of your *author's* subject, neither hath it any relation thereto.—“Then *Pyrrho* said to *Theophilus*, I know you have already intimated your dislike

The 85th  
text, Mark  
iv. 26, &c.  
See p. 108.

The 86th  
text,  
1 Cor. ii.  
14. See  
p. 103.

dislike of Bishop Beveridge's interpretation; but PART III.

I expect that you should give us your sense of the text, on which he hath grounded his observations." I am willing (replied *Theophilus*) to do my best to clear up any passage of Scripture; but I do not think myself obliged to stand to the opinion of any man, *what weight soever his name may carry with it*;—unless it be both reasonable in itself, and agreeable to the scope and connection of the text from whence it is taken. The passage you refer to, is in our common *English* translation thus rendered, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. By the natural man, some understand the animal or sensual man.* I desire *Crito* would inform us, whether that is the proper signification of the word in the original. *Crito* said that, as  $\psi\chi\eta$  was with the antients, *the sensitive soul*, or the seat of the passions and appetites,  $\psi\chi\iota\kappa\omicron$  must mean the *animal* or *sensual man*. The word is used only in four other texts, in all the New Testament; and in every one of them it signifies, either *animal*, or *sensual*. In two of the places our *English* version hath rendered it *sensual*, viz. *James* iii. 15. and *Jude* ver. 19. Indeed  $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\omicron$  would be the proper word to expresse the *natural man*.—*Theophilus* thanked *Crito*, and said, that is sufficient to my present purpose; for, if that be the sense of the word elsewhere, here is enough in the context, to determine it to be the meaning of it here. What the Apostle hath said, plainly relates to the *animal*, or *sensual man*, whose prevailing regard was to the interests and gratifications of this *sensible*, *animal* life. *The sensual man*, [who lives a mere animal life, like a brute, or who indulges his senses and appetites as the chief good,] *receiveth not the*

PART III. *things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know [or approve] them, because they are spiritually discerned. It requires a well-disposed mind to perceive the worth and excellence of spiritual objects, and have a proper relish for them.—St. Paul doth not here say, what another late author hath represented him as saying, [No man knows or understands the things of God, but by the Spirit of God speaking in him.] Neither doth he assert that a man must be inspired, before he can find out the true sense of Scripture, or be let into the mysteries of the Gospel, or apprehend the things of God:—But only that a man, that is animal, sensual or wicked, cannot perceive the excellence of spiritual objects, or have a proper relish for the things which God has revealed by his Spirit, and which are now contained in the Holy Scriptures;—for they are the things of the Spirit of God. This is otherwise expressed by the same Apostle, viz. The carnal mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither (as long as it continues carnal and wicked) can it be subject thereto.—You see plainly, the Apostle saith nothing to your author's purpose. Here is not one word about the Spirit's infusing Faith, inspiring conviction; rendering every believer infallible all his days; here is nothing said of a constant and particular revelation imparted separately and supernaturally to every individual; [see the author, p. 112.] or any thing like that which he has laid down as the grand foundation of his hypothesis.—“Pyrrho said that, as Crito had enjoined him to bring like things together, he would now mention some texts, which his author had alleged to prove the same things.”—As soon as he had found the passage referred to, Theophilus observed that the author, in order to show that there may be an unity of Faith, without an unity of understanding, quotes a passage out of our*

The 87th,  
88th texts,  
Eph. iv. 3.  
1 Cor. xiv.  
15. See  
p. 76.

our *English Liturgy*, which is taken from the Scriptures, and which there evidently relates, not to *unity of Faith*, but to their preserving mutual peace and concord. With this view the Christians are exhorted to *preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. “*Pyrrho* took notice that his *author* had, to the same purpose, alleged what the *Apostle* has said, about a man’s *praying with the Spirit, without understanding what he himself says*.” *Theophilus* replied, I have had occasion to speak of the *miraculous gifts*, once and again; and have observed that the *gift of tongues* was one of them, and the *interpretation of tongues*, another.—The church at *Corinth* abounded with such gifts and powers, and *St Paul* was very careful to direct them in the right use of them. In the beginning of this chapter the *Apostle* exhorted them to prefer those gifts of the Spirit which tended most to edification. And, to that end, they were particularly to prefer *prophecy*, (i. e. preaching or praying by inspiration, in a language understood by the audience) to *speaking*, (i. e. praying, or prophesying) *in an unknown tongue*. For (says the *Apostle*) *he, that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man [present] understandeth him. Howbeit, by the Spirit, he speaketh mysteries. Whereas he, that prophesieth, speaketh unto men, for edification, and exhortation, and comfort*. However it is plain, from *ver. 4.* that *he, who spoke in an unknown tongue*, [or in a language unknown to the congregation,] understood himself: For it is expressly said that *he edified himself*; just as the other, who prophesied in a known tongue, edified the church. Now, if he had not understood what he said, he could not have edified himself; for where there is no knowledge, there can be no edification.—Every man, in the common course of things, thinks in some language, most frequently (I sup-

(I suppose) in his native tongue;—and, when the Spirit enabled any man to prophesy in an unknown tongue, he might not be able, of himself, perfectly to remember, and readily and fluently to repeat, the whole discourse, in the language most generally understood by the audience. For that reason, they had, as another spiritual gift, the *interpretation of tongues*. Upon these things the Apostle grounds his advice, *ver. 13. Wherefore, let him, that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret. For, if I pray in an unknown tongue, my Spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful; [i. e. if I, by the assistance of the Spirit, pray in a language unknown to the congregation, I do, indeed, by my spiritual gift, actually pray to God; but then my meaning is unfruitful; the sense of what I utter must be unprofitable to the audience, because they do not understand me.] What is to be done, therefore? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray also with understanding, [or so as to be understood by the audience.] I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing also with understanding, [or I will take care that the hearers shall understand what I sing.] If you do otherwise, when you shall bless [God] by the Spirit, how shall he, who filleth the seat of the [private, or] unlearned man, say, Amen, upon your giving of thanks; seeing he understandeth not what you say? For [when you, by the Spirit, praise God] you do, indeed, give thanks [very] well; but the other [the unlearned man, who understands you not,] is not edified.—Here is not one word relating to the worship of Christians in all ages of the church; or of the Spirit, from the lips of a whole assembly, contriving to speak the same thing. Here is nothing absurd, nor any thing liable to reproach or railery,—not one word of any man's praying by the Spirit without understanding what he himself uttered. Such false and groundless ridicule must fall upon the*

the person, who hath so grossly misrepresented this PART III. and several other texts of Scripture.—“*Pyrrho* went on thus, If I take my *author* right, he thinks the *Apostles* themselves spoke only one language, and yet every member of every nation, at the same instant, heard the same divine lesson, in his own proper language. So that the hearers all understood what was said, though the *Apostles* neither understood, nor spoke, any language but their own.” *Theophilus* observed that, in the place referred to, there is an account of the first effusion of the Spirit, after Christ’s ascension. *John Baptist* had often said, though he could baptize with Water only; yet the *Messiah*, who was approaching, would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with Fire, or with the Holy Spirit, accompanied with the external appearance of a flame of Fire. Now was that promise accomplished. And, among other things, it is said, that there appeared unto them divided tongues, like as of Fire; and that a tongue rested upon every one of them. The points of flames were, by the Jews, usually called tongues of Fire: And here we are informed that the rays of a glory first filled the upper part of the room; and, after some time, a distinct ray, like a tongue of Fire, settled upon every one of the persons present. And [together with this glorious appearance] they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues [besides their own native language,] as the Spirit gave them utterance, [or as the Spirit enabled them to expresse themselves.]—It is said, indeed, that some few, both of the antients and moderns, have imagined that the *Apostles* spoke only their own native language; but every man, of every nation then present, heard what was said in his own proper language. Now, according to that interpretation, though the *Apostles* did not speak these several languages, nor even so much as understand them, yet the audience heard them distinctly, and perfectly

The 89th  
text, Acts  
ii. 4, &c.  
See p. 108.

**PART III.** perfectly understood them.—This, therefore, will widely differ from the last objection, in which it was insinuated that neither speaker nor hearer understood what was said.—But, whatever consequences would follow, if such an interpretation were allowed, they affect not the Scripture itself, which says that, when “they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to *speake* with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” It is not said, they began to speak in their own tongue; and the people heard them in other tongues. Again, *ver.* 6. “The whole multitude were astonished; because they *heard them speaking*, every man in his own language.” And they thus expressed their astonishment, *verses* 7, 8. by saying one to another, “Are not all these, *that speak*, Galileans? How comes it to passe, then, that we hear them, every one of us, in our own native dialect?” and *ver.* 11. after the several nations, which composed the audience, are reckoned up,—they said, “we hear them *speake* in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”—Now this is exactly agreeable to all the other places, where the gift of tongues is spoken of. For they all represent the persons indued with *that gift*, as speaking the languages of the various countries, or persons. And, indeed, when they went to plant Christianity among the nations, it must have greatly facilitated their work, to be able to preach the Gospel intelligibly to every man in his own language.—As your *author's* interpretation fails, all he has built upon it, must be without foundation.—“*Pyrrho* referred *Theophilus* to the next page of his *author*, and said he wanted an interpretation of the text there alluded to.” *Theophilus* observed that *Jesus* was giving his *Apostles* their commission, and telling them what treatment they must expect. And, among other things, he intimates that they should meet with persecution, and be

The 90th  
text, Mat.  
x. 19, 20.  
See p. 109.

be hurried before princes and magistrates, which would, in the event, turn to the furtherance of the Gospel. But (says he) *when they shall deliver you up [to such great personages] be not anxious how, or what you shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.* For it is not you yourselves that [shall then] speak; but the Spirit that speaketh in you. The like promise is repeated, *Mark xiii. 11. Luke xii. 11, 12. and xxi. 12, &c.* In all which places it was made unto those who were to plant the Gospel; and, in order to that, were to be indued with the miraculous gifts. As the *Apostles* were to be so much exposed, nothing could have been more proper than such extraordinary assistance of the Spirit. For they could never have been prevailed upon, to undertake such an hazardous work, or been able to have borne up, under such repeated difficulties and discouragements;—they could not have spoken with such ease and freedom, before the greatest personages and most august or numerous assemblies, if they had not had such divine support. And, as they were favored with so great a variety of other spiritual gifts, there was nothing absurd, but a great deal of propriety, in their having this also.—However, here is no intimation of the *Apostles* not understanding what they themselves uttered upon such occasions; nor is this a promise to all Christians, of all ages and nations, *strongly to support them upon emergencies, when they are persecuted, without so much as a single thought or suggestion of their own, by way of forecast: Or that the Spirit will pronounce for us a regular series of arguments; or discourse extempore through our organs, for our vindication in a court of justice.—As to the Spirit's being capable of dictating sentiments in secret to our understandings; or of prompting our lips with expressions (as your author phraseth it,) of putting belief into our hearts, or words into our mouths; and giving us what to think, as well as*

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*what to say*;—we have no manner of doubt. For we are fully persuaded that the Spirit is capable of doing all these things, and more too; if God should see fit to grant us such an effusion of the Spirit, as he did to the Apostles and first Christians. But the question is not, concerning the ability of the Spirit to do such things; but concerning what grounds and reasons we have, *now*, to expect any such thing?—“*Pyrrho* said, he had observed two texts more, which *Theophilus* had not touched upon, and which seemed to sound very well to his author’s purpose. The one was, *Make not thyself overwise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* And the other, the concluding sentence of the whole book.” As to the former of these (said *Theophilus*) *Solomon’s* words, at length, are a caution both to the righteous and to the wicked. *He had observed a just man to perish in his righteousness, and a wicked man to prolong his life in his wickedness.* Upon this he grounds his advice to persons of both these characters.—To the righteous, he recommends prudence and discretion, in these words, *Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise. Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* To the wicked man, he recommends repentance and amendment; intimating, though he had hitherto prolonged his life in his wickedness, yet that could not always preserve him;—and his advice to him is, *Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish. Why shouldest thou die before thy time?* Now, take both these rules together, and they will amount to much the same thing with our *Savior’s* admirable direction to his disciples, *Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.* This interpretation may be illustrated from instances in various stations of life;—A king that would be for making laws, to remedy every little inconvenience in the state, and that should put such laws rigorously in execution, would be *righteous*

The 91<sup>st</sup>

text,

Ecclef. vii.

16. See

P. 114.

*teous overmuch, and make himself overwise.* And, in PART III. that way, would (most probably) destroy himself. For human affairs are, at present, such as that every little inconvenience cannot be remedied;—*that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.* How well soever he might design, the people would look upon such a king as a tyrant, and would (very likely) be for treating him accordingly.—On the other hand, a king that should have no regard to the remedy of greater evils; nor any concern to promote the good of the community, in any tolerable degree, would certainly *be overmuch wicked, and act a foolish part, and would be in eminent danger of plots and conspiracies, and of thereby dying before his time.* Again; a private man, that should stand up for his rights in every punctilio; and, to support his property, should be always quarrelling, or going to law for every little trifle;—such an one would *be righteous overmuch, and make himself overwise; and take the ready way to destroy himself.* On the other hand, a man that has no regard to his property; who lets every body cheat him at pleasure, till he becomes unable to pay his just debts, would certainly *be overmuch wicked.* And the being reduced to such straits, is the way to perish, or to *die before his time.* Or finally, let us take another instance, which may come nearer our present purpose;—Suppose a zealous protestant should, without an extraordinary commission from God, go to *Spain, Portugal,* or other *Popish* countries, and there publicly throw down their altars, or idols, or snatch the host out of the priest's hands, at the time of high masse, and stamp upon it; and should thereby expose himself to the dreadful tribunal of the inquisition, and (after various tortures) to a cruel death;—he would *be righteous overmuch, and make himself*

**PART III.** *himself overwise, and would evidently thereby destroy himself.*—On the other hand, a man who is indifferent about truth and falsehood, unconcerned about all religion, and makes sense and appetite his counsellors and his guides;—such an one would *be overmuch wicked and foolish*, and might (possibly) through his extravagance and debauchery, *die before his time*.—From these hints you may perceive that the rule is in itself a wise and excellent rule, and applicable to many cases (like other proverbial maxims) where the observation of it would be of great advantage:—that men should avoid wickedness; and, together with their virtue and piety, exercise great prudence, was *Solomon's* grand design; as appears from what follows. *It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this*, [i. e. not to be overmuch wicked and foolish,] *yea also from that withdraw not thine hand*, [i. e. from a regard to the former of these two precepts; or take care not to neglect the prudence I have recommended to the good man.] *For he that feareth God shall come forth of them all*; [he shall avoid both the destruction of the just man, that is imprudent; and the untimely death of the wicked and foolish.]—I need not add, how evident it is that your *author* hath abused and perverted this text also; as if it were an injunction to a man of learning and capacity not to search into the things of religion, beyond his neighbors and relations, who have no such advantages;—notwithstanding both Reason and Scripture teach us, that God will require of *every man according to his several ability*. “*Pyrrho* said that he had nothing more to propose at present, but to put *Theophilus* in mind of the other text, wherewith his *author* had concluded his book. Thereby he insinuates that Faith, or trust in the Lord, is a very different thing from reason, or the dictates of a man's own understanding; which he thus expresses,

The 92d  
text, Prov.  
iii. 5. See  
P. 118.

presses, p. 84. viz. that we are to *captivate our reason* to the obedience of Faith; to *captivate*,—to lay it under the most absolute restraint and prohibition; not to permit it the least opportunity or freedom to exert itself, or interpose on any occasion whatever." Theophilus said, he was so used to find the author give texts a quite different turn from what they have in Scripture, that he was not surprized at his perverting some of the most excellent maxims and best moral precepts, that ever were proposed for the regulation of mens conduct. But whoever would use *Plato* or *Aristotle*, *Epietetus* or *M. Antoninus* in that manner, would soon lose his credit among men of letters. And surely the sacred books ought to be treated with, at least, as much justice and candor as other antient authors.—As to the text which remains to be considered; *Solomon* begins the chapter with advising his son to regard his admonitions and keep his commandments; for he commanded him to lead a pious, virtuous life, which was the way to manifest a good understanding, acquire many temporal blessings, and obtain favor with God and man. And then he adds, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.* And then he again points out the many and great advantages of such a pious, virtuous behavior. *Leaning to his own understanding* was, therefore, to cast off the fear of the Lord, and to pursue what was evil. When God commands one thing, and men choose the contrary, then they do not *trust in the Lord*, but *lean to their own understanding*; they set up their own wisdom against God's, and will have it that happiness may be obtained in the way of vice and wickedness, when God assures them that it is not to be found, but in the ways of his commandments.

With

**PART III.** With what propriety, therefore, may it be said to any man, to guard him against vice, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he will direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes. Fear the Lord, and depart from evil. And then thou wilt take the true way to be happy?*—But is there, in this *Proverb*, any thing like an intimation that our understandings have nothing to do in judging of matters of religion; that we must not pretend to think about them; that the dictates of our own understandings, even when they are not perverted by sense and appetite, are directly contrary to what God directs or reveals? And that, therefore, we must (without thinking or offering to judge) blindly and implicitly receive whatever is recommended to us as coming from God;—even without so much as examining whether there are any rational proofs and evidences of its coming from God, or being a divine revelation?—Men may call such an abuse of passages of Scripture, by the name of *wit*, if they please;—to me it appears to be horridly profane. And no man of learning would think it right, in the interpretation of any celebrated moralist among the antients.—*Theophilus*, having now come to an end of his interpretation of texts which related to the main argument, proposed that they should meet the next evening to finish. For he had some farther remarks upon the *author* and his arguments, which would at present take up too much of their time. Upon which the company broke up, with a resolution to come once more and hear the conclusion.

## The concluding DIALOGUE.

C R I T O now inquired of *Theophilus*, what re-<sup>PART III.</sup>  
marks he had to make upon the *author* or his  
argument? For, according to your own proposal  
(said he) we are come together this evening to finish  
our design. *Theophilus* answered, that he had hi-  
therto, with patience and attention, heard the ob-  
jections which *Pyrrho* had produced out of his *author*  
against a rational Faith, and had given the best  
answers he was able. But now he designed to  
make some objections to what the *author* had of-  
fered; and *Pyrrho* was at liberty to defend his *au-  
thor*, if he pleased, or to make such answers to the  
remarks as he saw proper. *Pyrrho* could say nothing  
against so fair a proposal; and therefore intimated  
to *Theophilus*, that he might procede as soon as he  
pleased. I would begin (said *Theophilus*) with some  
remarks on what your *author* hath said, p. 63, &c.  
For, according to my notion of the Christian  
Faith, it is not a mere act of the understanding,  
but of the will also; it implies a candor of mind,  
a disposition to search after truth, or attend to it, a  
readiness to profess it, and to be duely influenced  
by it. And, therefore, I can easily see how the  
want of it comes to be represented as a very great  
crime, and so severe a penalty denounced against  
*infidelity*. For, if *Faith* be a virtue, and *Unbelief* a  
vice, the one may be reasonably required, and  
the other threatened and punished as criminal. But,  
*upon no other supposition*, can any tolerable account  
be given. Your *author* had sagacity enough to see  
this; and therefore thought himself obliged to say  
something by way of answer to such an objection.  
But what hath he said, that, upon his own scheme,  
can satisfy any rational or thinking man? Why,  
he has intimated that the Spirit worketh *Faith* in  
all

all mankind, but some want a proper disposition. *The universal tender of this conviction, however potent in its influence, must yet depend greatly upon the proper disposition of our minds to give it reception for its efficacy; and so far will give place, and afford ample matter of trial and probation, and become indeed a test of our obedience.* Now, according to the main tenor of his argument in the rest of his book, this (in his own polite phraseology) *is the most ridiculous jargon in the world.* For has he not, in general, represented Faith as a mere act of the understanding, a matter of necessity, and not of choice, a thing which cannot be commanded, neither ought men to be threatened for the want of it, because it is a compliance out of their power? Here it is only *the tender of a conviction*; but elsewhere, it is *omnipotence irradiating mens souls at once, inspiring or infusing a thorough conviction.* This he calls *the all-sufficient source and origin of our Faith.* And asserts, that *thus instructed, men may be brought to think all alike.* Above all (says he) *it is of immediate influence, and operates without delay.* And again; he says, *the conversion of Saul was effected, not by the force of dilatory inferences and conclusions, but by an irresistible light from heaven, that flashed conviction in a moment.* And thus called, *we make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put not off from day to day.* Our Faith is completed in an instant, and the most perfect and finished creed produced at once. These dictates are, *as it were, self-evident to the mind;—but little differing from that of intuition itself.* And yet, notwithstanding all this and a great deal more to the same purpose; behold his main scheme disappears, his language and sentiments are quite altered! The Christians, who are for instantaneous conversion and irresistible grace, do not contradict themselves in this manner. But (according to your *author*) though thus instructed, all men may be brought to think alike; yet  
this

this grace is universal, and all men are not brought PART III. to think alike. For though, by irresistible light from heaven, conviction is flashed into their minds in a moment; yet it is in their power and wholly at their own choice whether they will be convinced or no. It is self-evident and like intuition, yet it is not self-evident, for men may not see any evidence at all, unless they themselves please. He represents it in one place as *irresistible*; in another place, it is such as any poor, weak, frail man may, by his bad disposition, resist. *It is of immediate influence and operates without delay*; yet, in many cases, it has no influence at all. *It flashes conviction in a moment, and the most perfect and finished creed is produced at once*; yet men may take time to consider whether they will believe at all, or no. Such is your *author's* unaccountable scheme; such his universal, particular grace; his irresistible, resistible conversion; such this same necessary Faith, which is purely free and voluntary, depending upon the proper disposition of our minds. Thus, notwithstanding his describing *Faith as mere assent upon evidence, and a compliance out of our power*; he has found, it must be, in a great measure, an act of the will; that therein its virtue lies; and that all he hath said of it, as a mere act of the understanding, is fallacy and misrepresentation. In this case, *conscience and believing have no connection in nature. Human invention cannot find an equal image to expresse the absurdity of an obedient or criminal understanding. The seeing of sounds, or hearing of colors, are illustrations far short of the nonsense of conscience in opinion upon that principle. The commanding men to believe, when God, by an irresistible light from heaven, hath flashed conviction in a moment, and consequently, they cannot help believing; or to command men to believe, and lay them under the restraints of threats and authority, is an attempt equally weak and unjust, of*

M m frightening

**PART III.** *frightening them into a compliance out of their power; as long as this irresistible light from heaven has not flashed conviction.—This, therefore, is such a scheme, at first view, as no pretence of authority, human or divine; no reasoning whatever, not even this acute performance of your author's, can command any regard or attention to, or indeed (as he expresses himself) any notice, but that of the contempt due to paradoxes, the most eminently impudent and ridiculous.—On the other hand; uniformly and constantly to represent Faith as a virtue, clearly points out the reasonableness of its being commanded, and unbelief's being so severely condemned. Here disbelieving and guilt have a meaning, when put together; since the compliance required is not (a compliance out of our power, nor any longer) that of the understanding, but of the will, in its nature free, and therefore accountable. And, though we are not by any means chargeable for the effects of our apprehension; yet there is no reason but that we may be, with all justice, called to the strictest account for our obstinacy, impiety and perverseness.—All this is consistent talk in a rational believer; but in your author it is all confusion and contradiction.—From this clear and consistent account we see, that heresies and schisms may be justly condemned. For, according to the Scriptures, they are not merely different opinions, or the speculative results of different understandings, which have certainly nothing in them either so strange or detestible; but are, on the contrary, consequences extremely natural, and no more than what was to be expected on such an occasion. But, in the sacred writings, they are both of them condemned as works of the flesh; and as matters of pure choice. He is the schismatic, who, through a spirit of pride, uncharitableness or contention, covetousness or other worldly views, subverts the peace, and breaks the unity of the church of Christ; for he makes a rent in what ought to be united. And the persons who are imposing*

posing or uncharitable, and are the causes of divisions and animosities, are guilty of *schism*, how great soever their number may be: And not they who, for the sake of peace, truth, and a good conscience, mark those that cause divisions and animosities, and separate from them.—*Heresy*, when criminal, and condemned as one of the works of the flesh, is the promoting an opinion, and supporting a party, out of worldly views. And accordingly the Scripture represents an *heretic*, as one that is *perverted and sineth, being self-condemned*. Now such *schisms* and *heresies* are justly ranked among the *works of the flesh*; and the persons, who are guilty of them, with great reason condemned. But if, by irresistible light from heaven, conviction was to be flashed into mens minds in a moment; if thinking all alike was the Faith required; and this grace was universal;—how is it possible that men should be guilty of *schisms* and *heresies*?—considered merely as different opinions, or the speculative results of different understandings?—Thus your author appears to have contradicted himself in the main argument.—If you have any thing to offer to show that he hath not contradicted himself; or to reconcile these two different accounts, I should be glad to hear you. *Pyrrho* saw the difficulty, and was unwilling to attempt a solution; but diverted the discourse by saying, “there was one part of his author, which *Theophilus* had not touched upon, viz. p. 24, &c. where he intimated that a rational Faith could not answer all the ends and purposes, which Faith has answered in former ages, and ought to answer upon us.” *Theophilus* let him know, that he had on purpose reserved this to the conclusion. For (says he) as I have already shown at large, how rational and excellent the Faith is, which Christianity requires;—I may now, with advantage, point out the glorious effects, which it is calculated to produce.

PART III.

The 93<sup>d</sup>  
text,1 Cor.  
xiii. 2. See  
p. 24.The 94<sup>th</sup>  
and 95<sup>th</sup>  
texts,  
Luke ix.55. Rom.  
x. 2. See  
p. 5; 25;  
80. See  
also the  
83<sup>d</sup> text.The 96<sup>th</sup>  
text, Jude  
ver. 3.  
See p. 25.The 97<sup>th</sup>  
text,  
Eph. iv.  
14. See  
p. 26.

duce. As to *superfeding the power of second causes, removing mountains by our Faith, walking upon the water, and the like*;—your author knows very well that he needed not to have mentioned such things to us. For we hold that miracles are ceased long ago:—though they were highly proper to introduce Christianity into the world; and Faith in the power of Christ to inable them to do such things, was rational in those disciples, who daily beheld such astonishing effects of his power. But Faith in God, and in the Christian Revelation, is able to inspire us with the noblest zeal, and with *that truly laudable warmth, with which religious truths ought to be asserted and promoted*; not, indeed, to *commit to the flames the writings* of those who differ from us, or *their persons*, though they were intirely *in our power*. For, if we attempt to spread our opinions that way, we *know not what manner of Spirit we are of*. But a rational Faith will inspire us with *a zeal according to knowlege*, which is the only zeal that the Scriptures recommend, or which can ever *deserve that name*;—a zeal to *contend earnestly for the Faith*, by good arguments and exemplary lives;—to attack the principles of Infidels, by an appeal to their understandings, and by laying before them a just account of the nature and evidence of Christianity;—and by the like methods to preserve Christians in a *stedfast adberence to their principles, and establish them in their most Holy Faith*. Such persons, as have their understandings exercised to discern between good and evil, and have seen the evidence of the truth of the Gospel, will not be *like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftinesse, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; but will be *rooted and grounded, and settled in the Faith*. They build upon a rock, and nothing can shake their foundation, nothing overturn it. When truth gets  
such

such fast hold of a man, he is the most likely to PART III.  
 persevere unto the end. For truth varies not, nor  
 can evidence ever shift about to the side of error  
 and fallhood. Such men pray, indeed, that they  
 may continue stedfast and immoveable, not against  
 argument, but against imposture and delusion;  
 and especially against the dangerous power of *vice*,  
 which (of all things) most strongly tempts men to  
 infidelity.—*Faith* is not the same thing with *demonstra-*  
*tion*. The Scripture doth, indeed, call it, *The evidence*  
*of things not seen*. There *Faith* is taken objec-  
 tively, for the doctrine of Faith, the sure word or  
 testimony of God, which is to us an *evidence*, an  
 argument, or convincing proof of those *invisible*  
*things*, which are there reveled. And, having  
 such a Revelation, *we walk by Faith and not by sight*;  
 —we regulate our conduct with a regard to a fu-  
 ture, unseen state. But here is, in all this, no  
 inconsistency between *Faith* and *Reason*. For we  
 do not mean *that our Faith ought to be the result of*  
*our own reasonings*, as that may signifie the finding out  
 the doctrines of the Gospel, without a Revelation.—  
 But we may reason and argue from the Scriptures;  
 and it is, indeed, our duty so to do. The argu-  
 ments from thence are good and conclusive, as the  
 Scriptures carry such evidences of a divine Revela-  
 tion. In common affairs, we act upon *Faith*,  
 as rationally as upon demonstration. And, in  
 many cases, a man would be laughed at, that  
 should refuse to do so. “Well but, *Theophilus*, (said  
*Pyrrho*) Do you imagine that a *rational believer* can  
 have *that complacency and satisfaction of mind*, which  
 flows from that inspired, infused Faith, of which  
 my author hath said so much? For, p. 29. he is  
 very positive, he cannot.” *Theophilus* replied, that  
 every believer was not *inspired*; and therefore it  
 could not signifie much, what consequences would,  
 or would not, flow from such a thing, if it were  
 true.

The 98th  
text, Heb.  
xi. 1. See  
p. 77.

The 99th  
text,  
2 Cor. v.  
7. See  
p. 77.

**PART III.** true. But I would ask you, *Pyrrho*, whether a man, a rational creature, can *injoy greater tranquility and confidence of Spirit* from any reflection than from this, that he hath made an honest use of his *Reason*, and of those faculties which God hath given him?—that he hath, as both *Reason* and *Scripture* direct, *proved all things*, with a view to *bold fast that which is good*?—that he hath diligently *searched into the Reason of the Faith and Hope that is in him*? And, that he hath not therein labored in vain? Must it not yield the highest satisfaction to every thinking man's mind, that his Faith is built upon a rock? that he hath carefully and sincerely inquired, that he might see whether these things are so? And that, upon a thorough and deliberate examination, he hath found, that Christianity is *the wisdom of God*, and that the miracles, worked in confirmation of it, proceeded from *the power of God*? A repeated review of the grounds and Reasons of his Faith doth not *diminish or obscure* the evidence, but strengthens and confirms it: and, instead of rendering him *liable at every turn to misgivings and distrusts about the sufficiency of his Reasonings* and arguments, secures that solid peace of mind, which neither infidelity and irreligion, nor enthusiasm, *caprice of thought or complexion*, or a mere mechanical religion, can ever afford.—Your author talks of such a Faith, as is to *force men to be virtuous against their inclinations*. He had forgot this (I suppose) when he asserted that *it must greatly depend upon the proper disposition of our minds to give it reception for its efficacy*. But, if he had declared uniformly for a mechanical religion, *of force enough to make us virtuous against our inclinations*; the rational believers would have rejected his scheme, and told him, that *forced virtue* is a contradiction in terms, and no virtue at all. The man that is forced to be good is, in a moral and reli-

religious view, good for nothing. But if such a *rational Faith*, as hath been described, doth not influence a man to a pious and holy life, nothing can. For he is not only convinced by his *reason*, that there is a God, a providence and a future state; but he is also confirmed by a *Revelation*, which carries in it many evident marks of truth and credibility. And that Revelation assures him that, if he deny himself of ungodliness and worldly lusts; if he resist the temptations which abound in the present state of things; if he give up all unreasonable gratifications, and steddily practise virtue and piety; he shall be no loser in the end, but be amply rewarded in a future state of recompence.—He knows that, in a few days, all temporal enjoyments will be over; but he is fully and rationally satisfied that there will be another state, where the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, every character set in a just light, and every man recompenced according to his prevailing character. *The mortifying all our most beloved lusts and the strongest propensities of our nature, is not too substantial a sacrifice to be made, in order to our inheriting eternal life. The evidence of the reward is proportioned to the difficulty of the duty required. Such arguments are a sufficient basis for a belief, which is to produce (in wicked men) a new course of life, and an absolute mastery of their passions, in opposition to all the importunate solicitations of sense, and the violent appetites of those, who continue vicious and depraved. The obvious and palpable interest of a rational believer is to postpone those objects which are present and sollicit the senses, and to depend confidently on distant expectations and promises for his compensation. It is enough, that he hath all the moral certainty in these proofs that he can desire, and that this is the highest degree of rational evidence that the nature of the subject can possibly admit, [as your author allows it to be, p. 32.] Surely*  
*eternity*

*eternity is sufficient to weigh in the scale against this short life; and the pure, unmixed, everlasting happiness of the virtuous, against the transitory and imperfect, the mean and ignoble gratifications of the vicious and abandoned, during this fleeting scene of things.—Nor is there any thing absurd or unintelligible in the rational believer's dying a martyr in such a situation, where life cannot be preserved in the profession of the truth, and the practice of everlasting righteousness. As to the infidel, who confines his views within the compass of this short life, if he should die a martyr for truth and virtue (as numbers have done to their lust and appetite) I must be free to think that Abner's elegy would exactly suit him, "He died as a fool dieth!" And the reason is evident; for such an one lived as the fool liveth. But what is that to the understanding and rational believer?—To one who hath, upon evidence, had a rational conviction of a God, a providence and a future state, and quits this life with the clearest prospect of something better to succeed in its room? Men, who are immersed in the world, or given up to sense and appetite, may insinuate that these things deserve not one moment's attention; but the thoughtful and considerate man reasons more justly, and reckons these things to be of the highest importance. Under this thorough, settled conviction, the glorious and undaunted confessors went through most amazing trials, with a wondrous steadiness; and this Faith, for 300 years, gave numbers of them the victory over this world, when all its powers were combined to destroy the innocent flock of Christ, and even to extirpate the very name of the Christians from off the face of the earth. It was such a clear and strong, such a lively and convincing evidence of a resurrection to an happy immortality, that inspired the martyrs with such astonishing degrees of fortitude*

The 98th

text,

2 Sam. iii.

33. See p.

33.

fortitude, that led them to encounter the last terrible consequence, and infused all that amazing constancy and resolution into men expiring under the last extremity of torture; and made them prefer the present and certain pangs of agonizing upon the rack, to all the most flattering allurements of the present world. For they reasoned, in the strongest and most convincing manner, when they looked upon *time* as nothing compared with *eternity*, and sought the perfect happiness of an immortal life, by a steadfast adherence to truth and righteousness, under all difficulties and discouragements whatever.—He must be a man of a very loose and trifling turn of mind, that can make himself merry with such a subject; and must be so far from being good himself, that he doth not seem to have any notion of what true goodness is. Is there, then, no worth, no excellence, in the character of one who hath lived a pious and upright life, and chosen rather to abide by his profession, and seal it with his blood, than part with his integrity? What is the displeasure of man, who can but kill the body, in comparison of the displeasure of him, who can destroy both soul and body in hell? And how great does the character of the glorious author and finisher of our Faith appear; when he, instead of the joy that was proposed to him, endured the cross and despised the shame? The most pointed satyr, the most cruel scoffs of insolent and abandoned wit, the most subtle malice of the old and experienced tyrant, or the most practised and diabolical father inquisitor, who is skilled in the art of teizing and torturing a poor, miserable creature, in the most sensible and exquisite manner; — are not so dreadful as the chidings of a guilty conscience, and the agonizing tortures of despair. That same rational conviction, which carried the true believer through a state of indolent toleration, and the

**PART III.** *smooth calms of life*, and rendered him proof against the temptations of such a state, will, in a time of persecution, and *when matters come to such a crisis*, collect all her scattered force, exert her utmost vigor, triumph over seen things, render the rational Christian *firm and stedfast amidst the rage and cruelty of malicious murderers*, and enable him to be faithful to the last to a persecuted religion.—Nothing, indeed, but a fixed and well-grounded confidence of being happy for ever, in another world, could effectually prevail on him to renounce all his hopes and interests in this.—But this he has; and therefore he acts up to such an exalted height as to strive even unto blood. This has been more than the mere imagination, or talk, of a Rationalist, warmed with contemplation. It hath been verified in numberless facts and instances, from St. Stephen down to this day:—Such instances as cannot be produced for any system of philosophy, or any scheme of religion, besides that of the Gospel. What your author hath observed, p. 82. is but too true, that many have made it their principle to vary, without scruple, every way, as their temporal interest hath led them;—have run readily into every denomination of Christians, by turns; and have seemed to hold Christ's church to be always the church in being. But all ought not to be blamed for some; nor the inconsistency of particular persons looked upon as any argument against the truth of Christianity, or a rational Faith. The list of martyrs, confessors, and those who have suffered with and for their religion, has not been small and inconsiderable. The ten persecutions in the primitive church, and other instances of a later date, that I need not remind you of, plainly shew us that multitudes of the most pious and excellent persons that ever lived, knew in whom they had believed, and what solid grounds they went upon. They

The 99th  
text, Heb.  
xii. 4. See  
p. 35.

They had computed, with the most impartial exactness, PART III.  
the losse and the gain; and, upon the strictest estimate,  
found that this life is a dream, a mere fugitive  
shadow, but that eternity is a substantial good, and  
a matter of infinite importance. They had the  
most powerful inducements to carry them through  
the conflict. They kept their eye steddily fixed up-  
on the exceeding weight of glory, by Faith saw heaven The 100th  
opened to their view, and looked forward, with and 101st  
longing eyes, to that signal day, when the Son of texts,  
Man shall stand plainly before their eyes, and be reveled 2 Cor. iv.  
in all his glory, to support and reward his faithful ser- 17. Acts  
vants, and to render unto every man, according as his vii. 56.  
works have been. Men may, if they please, in an See p. 35.  
impious and profane manner, ridicule these things,  
and endeavor to turn into jest the hopes of the  
righteous man, the tortures of the confessor, and  
the agonizing pains of the expiring martyr. But  
these are not matters to be jested with. Eternity  
is too serious and important an affair for banter  
and ridicule. And the nature and evidence of  
true religion are of moment enough to induce all  
virtuous and thinking men carefully to examine into  
them, and let them have their proper weight and  
influence. I hope, living and dying, they will  
ever be things of the last consequence with me.  
And I heartily wish they may be so with others  
also!

Theophilus's warm and affectionate manner of  
concluding, struck all the company with attention,  
and was observed to make great impressions upon  
them. Pyrrho acknowledged that he was greatly  
obliged to Theophilus, for the pains he had taken  
at his request; and promised, with care, to re-  
examine all that had passed. They both thanked  
Crito, who had so often sate as chairman, and kept  
order, during their whole debate. All the com-

**PART III.**

pany expressed themselves, in very grateful terms, for the favor of having been so freely admitted. And the three friends, as they looked upon one another to be, in the main, honest and sincere, continued to maintain the same mutual friendship and good-will to one another as ever.

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