

THE
DIVINITY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

PROVED

By the Evidence of Reason, and Divine Revelation.

CHAP. I.

Religion is necessary for the honour of God and happiness of man: Among the variety of religions in the world, it is the highest point of wisdom to consider which is pleasing to God. God alone is to prescribe the way of his worship. He has revealed it. The truth of the christian religion is made evident by comparing it with all other religions. Gentilism convinced of falsity by its contradicting natural light in mistaking the object of worship, and in the manner of it. The idolatry, the impure and frivolous rites, the cruel sacrifices of the heathens considered. Philosophy was ineffectual to redress those evils. Judaism considered. The ceremonial part of that religion contains nothing morally good. It was of impossible performance to all nations. It was enjoined the Jews for special reasons. The carnal law was to expire at the coming of the Messiah, and give place to the christian religion, that is all life and spirit. The falseness and absurdity of mahometism discovered by the quality of the author, and its nature; by the fraudulent and violent means whereby it was propagated; by the quality of those who received it, ignorant barbarous nations; by the quality of the reward it propounds, neither becoming God to bestow, nor man to desire.

HAVING in some former discourses established and cleared the foundations of religion, I shall proceed to raise the super-

structure. That God is the maker of the world; that he observes our moral actions, and will require an account of them in the future state, and distribute eternal recompences accordingly, has been proved by such invincible evidence that reason cannot resist. It follows therefore that religion is necessary both for the honour of God, and in order to the happiness of man. For we cannot conceive, but that the wise Creator in making all things, designed his own glory, both in the manifestation of his own perfections, and that they should be acknowledged and revered, loved and praised by intelligent creatures. This is a natural duty, to which mankind with an unforced consent agrees. For, as honour in the general is the homage paid to conspicuous excellencies, and specially to beneficent virtues; so religion, that is the highest honour, is justly due to God the most sovereign being in all perfections, and our sovereign benefactor. And it is equally clear that the happiness of man depends on religion. For if God regard the actions of men, not to have a naked speculative knowledge of them, but with an eye of providence and judgment; if he will accept and reward our services not as profitable to him, but as the just expressions of our love, thankfulness and obedience to him, it is requisite our prime care should be to serve him. In this the greatest duty and supreme interest of men are inviolably united: for what obligation can possibly be equal to that of pleasing our Maker and preserver? And what is comparable to the interest of eternity? From hence there is a general inclination in men to worship the Deity, impressed from the author of nature; but the ways are diverse. Religion changes its shape in several countries, and the rites that are observed by some nations as sacred, are rejected by others as impious, or vain. Now, in this variety of religions, and every one contrary to the other, it is necessary to consider which is that special way of serving God that is only pleasing to him. If a traveller be distracted between several ways, he will inquire which leads to his journey's end, and not go on with uncertainty. And is it not infinitely reasonable to do that in the most important affair, which any person will do in the most ordinary? To be indifferent in a matter so deeply concerning us, is prodigious above all wonder. For if the means we use to obtain the favour of God, provoke his anger, our misery is remediless. But alas! no rashness is so common, as that of men's preferring one religion before another.

How many false religions are defended by whole nations with that zeal as if they were the most assured persons? When the foundations of their belief and adherence are so weak, that did they call reason to counsel, they must be convinced of their errors. They are led by vain respects to their progenitors from whom their religion is derived; and what they receive at first without discerning, they never distrust; as if the first instructions were always true. They resign up their judgment to their princes: and if human authority were a sufficient motive in this case, then every religion will be saving in the country where it is established by law. Nay the christian religion, though shining with an extraordinary lustre, which justifies it to every one that will but open his eyes to consider it, yet is as injudiciously and carelessly received, as the vainest religion in the world. Innumerable are christians in title, without any solid conviction in their minds, or divine change in their hearts, the effects of its truth and goodness. They are disciples of Christ, as the Turks are of Mahomet, by the sole impression of example.

In the discussing this matter I shall proceed upon such principles as are evident to the human understanding. It is a common principle acknowledged by all men, 'That God alone is to prescribe that way and order of service wherein he will be honoured.' For this reason those who in any nation introduced a form of religion, always pretended to have divine direction for it. Now that God has signified his will to men in this most important matter, it is most reasonable to believe. The * philosopher observes that such is the providence of nature, that the most necessary arts for the support of life are easily learnt of all. In the rudest ages men were skilful to cultivate the earth, to govern their flocks, to dress their provisions for food. But those arts that were only for delight, not absolutely useful; as music, painting, perfuming, embroidery, &c. required more study and skill, and therefore were more modern. And if the divine providence has such a tender care of man, as to make the knowledge of such things easy as are requisite for the temporal life, it is reason to believe he has not left him destitute of those means that are necessary for the obtaining eternal life. Now that the christian religion alone is true, will fully appear.

* *Arist. Metaph.*

I. By comparing it with other religions, that upon trial are convinced of open falsity, or that they are infinitely excelled by the christian in those things wherein they have any resemblance or degrees of truth and goodness.

II. By considering it directly, as to its intrinsic excellencies, and those external supernatural operations, that are the express characters of God's hand, which afford an infallible testimony of his approving it.

Before the coming of Christ into the world there were two sorts of religions, Gentilism, and Judaism. The first is utterly excluded upon the account of its gross and palpable contrariety to the principles of sound reason.

1. By a fundamental error in the object of worship. Idolatry then spread through all the regions under both the hemispheres. Now it is evident by reason there is but one true God, an infinite being, the maker and governor of all things, that has alone divine excellencies in himself, and a divine empire over us, and consequently is alone worthy of supreme honour. And what greater indignity can be offered to him, than the placing of idols in his throne? He is a jealous God, sensible and severe; and will not suffer any partner in his worship. His honour is eminently concerned to vindicate his despised Deity. It is a pitiful shift to allege that they honoured their inferior gods with a lower and imperfect worship: for all divine worship is supreme, and to be given only to the supreme God. Besides, what more debases man than to consecrate the flower of his esteem and affections to unworthy objects, and many times to things wherein were no signs of life, much less any ray of divinity? It is evident therefore that the numerous sects of superstition were involved in the most wretched ignorance of God and themselves. And it is observable, that no quarrels were raised amongst the heathens about the several gods they worshipped. For the devil, the irreconcilable enemy to God's glory and man's happiness, was pleased with their deadly errors. Let them adore the host of heaven or of the earth, it was alike to him: for they all diverted the minds of men from the sole object of divine worship, the true God.

2. Gentilism was equally culpable in the manner of worship. Those who made gods to themselves, ordained their service according to their fancies. But the true God that made man will be worshipped according to his own appointment. Now if we

consider that unintelligible variety of religions amongst the heathens, we shall have reason to conclude that there is no instance wherein the excess of man's native blindness and depravation is more astonishing, than in the ways he has devised for the serving of God. This will appear by taking a short general view of the ways of worship in practice among the most learned and polite heathens.

The Grecians and Romans had more art and improvement than the rest, yet how frivolous and extravagant, nay how impious were their solemn mysteries? * The *Eleusinia sacra*, the rites of Cybele, the Floralia, &c. were mixtures of folly and filthiness. Their auguries by the flight of birds, their presages by inspecting the † entrails of beasts, and the smoke of the incense, were so fantastic, that if one had designed to invent things ridiculous without the least show of reason, it had not been possible to exceed them. They were very curious about trifles, and careless of real virtue: and what is more unworthy of God than to imagine that he is pleased with little senseless observances solemnly performed? They were afraid to soil themselves with imaginary pollutions, and insensible of the deepest defilements. Their most sacred mysteries were a covert for uncleanness, and under the mask of religion the basest villanies were disguised. ‡ But I will not rake in those sinks of filthiness. Now what is more impious than to imagine that God is pleased with the most sordid lusts, that cannot be named without violating modesty, nor thought of without defiling the mind with their infamous ideas? But it is no wonder that such pollutions were esteemed religious rites, for they attributed to their gods such actions as were most unworthy a virtuous man. The Poets were the chief doctors in their church. Their tales of the rapes, and incests, and secret armours of their reputed deities, were the rule of their faith. And what a pernicious influence this kind of belief had upon them, and how dishonourable it was to their gods, the wi-

* Tanta gentium in rebus frivolis plerunque religio est. *Plin.*

† Magis ex alieno jecore sapiebant, quam ex suo.

‡ Μαχλῶντα Ἀφροδίτης ὄργα. Ἀπόσβετον, ὡ Ἱεροφάντα, τὰ πυρ, αἰδέσθῃσι δαδύχει, τὰς λαμπάδας, ἐλέγχῃσου τὴν ἱάκχων τὸ φῶς. *Clam. Alex. Protrep.*

ser sort then discovered. It was Cicero's just censure of Homer, that whereas he should have raised up earth to heaven, instructed men to live according to the purity of the gods, he forced down heaven to earth, and made the gods to live like men in this region of impurity. It is the highest glory of man to be made the image of God in moral excellencies, and it is the vilest contumely to God to fashion him to be the image of man's vicious affections.

Add further, that man was a sinner, and under the righteous displeasure of heaven, all were compelled to acknowledge by the stings of conscience. But what miserable work has been made from the ignorance and guilty fears of the heathens, to render the Deity propitious, is manifest in several instances, and especially in their cruel sacrifices of men. This was their practice in extreme dangers, to purge their cities, and avert divine judgments. As if some eminent acts of sin had the virtue of expiation. In short, the design of religion is to procure the favour of God, and to sanctify man, both which are necessary in order to his blessedness; but how insufficient Gentilism was for these great effects is manifest. Nay, on the contrary, such a prodigious mixture of folly and wickedness makes it sadly evident, that the variety of religions among the heathens, were but several ways of dishonouring God, and perishing for ever. It is further to be observed, that the philosophers of greatest reputation, admired as oracles of more than human wisdom, did not cure these destructive evils. They should have expressed an heroic magnanimity (to which they vainly pretended) in resisting the dreadful torrent of idolatry that overflowed the world. But they basely temporized with the vulgar heathen. It was their declared principle, that a wise man should follow the religion of his country, and conform in his external practice with established customs, if he reserved his mind free from philosophy. Thus they extinguished the most radiant beam of the Deity, and robbed him of his most glorious attribute, the unity of his essence. And by this we may judge how unfit they were to instruct and correct the degenerate world, and make it truly better, when they suffered religion, the fountain of all virtues, to be corrupted, and the worship of the only true God, the prime and chief part of piety, to be given not only to inferior objects, but to evil spirits. Miserable physicians! Whose care was applied to re-

dress some lesser evils that concerned societies, and neglected this mortal wound in the heart. It is a killing aggravation of their connivance and compliance with ignorant idolaters, that they held the "truth in unrighteousness; and when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but changed the glory of his incorruptible nature, into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." This was the state of the pagan world till the gospel appeared, and directed the natural religious inclination of mankind into its proper channel to the only true God.

2. The religion of the Jews is to be considered. This the christians acknowledge with them, was divine in its authority, doctrine, moral part, worship and promises. God himself was the author, and confirmed it by many illustrious miracles. It is delivered in the most ancient, authentic, and venerable writings in the world. It instructs us concerning the nature of God, his works of creation and providence, and the judgment to come. It commands the love of God, and to serve him only, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves. The ceremonial part was a full conviction of the guilt of sin, a visible discovery of the rights of eternal justice, and a powerful means to humble men before the infinite and offended majesty of the Creator. It propounds temporal rewards, as the marks of God's favour suitable to the church then in its minority, but under that veil the most excellent and eternal rewards. This religion in its ceremonial external part was to continue till the coming of the Messiah, and then to be abolished. To make this evident, I shall thus proceed:

(1.) That the ceremonial part contained nothing that was morally and unchangeably good, for then it had been obligatory to all nations, and from the beginning; whereas it was prescribed only to the Jews, and after a long space of time, wherein many holy men, though ignorant of that part of the law, yet received a divine testimony that they pleased God.

(2.) It was of impossible performance to all other nations; as appears by the precepts concerning sacrifices that were to be offered only in Jerusalem, and by the Levitical priests, and their solemn festivals so many times in the year. Now the worship of God being an essential duty of the reasonable creature, it is ab-

surd to imagine that it necessarily consists in such things that cannot be done by all men.

(3.) God himself often declared that the rituals of the law were of no price with him absolutely considered. Isa. 1. Psal. 50.

(4.) They were enjoined the Jews for peculiar reasons, principally that by those imperfect rudiments they might be prepared for the times of reformation. God had drawn in the legal ministration, numberless images of the Messiah; their temple and highpriest, their ark and offerings, with all their ceremonial service did signally point at him. And this is an infallible evidence that a mind superior to Moses' designed all that work with a final respect to Christ, that the Jewish nation having the idea of him always present might not mistake him when he should appear. And that heavy yoke of ceremonies, with the spirit of servile fear that attended it, was to excite in them earnest longings after the Messiah, the desire of all nations, that with unspeakable joy they might receive him at his coming.

Now that the legal institution should expire for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, and a divine sacrifice be offered up of infinite value and virtue to reconcile God, and purify the consciences of men, was declared whilst the service of the temple was performed with the greatest pomp. Thus the Messiah spake by the mouth of David, "Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire, my heart hast thou opened; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required; then said I, lo I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God." Psal. 40. And the same inspired prophet declared when the Levitical priesthood was in the greatest splendour, that there was another order of the priesthood than that of Aaron, established in a more solemn manner and of everlasting efficacy: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Psal. 110. That this prophecy respected the Messiah, even the Pharisees could not deny, for when Jesus Christ asked them whose son Christ was to be? They answered, David's. And demanding again, why David called him Lord, in those words of the Psalmist, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand till I have made thine enemies thy foot-stool?" Mat. 22. 42. They could answer nothing. Their silence was a clear acknowledgment that

the Messiah was the person there intended. Heb. 5. 5. The apostle also who wrote to the Jews, takes it for granted by the universal consent of that nation, that that psalm respected the Messiah, and proves it was accomplished in Jesus Christ. Besides, it was foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, that another covenant should be made, wherein the real benefits of the pardon of sin, and true holiness that were typified by the legal purifications and observances, should be conferred on God's people. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, different from that made with their fathers when they came out of the land of Egypt, I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sin no more." In short, there are abundant declarations in the prophets, that the carnal religion of the Jews should expire, and a religion all spirit and life should succeed in its place, and be diffused among all nations. This was to be introduced by the Messiah. Thus Moses foretold, "The Lord thy God shall raise up a prophet from among thy brethren like unto me, him ye shall hear." It was the singular prerogative of Moses above the rest of the prophets, that he was a lawgiver, and mediator of the covenant between God and Israel, and accordingly the Messiah was to be a lawgiver and mediator of a new covenant. Now if the mosaic institutions were to remain after his coming, the parallel would not hold between them in those principal respects. Besides, it was prophesied that the Messiah should be a king sitting on the throne of David, and commanding the kings of the earth. By which it is evident that his laws must be of another nature than those of Moses, that were proper only to the church whilst confined to the Jewish pale, but not for the government of the world. And whereas the Jews object, that some of their rites were ordained to continue for ever. The answer is clear, that was only to distinguish them from some temporary injunctions, that were of force only while they were in the wilderness, or when they were inhabitants of Canaan, but were to be practised in all places, till by a new signification of the divine will they were for-

bidden. And it is observable that in the Jewish law the term for ever, when applied either to a man's right, or to servitude, imports only a continuance to the jubilee : so that those rituals were to continue in their vigour during that entire period, and to be determined after the coming of the Messiah, the great jubilee of the world. And that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah is most evident, in that his coming was exactly as he was designed, and was to be expected ; that he had the power of working miracles to authorize him to change the externals of their worship and service. Briefly Judaism now is but the carcass of a dead religion, and the obstinate adherers to it, are become so sottiſhly blind, as to believe the most prodigious fables as divine revelations. Their Talmud so revered by them, contains intolerable follies, nay blasphemies, against God. It regulates his hours in the day. It relates that he spends three in studying the law, and three more in the instructing children that died in their minority, and that he employs three in taking the accounts of the world, and in the three last diverts himself with Leviathans, and that the night being come, (for they imagine that the sun sets in Paradise) he ascends a chariot drawn by the swiftest spirits, the Cherubims, and visits the eighteen thousand worlds he created. I shall not instance in any more of their extravagant tales, not to be defended by the pretence of solemn mysteries, and by strained allegories. This is sufficient to show that by the righteous judgment of God, for their rejecting the truth of the gospel they are given up to believe lies.

Since the coming of Jesus Christ, Mahometanism has overspread a great part of the barbarous world. But this carries in it such apparent and certain marks of falsity, that it can be no temptation to any person in whom there is but a spark of good sense. Whether we consider,

(1.) The author from whom it was derived : a robber, one drenched in sensuality, and therefore utterly unqualified to be the revealer of the will of the holy God to men.

(2.) The quality of its doctrines ; some are ridiculous and extravagant above the vanity of a feverish dream : some are pernicious, flattering both the lower appetites ; the concupiscible, by losing its natural restraints from exorbitant fleshly pleasures ; the irascible, by commending the violent oppression of others for the advancement of religion.

(3.) The means by which it had its rise and was propagated : it sprang from imposture ; Mahomet erected an oracle in his own fancy, and pretended that the Holy Ghost descended there to give his inspirations. Thus he seduced at first : but having got a strong party, force succeeded deceit. The sword cut its way through many countries. And is it strange that the people so fiercely taught should follow the religion of the cruel conqueror ? Thus it was planted, thus it increased, and is still maintained by the same causes.

(4.) The quality of those who received it. They were barbarous nations, and absolutely forbid to make an inquiry into the matters of religion. And how easy is it to make an impression on the rude lump of the multitude ? What wonder is it that pleasant follies should usurp the belief of the ignorant vulgar ?

(5.) It promises in the future life a paradise fit for swine, most unworthy the glorious rewarder God, and the excellence of man. This is so evident, that Avicen, a Saracen philosopher, and Mahometan in profession, speaks with abhorrence of those dreggy low delights, and on the contrary asserts, that the height of happiness is in the perfections of the soul united to God ; and thus virtually condemns their faith, as repugnant to the dictates of clear religion.

CHAP. II.

The christian religion directly considered. Previous considerations, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ who conversed in the world, and instituted that religion, is most credible from the uniform testimony of christians in all ages. It is equally certain the books containing the doctrine of Christ, are transmitted without material alteration. The proofs of the christian religion, though not equal in clearness to sense or science, yet are sufficient to convince unprejudiced minds of its truth. The intrinsic excellencies of the christian religion considered. The doctrines of the gospel illustrate natural truths concerning God, and reveal what is further necessary for his glory and man's happiness. The entire agreement between them. The gospel discovers the misery of man in its causes and degrees; and the means of his recovery. It represents a full and glorious image of God's perfections in the manner of our restoration. Therefore it is worthy of all acceptation. The christian religion sets before us a rule pure and perspicuous, in nothing superfluous or defective. The promises of the gospel are worthy of God, and suitable to the wants and desires of men. They offer the pardon of sin upon the condition of repentance and faith. The supernatural assistance of the Holy Spirit. The supply of our temporal wants, and support under afflictions. The reward of eternal life.

I WILL now consider the christian religion directly in itself. It has this noble prerogative above the rest, the more one searches into it, the more its divinity appears. Whereas other religions may please a sudden eye, but cannot endure a serious trial. Some things are to be premised.

1. I shall suppose it as a principle above all doubt, there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who conversed in the world, con-signed the christian doctrine to the apostles, and by them it is conveyed to us in the New Testament. For in asserting it we have the uniform deposition of all that profess this religion, from its rise till the present age, and in all parts of the world. Though in other things of different opinions, yet they agree in this, that Jesus Christ was their founder. Now who can better know the Author of an institution ecclesiastical or secular, than those who were admitted into its beginning, and those who have succeeded in that order from age to age without interruption? Besides, we have the consenting and constant testimony of Jews and heathens, the obstinate opposers of the christian religion, that its

name as well as original was derived from Christ. We may with more reason suspect, there were never such philosophers as Plato and Aristotle, or that the books which from their times by universal persevering fame have been attributed to them, were made by others, and put forth under false titles, than to question what is so generally received concerning the author of the gospel. It is the perfection of folly and madness to oppose such evidence.

2. It is equally certain that the books of the New Testament are transmitted to us in their original purity, without any material alteration. For it is incredible that the societies of christians should neglect the preserving incorrupt and entire, those writings which they esteemed a most sacred treasure, on which they built their hopes of eternal blessedness. It cannot be supposed they would transmit them to their children, whose salvation must have been dearer to them than the world, otherwise than they received them. This were to charge them with the most supine carelessness, and unnatural cruelty. Besides, the great number of copies dispersed through all places, and translated into many languages, and read in all christian assemblies, make the attempt to falsify them in things of moment to be morally impossible. This will be more clear if we consider that among christians there have been so many persons wise and good, of excellent learning and virtue, and of diverse countries, that by their office were established the depositories of those present writings. And is there any colourable pretence to imagine, that they should suffer any notable alteration in them, much less conspire to make a change in any doctrines of faith or life therein delivered? To give reputation and credit to a lie, entitling it to divine revelation, especially in matters of eternal consequence, is such a black crime that none can be presumed capable of, but one that has utterly lost his conscience. I shall not here urge, that the immortal providence of God is eminently interested in preserving the scriptures in sufficient purity. It were a vile imputation upon his wisdom and goodness to believe that he would permit them to be undiscernibly corrupted in points important to his own glory, and man's salvation. Thus a snare would be laid without possibility of prevention, and the embracing error instead of truth would be innocent. But this argument though incomparably the best, supposes that the christian doctrine descended from heaven, the proofs of which are to be considered.

3. I will not insist on the proofs of all mysterious points of the christian faith singly considered, but propound the arguments that evince the truth of that religion, wherein they are expressly and clearly contained, and from thence conclude that it is most reasonable to believe them. As in besieging a town, the assailants do not attack every particular house, but vigorously press on to possess themselves of the citadel that commands the whole, and with that all the houses are conquered. That divine revelation is infallible, is an acknowledged principle by all men: for natural reason dictates that unerring wisdom and infinite goodness are essential perfections of God; so that he cannot be deceived, nor deceive those that trust in his word.

4. The proofs of the truth of the christian religion are of a moral nature; and though not of equal clearness with the testimonies of sense, or a mathematical demonstration, yet are so pregnant and convincing, that the considering dispassionate spirit fully acquiesces in them. A mathematical demonstration brings so strong a light that the mind cannot suspend its assent, but is presently overcome by the naked propounding of the object: and hence it is that in mathematical matters, there are neither infidels nor heretics. But the motives of faith are such, that although the object be most certain, yet the evidence is not so clear and irresistible, as that which flows from sense, or a demonstration. And it is the excellent observation of || Grotius, God has wisely appointed this way of persuading men of the truth of the gospel, that faith might be accepted as an act of obedience from the reasonable creature. For the arguments to induce belief, though of sufficient certainty, yet do not so constrain the mind to give its assent, but there is prudence and choice in it. Not that the will can make a direct impression upon the mind, that it should comply with its desire, and see what it does not see. It cannot make an obscure object to be clear to its perception, no more than it can change the colour of visible things, and make what appears green to the eye to seem red. But the mind enlightened by sufficient reasons that the christian religion is from God, represents it so to the will, and the will, if sincere and unbiassed by carnal affections, commands the mind not to disguise the truth, to make it less credible, nor to palliate with specious colours the pretences

| De verit. Rel. Christ.

of infidelity. And thus the belief of it results from conviction and love.

This moral evidence is as convincing as is requisite to make us stedfastly believe and obey the gospel. Moral arguments produce as satisfying certainty, though not so palpable as those drawn from sense. When there is a concurrence of reasons proper to the nature of things, and the strongest they are capable of, by their united light they dispel all doubts and fear of the contrary. For after the understanding has deliberately and impartially compared the motives and arguments in favour of the truth of a thing, and those that contradict it, and finds the most weighty moments of reason in one scale for it, and in the other nothing but air and emptiness, it concludes without hesitation or suspense that such a thing is real. And as it is impossible that a physical demonstration concerning the existence of a thing should be deceitful, because the two parts of a contradiction, as of the being and not being of a thing, cannot be true : so there is as it were an equal repugnance, that a moral demonstration, formed upon the best arguments the matter will admit, should deceive the mind. It presents the object without a cloud, so that the understanding has an undoubted assurance of it.

II. To proceed ; the *intrinsic excellencies* of the christian religion will appear, by considering the doctrines, precepts, and promises it contains, which are the essential parts of religion. And of them in general we may observe,

1. *Its doctrines.*

The gospel illustrates and establishes all the natural principles of truth and goodness that are common to mankind, the rule of moral actions : and reveals all supernatural things requisite for the glory of God, and the supreme happiness of man, that rectified reason upon the discovery, must acknowledge it came from heaven, and infallibly leads those who believe and obey it to heaven.

There is such an entire agreement between all the parts of the christian religion for the accomplishing its great end, as affords a clear conviction it is no human invention, but from God. As the harmonious composition, the beautiful order, and uniform preservation of the world, is a sensible demonstration that it proceeds from a most wise, powerful and good cause.

In particular, the doctrine of the gospel contains besides what

may be known of God, 'and of man by natural light, two principal points: an account of the corruption and misery of mankind in its first causes: and his redemption effectually accomplished by the Son of God. The discovery of both is equally necessary to man. The first makes him understand the depth of his guiltiness, that he is incomparably more wretched than he feels himself, clears the purity and justice of God in his dealings with man, and prepares him by the afflicted sense of his condition for mercy. And the knowledge of the divine Redeemer powerful to restore him, is as necessary in order to his duty and happiness. For without it he would be always tormented with the mournful remembrance of his lost felicity, and hardened in despair.

The christian religion gives a full account of the depravation and misery of human nature in its first causes. The heathens felt an inseparable permanent discord in man between the upper faculties and the lower appetites, but were utterly ignorant of the cause of it. Now the scripture reveals that man in the original frame of his nature was regular and holy, a piece of workmanship worthy the perfections of his Creator, but he abused his liberty to break the first command, which was given for the trial of his obedience. He yielded to the enticements of a fallen spirit, who was a liar, that he might be a murderer, and by his revolt from God lost his holiness, and made a forfeiture of all the privileges of his happy state. Thus the fountain was tainted; and "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? By the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation." Every man is now born a slave of sin, a tributary of death. From hence it follows, that the most deformed monsters in villany, the most fierce enemies of religion serve to confirm its truth, as well as the most eminent saints. These show the virtue of redemption by the sanctity of their lives, the other the corruption of nature by their obstinate wickedness.

The christian religion instructs us that God sent his own son into the world in the human nature, that he might offer up himself an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, to restore them to his favour. This is a mystery above the flight of any created understanding; yet it is so tempered and framed; there is such an uniformity of wisdom in all its parts, it presents such a full and glorious image of the Deity in all his perfections, that it causes the highest admiration, and commands belief in those who

duly consider it. The whole economy becomes the majesty, the goodness, the holiness and justice of God. His supreme majesty appears in his pardoning the guilty for the sufferings of another. For this is an infallible proof that he is above law. And his inconceivable mercy is the only principle and fountain of our pardon. For man was absolutely incapable to merit the favour, or to repair the honour of God, so injured by his inexcusable disobedience. Repentance cannot produce such great effects. What merit can there be in the sorrowful sense and confession of that which deserves eternal death? Besides an extreme hatred of sin, an ardent love of holiness, serious resolutions to follow it whatever it costs, (which is the best part of repentance) was due to God before the commission of sin, therefore cannot be satisfaction; so that pure mercy is the cause of forgiveness. Moreover, God to glorify his holiness in declaring his vehement and irreconcilable hatred to sin, and to preserve the rights of justice, was pleased to appoint an all-sufficient mediator, capable to offer himself an expiatory sacrifice for sin, and to give an infinite value to it. This was done by the incarnation of the Son of God. The flesh and blood he took of our humanity, was made divine by union with him, and offered on the cross was full payment for our offences. Thus justice and mercy triumph with equal glory, being equally victorious. For what is more honourable to justice than satisfaction equal to the offence? And what can more commend mercy than the most free and undeserved bestowing the high price requisite for it? Thus the gospel affords to us a just and complete idea of the divine excellencies in the redemption of man. The design, manner, and the effect are most worthy of God. Where might such a contrivance of wisdom be framed but in the divine mind? Where could such an excess of compassion be found but in the heart of God? Thus it became God who is love, to magnify his love, to advance his dearest glory, and overcome our guilty disaffection to himself. For while terrible apprehensions of the Deity possess the heart it is frozen with a stony rigour, which the hope of mercy only can dissolve. Thus it appears that the 'doctrine of the gospel is worthy of all acceptance.'

2. *Its precepts.* The christian religion sets before us a rule of life pure and perspicuous, in nothing superfluous or defective, but comprehending the entire duty of man, this was necessary in or-

der to his recovery. For in his fallen state the law of nature is active in some things, but dormant in others. The best morals of the heathens are dashed with impure permission. "But the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." It forbids all sin in all its degrees, not only the consummation of it in the act, but the first conception of it in the thoughts, and desires. Which argues that the lawgiver was more than a man, having an inspection into the heart, which is only visible to God, and only accountable to him. It teaches us to worship God the supreme and purest spirit with the highest esteem, and with purity of affections. It enjoins all relative duties to men in a most perfect manner. What things we would have others to do unto us, supposing ourselves in their circumstances, we are obliged to do them. This one law of Christ eminently contains all others that respect society. This is the primitive rule of commerce, and directs our carriage towards all persons with justice and equity, kindness and decency. The gospel also with respect to ourselves gives a perfect rule to make us holy and blessed. It teaches us the contempt of the world, the valuation of heaven, the restraint of corrupted sense, and the angelical exercise of our affections. In short, it commands the practice of all virtues, and that we should aspire to the most eminent degrees in them. But especially it enjoins humility and love to God, the foundation and perfection of all virtues, of which the precepts of philosophy take little notice. Humility, that is, a lively deep sense that nothing is properly ours but sin and misery, arises from the consideration of our absolute dependance upon God for our being, all the benefits we enjoy in nature or grace. From hence gratitude springs. It is most reasonable that our lives should be a continual expression of obedience from a noble and free principle of love to God, and be designed for his honour, and that for all our advantages temporal and spiritual we should only glory in him. In this philosophers were very defective : * they considered man with respect to himself, or to other creatures without him, and accordingly the product of

* Nullam virtus aliam mercedem laborum periculorumque desiderat, præter hanc laudis & gloriæ : quæ quidem detracta, quid est quod in hoc tam exiguo vitæ curriculo, & tam brevi, tantis nos in laboribus exerceamus ? Cicer. *per. Arch.*

their precepts, was a certain moral honesty, to do nothing unbecoming the reasonable nature, nor to break the civil peace. But they did not consider duly his relation to the Creator, in "whom he lives, moves, and has his being, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift." And by neglecting him, all their glittering actions were but a weak counterfeit, a dead resemblance of real virtue. In their most eminent public works the praise of men was their ultimate design; and as some appear bold from fear, they were virtuous from vanity. If God be not the principle, the motive, and the end of what we do, there are wanting the essential ingredients of moral goodness. Now all these precepts shine with their native light, and carry such evidence of their rectitude, that our obedience may come from an ingenuous filial spirit satisfied with the reasonableness of our heavenly father's commands, and not be servile, only performed to the absolute will of a master. And can there be a more convincing proof of the truth of the christian religion, of its divine descent, than the image of God's holiness so clearly impressed upon it? And further; these precepts are delivered with that plainness, and so proportioned to the capacity of all, and yet with that sovereign authority, that it is reasonable to believe that God himself speaks, and it becomes man to hear with reverence and submission. The gospel is without the ornaments of art, yet its sweet facility is tempered with that majesty, that it is a sensible character that divine wisdom composed it.

3. *Its promises.* The promises of the gospel are so worthy of God, and suitable to the wants and desires of men, that it is perfectly reasonable to assent to their truth and goodness. This will appear by a particular consideration of them.

The promise of pardon to penitent believers. And in this we are to consider the conditions, and the ground of its assurance to us. The conditions are repentance and faith.

Repentance is a peculiar command and privilege of the gospel. The law considered in itself did not admit of it, nor give the least hope of pardon: for it supposes man in the integrity of nature, and accordingly directs him how to please God and preserve his love, but propounds no means of reconciliation after an offence. There are no seeds of grace to temper its rigour. But the gospel is the declaration of mercy to the guilty and miserable, upon such terms as God may be capable to give pardon, and

man qualified to receive it. It is not more true that God is the judge of the world, and that all men shall appear before his tribunal, than that sin without repentance shall not escape punishment. To forgive the unreformed sinner would stain his purest perfections, the inviolable beauty of his holiness, the incorruptible rectitude of his justice. Such lenity would have a pernicious influence on the corrupt world, by encouraging men to sin without fear, and outrageously to break his laws in confidence of pardon. Therefore in the evangelical promise, repentance and remission of sins are inseparably joined. Repentance is a preparative in order to our receiving divine mercy, and a strong preservative against sin for time to come. The remembrance of those sorrows and fears, the anxieties and indignation against himself that sin caused in a true penitent, will make him jealous for the future of his heart, and circumspect against all temptations that may betray him. As one that has narrowly escaped consuming by fire, retains the idea of his danger so deeply impressed on his mind, that upon any new occasion his ancient fears revive, and make him very watchful. Besides, the apprehension of just and eternal vengeance, makes the mercy of God so admirable, the sense of his tender compassion so sweet, that an humble believer cannot forget or neglect it. The forgiveness of sin in this way is not only an engagement, but an infallible cause of fearing to offend a God so great and good.

And faith is a qualification as requisite for the obtaining pardon; that is, a cordial entire receiving Jesus Christ as he is presented to us in the gospel: to resign our minds to his doctrines as our prophet, to have reliance on his sacrifice and mediation as our priest; to yield universal cheerful and constant obedience to him as our king. And how congruous is it that all who receive so invaluable a benefit as forgiveness of sin, should thus honour him who procures it?

And the gospel affords the strongest assurance that God is most willing to pardon humble and contrite sinners. This is necessary for the relief and ease of true penitents. For when the enlightened conscience reflects upon the number and enormity of its sins, the presumption in committing them, it is ready to be swallowed up with despair of recovering the lost favour of God. It cannot devise any means how to appease his incensed majesty, and satisfy violated justice: how a rebel should become his son;

how one condemned to everlasting punishment, should be restored to the unfading inheritance of life. The case is most intricate and hopeless. Now the gospel propounds means of universal sovereign efficacy to reconcile God to us; the most precious blood of his Son offered up a sacrifice to expiate sin. This sprinkles all nations, and in all ages retains an undecaying virtue. This affords solid and everlasting comfort to all sensible returning sinners.

The sending of the holy spirit of God to renew us according to his image, and to confirm us against temptations in this mortal life, is another promise of the gospel, and most requisite to make us capable to serve and enjoy him. A happy temper of nature, the precepts of philosophy, virtuous examples, the severity of human laws, are not powerful to regenerate a man, and transform him into a new creature. They may restrain the exorbitances of carnal appetites, but cannot thoroughly change the mind and affections. Were there any vital spark within, any seed of holiness in man's corrupted nature, such assistance might cherish it; but he is dead to the truly spiritual life, though not to the merely moral, and no less than an omnipotent efficacy can produce a new spring of life, a divine nature, the principle of willing obedience to God. And after conversion, while in the state of trial here, the best are subject to innumerable surprises by their own frailty, and exposed to new dangers every hour by temptations that foment and heighten the relics of sin in them, so that without supernatural assistance they would be quite discouraged and foiled by the enemies that war against the soul. Now in the gospel God has promised to give "the Holy Spirit to those that ask it:" in the most hazardous and difficult conflicts, he assures those who ardently address themselves to him for help, "that his grace shall be sufficient for them."

The gospel contains many gracious promises with respect to supplying the wants, and giving support and refreshment under the troubles of the present life. Temporal blessings are in the lowest rank of good things, and are promised as they should be desired subordinately to our chief good. "First seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and all other things shall be added," saith our Saviour. And to relieve us in the troubles of this mortal state, the gospel assures us of their blessed issue at the last. The main design of philosophy was

to reconcile the mind to every condition ; that nothing might be able to discompose its tranquillity. As some high mountains that ascend above the middle region, whilst clouds charged with thunder break upon the sides, and storms encompass it below, yet the top has a pure sun and calm air. Thus the philosophers pretended to raise man to that height of virtue, that the superior part the mind, should be serene and undisturbed, whatever was done to his lower part the body. But their principles were insufficient on which they built their persuasion. Some pretended that men were abused by words, and that was the cause of their misery. The loss of estate, of relations, of health, were not real evils, but only called so. Sottish wisdom ! As if things by the change of names would alter their qualities. Call them by what soft titles you please, still they are injurious and afflictive to our nature, and to persuade the contrary is to deprive us of sense. Others tell us that the evils we suffer are fatal, and to resist inevitable destiny is to no purpose. But this is to exasperate instead of allaying our sorrows. This is to turn our fears into despair, to make an afflicted condition absolutely uncomfortable. Others direct us to look abroad into the wretched world, and compound a medicine of the miseries of others for our own griefs. But this as it is vicious in its principle, so it affords no true relief. For that another suffers in the same or different manner does not lessen the evil that oppresses me. Nay if human affections are not extinguished, by a sorrowful influence increases it. Others discourse of the vanity of riches, pleasures, dignities, and life itself, to make us quietly to part with them. But this discourse, though true and useful, yet cannot afford contentment, unless to a Christian, whose hopes extend to a future state of blessedness. For how mean soever these things be, yet, if we know no better, they are our felicity. Some attribute to naked virtue a power sufficient to support a man under the heaviest troubles. This they affirmed to be the true philosophers' stone, that purifies and exalts the basest metals, turning them into fine gold ; that enables a person not only to be content in every state, but to enjoy torments, and be pleased with the greatest disasters that befall him.* But they took so

* Vereor, ne ille plura tribuit virtuti, quam natura patiat. *Cic. lib. 4. Acad. Quest.*

high a strain, that human nature could not uphold. The indifference and equality of mind they so much pretended to, was but an empty appearance. One might discover unquiet agitations under all that feigned insensibility, and true servitude under that imaginary sovereignty of their wise man. * Indeed without the stedfast belief of another life, the reflection upon unhappy virtue inflames the wounded spirit, and kindles in the breast murmurings against providence, so that it is so far from making the afflicted happy, that it is rather the seed of new misery for the unequal distributions here. The christian religion alone affords us solid and everlasting comfort. It does not disguise the nature of things, but allows "that present afflictions are not joyful but grievous." It doth not promise an exemption from misery: nay it foretels that besides the common troubles that rain upon mankind, there are some proper to sincere christians, to which they are exposed upon the account of their holy profession. But "it assures them that all things shall work together for the good of those that love God." As in mixed bodies, the divine power is admirable, in tempering the qualities of the fighting elements in such a manner, that what in itself is a destructive contrariety, becomes only a diversity, to preserve the compounded beings that result from them. Thus the wise and gracious providence of God makes all things, even the most adverse, to conspire for the final happiness of his faithful servants. "Their light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." This makes them to "possess their souls in patience, to rejoice in hope," and to be triumphant conquerors over the greatest outward troubles. Who can dispute felicity with that person who is upon certain grounds persuaded "that nothing shall separate him from the love of God?" Nay that the worst evils he suffers promote his supreme happiness. For the afflictions that befall a christian upon the account of religion, render him more dear to God: and those that are the effects of his sins, if humbly submitted to, and improved for holy ends, confirm his faith in the

* Titus Imperator febrim nactus, cum lectica transferretur, suspexisse dicitor dimotis plagulis cælum, multumque conquestus Eripi sibi vitam immerenti, neq; enim extare ullum suum factum pænitendum, excepto duntaxat uno. *Sueton.*

divine mercy. The gospel is that paradise wherein the tree of life is, whose leaves are for the healing the nations.

The christian religion promises for the reward of obedience a blessedness most becoming the glorious goodness of God to bestow, and the reasonable creature to desire; that is, the perfection and satisfaction of his most noble faculties, in the clear vision and full enjoyment of God himself in a perfect eternal state. The heathens wretchedly mistook in their opinions about the last end of man. There is a secret instinct in the human nature towards a felicity suitable to the more excellent and divine part, but stifled under darkness and concupiscence, that is become a second nature. Reason is misled by sense after the fickle appearances, the deceitful vanishing colours of good. And this is a certain indication that man is fallen from the degree of his original perfection. For if it had been never corrupted, he should enjoy with assurance true and complete happiness: if he had been always corrupted, there would be no glimmering idea of an happiness above what this present world affords, no inclination towards it. This is the spring of his misery and sin, that the spiritual eternal good is undiscerned, unregarded, whilst he seeks for happiness in numberless vanities. The philosophers themselves are extremely divided, and are mistaken in this main point. This was indeed the master-piece for which all their philosophy was designed, and their pretences to make this discovery gave them reputation. From all parts some came to Athens, as the universal mart, to be furnished with felicity. From hence sprung the variety of sects among them: by this livery they were distinguished. For philosophy being the rule of life, is specified by the end to which it leads. From hence arose their sharp contentions, every sect being concerned to defend their palladium. And as the wasps fly about with noise, and sting those who provoke them, and make combs like bees, but without wax or honey: thus the philosophers were full of glorious presumptions, were vehement against dissenters, and had the appearances of wisdom, but afforded no certain light to direct the mind, no heavenly motives to allure the will. They were not competent nor sincere searchers after true happiness. For,

1. The darkness wherein all men are born, involved them, and without supernatural light could not be dispelled.

2. They were ambitious of superiority: every great spirit was

desirous to raise a sect, to act the part of a king in the scene of fame. Now by propounding a new object as the blessedness of man, they had the reputation of sovereign masters.

3. They drew a picture of happiness every one according to their different conceptions and desires. Epicurus set up the pleasure of sense, as the chief object. And that reason might be flexible to his inclinations, that his roses might have no prickles, to prevent any melancholy reflections after carnal enjoyments, he denied the divine providence, and the future state. It is said by some in his favour, that he intended a calm and peaceful temper of mind, a felicity refined from the dregs of sensuality. For this they allege Epicurus himself depreciating carnal pleasures, and extolling virtue as the great composer of the soul. But in vain they wash this voluptuous swine: For,

1. Those sentences of a more noble and generous strain, might, as flashes of lightning from a black cloud, break forth of his conscience in the midst of the darkness that covered it, yet sense might be his predominant principle.

2. He was a crafty spirit, * and made use of some beautiful expressions to lessen the horror that his doctrine, nakedly proposed, would cause in sober persons. Sometimes he speaks with a grave air as a philosopher, That true happiness consists in the pleasures of the mind. At other times, That there is no solid happiness but what might be tasted and enjoyed by the senses. He was a politician, and would not scandalize the severe, nor alienate the dissolute from him. † Tully observes that the secrets of his school, the pernicious lessons of sensuality were not communicated to all: but those who had intimate conversation with him, had a free indulgence for their lusts.

Aristotle places happiness in all the perfections of the body and mind, with the confluence of all external things as necessary ingredients of it. But this only respects man in the present state in the world: and were his opinion true, yet his description would cause despair of obtaining that happiness. For how could any single person expect an entire union of all such perfections in himself as are not to be found in all men together?

* *Dulces voluptates Epicurus interdum sic extenuat, ut Curium loqui putet, interdum ita laudat, ut quid præterea sit bonum neget se posse suspicari. Cic. lib. 2. de fin.*

† *Quædam arcana apud se habuisse, neq; se permittere omnibus.*

The Stoics asserted felicity to consist only in virtue. But this is contrary to reason and humanity. For the union of the physical good with the moral is requisite to give satisfaction to the faculties of man.

Plato and his followers, in whom natural reason ascended as high as in any of the Gentiles, * had a glimpse of the true blessedness of man, as consisting in his likeness to God and the enjoyment of him. But their knowledge was shadowed with much ignorance, their hopes mixed with doubtful fears. They had rather suspicious and wandering desires, than solid apprehensions and firm expectations of it.

Briefly, no sparks struck out of human intellectuals were sufficient to give light or heat, to direct in the clear way, and to animate against the intervening difficulties that hinder men in the pursuit of blessedness. This was the state of the Pagan world, till "light and immortality were brought to light through the gospel." The quality of this life is therein revealed; it is a pure and holy felicity consisting in the perpetual exercise of the most excellent actions the intelligent nature is capable of: that is, in the perfect knowledge, and love, and praises of God himself. The subject of it is the entire man, for this end the body shall be raised from its dead sleep to an eternal life. The place is the highest heavens, framed by the divine power for the seat of his majesty, the kingdom of his love, wherein he will manifest himself to his favourites. And can there be a stronger attractive, a more noble inducement to make us holy? Secular rewards, as riches, and honours, and the like, are extrinsical to the nature of goodness; and to do our duty with such low aims and expectations, is to be defective in the best part of it, the love of virtue for its inherent excellence. But the divine reward is the perfection of holiness, the glory of the soul; and the belief and regard of it has a powerful influence to make us truly good. The faith in this makes us victorious over all the charms and all the cruelties of the world. For what can possibly come into competition with a happiness infinite in its greatness and duration?

I will only add, that though heaven be so rich a jewel, that it needs no foil to set off its lustre, to those who are clear-sighted

*. *Sympos.*

to behold it; yet in a merciful compassion to man the gospel reveals what will be the recompence of wilful continued disobedience, an eternal hell, wherein the justice and power of God are terribly glorified. And what is more powerful to excite the sensual and secure, who despise the blessed hope, than the fear of an immortal death?

Now after this short delineation of the Christian religion, let reason judge whether it is the invention of men. The doctrine of it shines with so clear an evidence, the precepts are so pure, able to inspire us with true holiness, the promises are so divine, that every one who does not wilfully shut his eyes, or turn them to other things, may discern its original to be from above; that it comes from the fountain of wisdom, holiness and goodness. What are all the productions of the earth to this sacred present of heaven? If there be any shadow of virtue in other religions, here the reality is in the highest perfection, and separate from all vicious mixtures. Christianity enjoins universal sincerity and purity of heart and life. It instructs man to appear what he is, by an humble acknowledgment of his sinful unworthiness, and to be what he appears, by an inward love and real practice of that religion of which he makes a public profession. It impresses a more noble character upon moral virtues, by enjoining them from a principle of love to God, and directing their performance to his glory, than philosophy did, that commanded them only as agreeable to human reason. What are all the most beautiful excitations of philosophy to the high motives of the gospel? To apply ourselves to the writings of the wisest heathens in order to our happiness, and to neglect the scriptures, is to be guilty of worse folly than the barbarous Indians at Mexico, * who though their woods abounded with wax, the labour of the bees, yet only made use of brands, that afforded a little light with a great deal of smoke. Upon the most impartial inquiry, and exact search, reason will conclude, either there is no blessed end for which man was designed by his Maker, or the gospel only has revealed it, and the effectual means to obtain it. So that we must say with the zeal and affection of the apostles to Jesus Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

* Pet. Mart. Hist. Ind.

CHAP. III.

The external proofs of the truth of the christian religion considered. Miracles are only performed by God. Why Christianity was confirmed by them: The number of Christ's miracles, the manner of his performing them, and their certainty, considered. The miracles done by Christ to confirm his doctrine, are an authentic testimony that God approved it. The pretence of libertines, that the heathen religion was confirmed by miracles, clearly disproved. The rational assurance that we have that the Apostles were sincere and certain of the miraculous things related by them of Jesus Christ. His resurrection attested by sufficient evidence.

WE are next to consider those *external proofs* of the truth of Christianity, the works of God himself, that seal our full assurance of it. I shall instance in two; *miracles*, and the *accomplishment of prophecies*.

1. A miracle is a supernatural work that requires an extraordinary divine power to effect it. For none can derogate from the universal laws of nature, prescribed from the beginning of things and time, but the Author of it. Indeed we do not exactly know the compass of that circle wherein the spirits of darkness exercise their power. They may by the application of natural means unknown to us, produce things that may astonish, or by lying wonders deceive men: but a true miracle is a work reserved to God, and possibly to no less than infinite power. Whether it be a first or second creation, the forming a new eye, or the giving a visive power to that that was naturally blind, it can only be done by his hand. If we respect omnipotency, there is the same facility; if the thing done, there is the same difficulty in the performance. If the devils had such a power, they might create a separate kingdom, and reign there.

Now miraculous testimonies were given to confirm Christianity; that there might be a just correspondence between its doctrines and their proofs. The mysteries of the gospel in their existence are above all natural power, and in their belief above the natural understanding. All that nature can do or know, does not make them credible. Therefore it was requisite those things should be confirmed by the divine power, that transcend

the comprehension of human reason. Besides, as the mysteries of the gospel are sublime, so the rewards are future; and that the Gentiles might not pretend that the preachers of the gospel feigned another world, and a heaven, and a hell, wherein the souls and bodies of men shall be glorified or tormented according to their actions in this life, supernatural evidence of the truth of those promises and threatenings was necessary. In short, herein the divine goodness appeared; that as the true religion is necessary to the salvation of all men, so it was discernible by such signs as may convince all. For upon the sight of those divine works, the simplest people were led by the outward sense, to an inward firm faith in Jesus Christ.

These things being premised, I will take a brief view of the miracles wrought by our Saviour to give faith to his doctrine.

It is recorded of Moses who was a type of Christ, that, after his familiar converse with God, as [a man with his friend, descending from the mount, his face shone with such an excessive brightness, as it were by reflection from the face of God, that coming to the Israelites to deliver to them the divine laws, he was fain to cover it with a veil: yet some rays of that miraculous splendour were visible through that mysterious veil, to assure them it was Moses himself that directed and governed them according to God's will.

Thus when the Son of God came down from the heaven of heavens to instruct the world, he shadowed the light of the Deity with a veil of flesh; yet he was not so absolutely concealed under his humanity, but that from time to time some beams of the divine nature appeared in works so proper to God, that the apostle says, "We saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten Son of God." In the representation of our Saviour's miracles by the evangelists, we may consider their number and variety, his manner of performing them, and the certainty of them.

(1.) Their number and variety. He went about all Galilee healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases, even the most incurable; the blind, the deaf, the lame, the paralytic, the hydroptic, the leprous, the lunatic were cured. He raised the dead, and cast out devils. Besides his miraculous feeding so many thousands, his commanding the enraged winds and seas to be still, and a great calm followed; his transfiguration before his disciples, when the beauty of heaven descended on his counte-

nance to be there more beautiful, discovered the sensible presence of the Deity in him.

(2.) The manner of his performing them is very considerable. They were done in an instant, by absolute dominion over nature. Thus when he said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean," immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Thus when the faithful centurion addressed himself to him,—“only speak the word, and my servant shall be healed. He answered, be it done unto thee as thou believest; and his servant was healed,” &c. both expressions of command and empire. And his words to the blind man, “Receive thy sight,” had the same creating efficacy with those, “Let there be light, and there was light.” Thus with authority he commanded the unclean spirits, even the most furious and obstinate, and they were expelled from their mansions wherein they had revelled a long time. Thus by the mere act of his will he reversed the order of nature. When the widow’s son was borne to the grave, he only said, “Young man, I say unto thee arise; and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak.” Now in this respect, the power of miracles in Jesus Christ was transcendent above that that either Moses, or the prophets, or the apostles had. It was derived to them by favour and commission from an extrinsic superior principle, the omnipotence of God; but it was inherent in his person, the natural proper attribute of his Deity, and proved him to be the Son of God, the Lord of nature, visible in human flesh. In all places this blessed virtue proceeded from him.

(3.) The certainty of his performing them was so great, that no shadow of suspicion could remain about it. Vitruvius the master of architects gives advice to those who built temples to *Æsculapius*, * or any other of the heathen deities that were invoked to the sick, that they should choose such places as were open to the most favourable aspects and influence of the heavens, where there was a well-tempered soil, clear air, pure springs of water, that diseased persons coming from unhealthy places might obtain recovery; and what was the benefit of nature might be

* Cum enim ex pestilenti in salubrem locum corpora ægra translata fuerit, & a fontibus, salubribus aquarum usus sub ministrabuntur, celerius convalescent. Ita efficitur, ut ex natura loci majores, auctasque cum dignitate divinitas excipiat opiniones. *Lib. 1. cap. 2.*

attributed to the divine virtue of *Æsculapius*. Thus that idolater counselled for the honour of his false gods. But in this he judged aright, that the power of the Deity was believed and honoured by men proportionably to the cures that were received from him. How much more when done by an undoubted miracle? Of this the people the numerous spectators were so convinced, that they said, 'When Christ cometh, the expected deliverer, will he do more miracles than these which this man has done?' The pharisees themselves could not deny the effects, but would not acknowledge the true cause. Envy was more powerful in their breasts than the clearest evidence. Therefore to invalidate his authority, they ascribed some of his wonderful works to the prince of devils. But this pretence was so void of all reason, and full of impiety, that nothing but inveterate malice could suggest it. For would the devil destroy his own kingdom? Is he such a lover of holiness as to authorize the most perfect master of it by a compliance with his will? Those proud spirits are servile only in appearance, and when they suffer themselves to be commanded by men, it is always with design to establish and increase their own dominion. Therefore the most famous sorcerers observe some rites by the devil's prescription, and in the using of them acknowledge his power. But our Saviour had a sovereign empire over them, and ejected them not only from the bodies, but from the souls of men, subduing by his holy doctrine the power of sin, wherein the kingdom of satan consists. From hence he argues, if I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you. And hence it was, that he charges them with self-condemning obstinacy. For if the Gentiles were inexcusable for not acknowledging and honouring God, so clearly manifested in the works of nature, the Jews were as inexcusable, for rejecting Jesus Christ, so powerfully declared to be the Son of God by supernatural operations.

Add further, that in his lowest state when he seemed to be utterly forsaken of God, yet then his innocency and the divinity of his person were miraculously testified: for at his death, even insensible nature, as if it had been capable of knowledge and affection, was in the most astonishing disorder, as resenting the passion of its Lord. * The sun was eclipsed in a time and place

* That eclipse might be caused in some other extraordinary unknown manner.

against all possibility of nature. For the moon was then in opposition to it, and in its full, and in an instant passed a half circle of the heavens to interpose between the body of the sun and the earth, that the air at noon-day was darkened as at midnight. This compelled the Roman centurion to acknowledge that he "that suffered was the Son of God." And his resurrection from the grave was a visible argument to confirm his doctrine; for that God would not exert his extraordinary power to confirm a false doctrine, in a matter of infinite moment, that so nearly concerns his own glory, and the salvation of men, there is sufficient assurance from his wisdom, truth and goodness. Was there ever any prince that would permit an usurper, in his own presence to make use of his royal seal, to authorize by commission his subjects to rebel against him? And would God have suffered a deceiver to work miracles, and thereby obtain divine honour from men, the incommunicable right of the Deity? Nay, it had not been a bare permission, but a positive act of God himself, it being impossible that any other should do them. Or, would God who is the prime verity, work miracles to give credit to a lie, and violate the honour of his eternal, most perfect veracity? Or, is it consistent with his infinite goodness, to make a delusion so strong, that the most sincere would be in great danger to be overcome by it? Therefore the apostle urges it as an uncontrollable argument of our Saviour's divine mission; "Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders, and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know." These were proofs of the greatest vigour, to induce the world to believe that he came from God, to make known his counsel for the recovery of lost undone mankind.

It is said by libertines, that the heathens tell miraculous stories to confirm their religion, that their heroes descended in a right line from some deity; and not to instance in many particulars, they boasted of Apollonius Tyanæus as one that vied with Christ himself in wonderful works. But this objection is easily refuted: for if paganism had a miraculous power attending it, why did it not make use of it to discredit that power that authorized christianity in the time it made fierce war against it? If equal to it in divine power, and incomparably superior in human aids, how came it to pass that the weaker proved victorious, and

the stronger was put to flight? It is evident therefore the pretended miracles of paganism, were works of the Devil, not to be compared with what was done by an almighty hand.

If it be again objected, that the relation of the miracles as performed by Jesus Christ is from his disciples, who favoured his person and cause, and therefore may be justly suspected. I answer; the vanity of the pretence is apparent: for if they had artificially framed a narrative of extraordinary things as done by him in that time wherein they wrote, and in the view of many, how easy had it been to expose them to the just scorn and hatred of all for their notorious falsehood, and infatuated impudence? But they were never accused of this. Nay such was the number, clearness, and greatness of his miracles, that the uncontrolled fame of them forced his enemies in after ages to acknowledge their truth. The Jews in their Talmud confess he did wonders, but give such a ridiculous account of the means by which they were done, as betrays the weakness of their reason, and the strength of their malice against him. And his apostles, with their successors, in preaching the gospel, wrought miracles so frequently in the face of many nations, that those who were most obstinately averse from submitting to it, could not deny what was visible to thousands, and that miraculous power they always ascribed to the name of CHRIST. So that there is no colour for jealousy, as if his miracles recorded in the gospel were not true.

But because the resurrection of Christ is the great principle upon which all christian hopes depend, I will show that we have all the rational assurance of it, that it is capable of. This being a matter of fact done many ages past, is to be proved by testimony. And first, it is worthy of observation that the providence of God is concerned to authorize this manner of proof that is absolutely necessary for the preserving human societies. It is of little importance, whether the truth of things be discovered in speculative sciences, or the appearance of it deceive the inquirer. It is no wrong to the commonwealth, that an astronomer mistakes in his dimensions of the magnitude of the sun; for his error does not lessen its benign influences; still it shines and causes the spring and autumn. It is of little importance that a philosopher is deceived in his search after the principles of mixed bodies: for, notwithstanding his mistake, animals still live, and

move, and perform all the functions suitable to their nature. But in judgments that respect matters of fact, if the truth cannot be known by testimonies, the civil felicity cannot long subsist. For the unjust distribution of rewards and punishments is necessarily ruinous to the being of the state. And is it credible the divine providence that reaches to the smallest parts of the world in such an admirable manner, should leave the conduct of human affairs, even of the greatest moment, to a deceitful light? And that after the most diligent search and caution has been used, the result should be only wavering conjectures? This imagination is extremely injurious to his wisdom and goodness.

In particular, if we consider the number and the quality of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and the circumstances of their testimony, we shall have so clear conviction of its truth as may induce us most firmly to believe it. I do not now speak of a divine faith, that supernatural light that makes us acquiesce in things because God has revealed them; but of a rational human faith, grounded on just and powerful motives, which is preparatory for the divine.

1. The law admits two witnesses as a competent number in causes of greatest moment. Of this there were many. The approved integrity of a witness gives weight to his testimony: as on the contrary a known liar forfeits his credit so entirely, that he is not believed when he speaks true. When Demades the orator addressed himself to the Athenians, 'I call all the gods and goddesses to witness the truth of what I shall say:' The Athenians often abused by his impudent lies, presently interrupted him, 'And we call all the gods and goddesses to witness we will not believe you.' The bare word of an honest man in an important matter, persuades more than the most exquisite oaths and far fetched imprecations, by which a liar would give credit to his imposture. Now we have strong proof of the integrity of the apostles. If an inflexible fidelity and constant truth were qualities so remarkable in the community of the primitive christians, that the pagan * judges themselves were constrained to acknowledge it, certainly they were found more eminently in those by whose doctrine and example they formed themselves. And as it is impossible to possess this virtue (so strictly united to justice) in an excellent de-

* Plin. in Epist.

gree, without having all the others; so it is evident they were adorned with all moral virtues. For their lives were above the least reproach and charge of their implacable enemies: so that they were fain to make express laws against their profession, to render them guilty in appearance. Besides, the circumstances of their testimony make it very valuable.

1. It was not built on the report of others. Mere hear-say is very deceitful, and often like a contagion passes from ear to ear, and blasts the reputation of the innocent with easy and credulous persons. But a testimony from sight makes impression on the belief of wise considering men. Now we have undoubted assurance of Christ's resurrection from the clear and concurrent deposition of their senses: "What we heard, and what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have handled of the word of life," saith the apostle John.

2. The uniformity of their testimony renders it convincing. If any material contradiction be between witnesses, it is an infallible mark of their forgery. But the apostles agreed not only in the substance, but in the particularity of the fact. In vain Porphyry and Julian racked their wits to find some contrariety in their relations. An impartial inquirer must acknowledge all their objections to be mere cavils, and effects of malice.

3. There were no motives to corrupt them. For the human will is naturally moved either by attraction of some good, or aversion from some evil. A fiction is not maintained for pure love of itself, but with respect to either of those objects whether real or in appearance. The Roman histories report that Julius Proculus solemnly swore that he saw Romulus ascend to heaven: but the motive of his imposture is visible; for it was to prevent a great disorder among the people. But it is very evident that nothing desirable in the world had the least influence upon the apostles. Nay on the contrary, whatever was terrible to nature, discouraged them. They suffered all temporal evils, even death itself, for this testimony. And this last proof confirms all the others; they are called martyrs by way of excellency, who have sealed the truth with their blood. Now what can be added to give us full and entire faith in their testimony? In great and difficult cases, suspected persons are put to torture for the discovery of truth. The apostles were tried by the sharpest sufferings, yet declared

the resurrection of their divine master with unfainting perseverance. What shadow of doubt can remain after such clear evidence of their sincerity? Let sober reason judge: whether the matter is capable of proof more strong and convincing? If it be said they were deceived with an illusion, either being distempered or in a dream; both the pretences are most absurd and incredible. For the operations of the external senses may be infallibly discerned by their proper characters from those of the imaginations. Indeed, if the mind be in disorder, either from some more fixed and tenacious cause, or from sleep, the influences of reason are suspended, or only some faint rays appear, and are suddenly extinguished, so that it can make no true judgment of things. In this state, the imagination draws all the vigour of the soul to itself, and the phantasms are made so bright by the heat of the spirits in the brain, that those painted scenes seem to be as real as the substantial objects, we see, hear and touch. But sound reason can reflect upon itself, and extend its view to the operations of all the other faculties, and observe the just and certain difference between chimæras in the imagination, and things really existent. It comprehends distinctly and with assurance, that it is not disturbed, and that the internal and external senses are disposed for their regular operations. It considers that the pageants of fancy moving in a dream vanish in a moment upon waking. But real effects perceived by the senses in their full exercise are more constant and durable. One may be wounded in a dream, yet feel not loss of blood or strength when he is awake. But the wounds received in a combat are sometimes rebellious against the most potent remedies. Now to apply this to the present subject.

Is it in the least degree probable that a vain shadow in a dream should make an indelible impression on the memories of the apostles, and their waking thoughts should not discover the deceit? Nay that it should inspire them with invincible courage to assert that Christ was truly risen? Or who can with the least colour of reason accuse the apostles of simplicity or any disorder of mind, when such an equal, uniform, and strong light shines in all their writings? Whereas the discourses of fools or distracted persons are unshaped abortions of the mind, beginnings without a regular progress, or if there be any coherence it is short, and

always attended with some notable extravagance. Besides, the constant order of their lives and actions was a certain proof of the composedness and wisdom of their minds.

To sum up briefly what is convincing that the apostles were sincere and certain in their testimony. How could they be deceived when they saw him do miracles, or by his power did the like? Did they all dream in a night, that they saw him appear after his resurrection? What could impress on them such a strong belief of that, of which the senses were the proper judges? Or could they conspire to invent such a falsehood, and so easily to be convinced, with the least rational hope that the world should believe them? How was it likely, considering the variable humours of men, but that some of themselves either by violent fears, or attractive hopes, should be prevailed on to discover the fiction, and leave their party? What could inspire them with such a false security, to despise the greatest dangers, and such a foolish presumption, to undertake the greatest difficulties? How could they expect to induce the world to believe in and worship one ignominiously put to death? After such a convincing evidence, what can reason, nay suspicion object with any colour to weaken their testimony? The motives of credibility are so strong that we may be as truly satisfied of the reality of the things related by the apostles, as if we had been spectators of them ourselves.

CHAP. IV.

The accomplishment of prophecies concerning the Messiah, in Jesus of Nazareth, is an unanswerable proof that he was sent from God to redeem the world. The circumstances of his birth, the actions of his life, his sufferings and death clearly foretold. The irreparable destruction of the state of the Jews was foretold as the just punishment for their rejecting of the Messiah. That terrible event is a continual proof that Jesus Christ was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God. The converting of the Gentile world to the knowledge and service of the true God by the Messiah was foretold in the scriptures; and is visibly fulfilled. The accomplishment of this prophecy by the most unlikely means, against the strongest opposition, is manifestly the effect of divine power, and is sufficient to convince the Jewish and heathen infidelity of the truth of christianity.

THE accomplishment of prophecies concerning the Messiah, his coming into the world, the work he should do, his sufferings, and the consequences of them, afford undeniable proof that Jesus of Nazareth came from God for our salvation. Prescience of things to come, and independent on the settled course and order of natural causes, is an incommunicable prerogative of God. His eye only can pierce the thick veil of futurity. He has an open unconfined prospect of all things that were, are, and shall be. Such perfection of knowledge transcends angelical minds. It is more easy for the devil by an adventurous imitation to counterfeit miracles, than to give a clear and distinct prediction of things to come that depend on free agents. From hence it was that he gave responsals ambiguously, to conceal his ignorance of future events, and left those who consulted his oracles dubious and hovering in what sense to understand them. God alone could instruct the prophets to foretel things at such a distance, especially considering some of them are supernatural, and others contingent from the wavering of second causes. Now the several prophecies of Jesus Christ if united together, make such an entire description of him, that they seem rather historical narratives of what is past, than predictions of what was to come. According to the prophecies, he was born of a virgin, a branch of the almost extinguished family of David, born in Bethlehem, ushered in by a forerunner, meek, lowly, just, and a worker of miracles.

Therefore when John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to inquire whether he was the Messiah that should come, our Saviour gave no direct answer in words, but referred them to his works, that gave a full and real testimony concerning him, "Go tell John the things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them:" that comparing his miraculous operations for the recovery of human bodies, with the prophecies, there being a perfect agreement between them, and both undoubtedly from God, they might by that clear and certain character acknowledge him to be the promised Messiah. It is an observation of St. Austin, * that the Son of God foreseeing the perverse interpretations that his enemies would make use of to darken the lustre of his miracles, accusing him as a solemn magician that wrought by the force of enchantment, that such a false persuasion might not prevail, sent the prophets before his coming into the world. From hence the saint argues to repress those impious calumnies: if by magical arts he did such wonders as to conciliate divine honour to him even since his death, was he a magician before he was born? And did he know the succession of all things in his life before he lived, that by an impossible miracle he predicted them to Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and others? Having thus argued, the saint turns himself to those infidels, as Christ, to the "pharisees, looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," and said, O dead wretch, hear the prophets.

But above all, his death and passion (the substance of the gospel) is most exquisitely drawn with the lines of his own blood. Daniel foretells the time; Dan. 9. 26. Zachary as if present at the execrable contract between Judas and the high-priests, tells us exactly the price of the treason, Zech. 11. 12. and then as if transported to Calvary, he saw his side opened with the spear, and notes it in these words, "they shall look on him whom they have pierced." David, as if he had stood at the foot of the cross in the hour of his

* Prævidens dominus Jesus impios quosdam futuros, qui miraculis ejus calumniantur, magicis artibus tribuendo, prophetas ante præmisit. Numquid si magus erat, & magicis artibus fecit, ut coleretur & mortuus, magus erat antequam natus? O homo mortuæ & vermescendo calumniose, prophetas audi, prophetas lege. *Tract in Joan.*

suffering, relates the manner of them in the person of our crucified Redeemer; Psal. 22. "they pierced my hands and my feet:" then the disjoining of his parts by the torture, "I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me:" his hanging naked on the cross, "they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture:" the bitter draught they offered him, they "gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink:" the blasphemous derision of the the priests and people the spectators of his death, "all that see me, laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him:" his words spoken in the height of his distress, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The prophet Isaiah represents the ignominy and torments of his passion, Isa. chap. 52. 53. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting:" and by the eyes of his mind saw him crucified between two thieves; "he was named with transgressors:" and as present at his most affectionate dying prayer for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" observe, "that he made intercession for transgressors." Thus as several painters that would draw divers copies from the same excellent original, are intent to view its various aspects, some directly, some on this and the other side: so the prophets, as if they had been the spectators of his cruel sufferings, copied from the life, every one that part that the holy spirit assigned to them. Now how was it possible, if not instructed by omniscience, that being so distant in time and place, and so long before the accomplishment, they should concur in such an exact description of what should befall the Messiah? Men are not prophets by the light of reason: as nature is not subjected to their power to work miracles, neither is futurity open to their view, to compose an history of things to come. The death of Christ depended on several causes; men, devils, and God himself concurred for divers ends in the same event. The two prime conspirators against his life, Lucifer and Caiaphas, were moved both from reasons of state to secure their own. The devil to maintain his cruel empire which for so many ages he had usurped in the world. For our Saviour having with authority cast out legions of his ministering spirits from those who were miserably possessed by them,

he was in fear of losing his power. Besides, he foresaw that if Christ were the Son of God, the killing of him would bring such a crimson guilt upon the Jews, that no less punishment than their rejection would follow: and so God should lose his peculiar people. Caiaphas excited the council to devote him as a sacrifice to preserve their nation from ruin: for their safety depending on their homage to the Romans, to prevent the jealousies that might arise by the fame of his mighty works, and by the people's attendance on him, that were fed by his miracles, they concluded on it as a necessary expedient, that Christ should die, and all suspicions be removed with him. Thus men and devils were the instruments, but God appointed that great event. The storm fell from heaven upon him for our sins. It is therefore expressly said, "he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God;" who over-ruled the train of disorders, the work of their cruel malice, for contrary ends than were designed for them: for the devils were cast out of their kingdom, the Jews deprived of their liberty, and the kingdom of Christ established for ever. Now who could read in the mind of God his free decrees? Even the angels of light that always see his face cannot without a revelation of them. None "but the spirit that searches the deep things of God," could make the discovery? And who could foresee that the Messiah so often promised to the Jews, so impatiently expected, and ardently desired, should be so fiercely rejected by them? That his death should be the effect of his own love, so of their hatred? None but God to whom all the periods of time are equally present, and who is more intimate with the counsels and passions of men than their own souls are, could predict it. He communicated some rays of his prescience to holy men, who foretold that obscurest contingency. From hence it follows that the clear testimonies of the prophets exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, are an unanswerable demonstration that he was the expected deliverer to restore the world.

2. The universal and irreparable destruction of the state of the Jews, foretold as the just punishment of their rejecting the Messiah, is another illustrious proof of the divinity of his person and doctrine.

To represent all the characters of that vengeance as they are set down by Josephus, an eye-witness and historian of it, would lengthen this discourse beyond the limits intended. It is sufficient to observe,

(1.) That all the severe scourges of God met in a direful conjunction against them. The most affrighting prodigies were his forerunners; a flaming sword brandished in the heavens, and monsters born on the earth: and war, famine, pestilence and fire were his attendants. Those who escaped the sword, were consumed by famine; and those who were preserved from cruel war and famine, were swept away by the pestilence, or devoured by the merciless flames. Wherever they turned their eyes, death in terrible shapes appeared.

(2.) All these judgments were inflicted at once upon them in the heaviest degrees. The sword never made a greater destruction of men than in Jerusalem: here were rivers of blood, there mountains of carcasses. In some places nothing but silence and horror amongst the dead, in others the cries and groanings of the dying. Innumerable were massacred by the rage of sedition amongst themselves. And when the mild conqueror would have spared them, yet by an unparalleled fierceness they would rather perish in an obstinate resistance. The famine was so extreme, as compelled even tender mothers to eat the flesh of their miserable children. The fire consumed the city from one end to the other, without leaving any part entire. The temple, the sanctuary of religion, and image of heaven where God so long had dwelt, had been served and praised, and rendered his oracles, was not exempted from the fury of the fire.

(3.) Their calamity was extreme and irreparable. The first desolation by the Chaldeans, so compassionately recorded by Jeremiah, was not comparable in the degrees and continuance to this second by the Romans, of which CHRIST himself was the chief mourner, and made lamentation. Then they were transported together, and not to a very rigorous nor perpetual servitude in Babylon. After seventy years they recovered their liberty, and were restored to their native land. But in the last, the captives were dispersed among divers people; a sad prognostic that they should never be joined again in one society. The ruins of the nation were so great, that the pieces of it are scattered all over the world. Wherever a Jew is found, there is a stone of ruined Jerusalem never to be rebuilt. In short, that wretched nation is rent into innumerable parts, and exposed to the contempt and hatred of all. As the body of a traitor is quartered, and the parts hung up in several places of public view, to

signify the horror of his crimes in the severity of his punishment: God has taken away all the marks of his alliance with them. No distinction of their tribes remain, no observance of their legal ceremonies, no priests, no altars, no sacrifices, no prophets nor miracles; in short, there is no true worship among them, no God but angry and revenging their bloody impieties. And which is most worthy of consideration, the Romans that conquered them have lost their empire, and the nations which were subdued by their arms, have recovered their liberty: but the Jews after sixteen hundred years are still miserable. Now is not this judgment of God upon them a dreadful proof of the extremity of their wickedness in crucifying JESUS CHRIST, and that consequently he was, as he declared himself to be, the Son of God, and that his office and doctrine were from heaven. Never before did the wrath of God break forth in such a fierce manner against a sinful nation. Therefore it is represented under the image of the final doom, when justice armed with flames "shall devour the ungodly," and the whole world become a theatre of terrors. And never was any other nation guilty of such an high provocation: for the Son of God descended but once among men to be personally crucified. The singularity of the punishment is a visible instructive sign of their transcendent crime. Immediately upon their pronouncing the capital sentence against him on earth, their utter ruin was pronounced in heaven. And the execution of the sentence was deferred no longer, but till the elect of that people were brought in, and by the preaching and excellent miracles of the apostles, the resurrection of Christ, and the truth of the gospel were confirmed, and thereby a beginning and form given to the new christian church. Now they have written on their foreheads in very legible characters, the fatal curse which their fathers pronounced concerning Jesus Christ, "His blood be on us, and our children." When Moses with indignation for their idolatry, broke the tables of the law, God re-established them, but when for a greater guilt God himself broke them, there is no possible reintegration.

If it be said, that it is not necessary to attribute this ruin of the Jews to the particular vengeance of God, but only to the instability of human things, wherein such disastrous revolutions sometimes happen.

I answer, that although divine justice was so visible in their

astonishing destruction, that * Titus himself refused a triumphal crown after his complete victory, declaring that he was but the instrument of God's anger, who was the invisible emperor in that bloody expedition; yet to force an acknowledgment of it from all that are not wilfully blind, it was foretold when the Jews were in peace, and their killing the Messiah specified, as the meritorious cause wherein that terrible effect was included: thus our Saviour in the parable of the husbandmen and vineyard, after they had put to death the master's son, he adds, "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and give the vineyard to others." And upon his drawing near to the city of "Jerusalem, he wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." This was also foretold by Moses in all the terrible circumstances: "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed; which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land; which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege; and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee." Deut. 28. Such was the threatening, and the event was correspondent in all the degrees of misery. Which as it demonstrates the truth of the prophecy, so it may instruct us how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

3. The converting of the Gentile world to the saving knowledge of God by the Messiah was foretold in the scriptures. The beams of this glorious truth were gradually dispensed to the la-

* Philost. vit. Apoll. lib. 6.

raelites as their weak understandings could sustain it. When the covenant was made with Abraham, God declared in express terms, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the world be blessed." That seed was the Messiah, not the people of the Jews descended from Abraham: for they were so far from a universal blessing to the world, that on the contrary they vainly presumed that God for their sakes despised the rest of mankind. And indeed before the coming of Christ they were an inclosed garden, the peculiar people of God, and without the compass of Judea sin reigned absolutely and universally. Now that promise clearly signifies, that the favour and blessing of God that he conferred upon Abraham in making known to him his will, and promising to be his God, and of his posterity, should one day be extended to all nations, by calling them to his knowledge and service: to this agrees the prophecy of Jacob: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, till Shilo come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be:" Gen. 49. 10. that is, the Gentiles shall be converted from their idols to the true God by the Messiah, whom the Jews acknowledge to be signified by that title. And Moses introduces God as complaining of the idolatry and ingratitude of the Jews, and declaring, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities, and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, and I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Deut. 32. 21. The external covenant between God and his people is represented by the union of marriage, to signify the duty they owe to God, the highest honour, the most ardent affections, and the benefits they receive from him. Therefore when the Jews gave divine adoration, the highest respects of religion, to idols, they provoked God to jealousy; and he threatens he would break his alliance with them, and give his heart and love to those which were not a people; and by the law of counter-passion they should be provoked to jealousy. It is very visible these expressions signify the calling of the Gentiles. And David by the same inspiration, in many psalms celebrates the kingdom of the Messiah. In Psal. 22. he is introduced, speaking, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation; all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." And in the 67. Psal. "God

be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us." Selah. "That thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. The prophet Isaiah in his revelations clearly speaks of the great design of God to bring the Gentiles to his service. Thus in the second chapter it is prophesied; "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Lord, and the sword of the Lord out of Jerusalem."

And among all the rest none is more clear and express than what is recorded in Isa. 49. There first the Messiah is represented as declaring his commission from God to go to the people of Israel; "The Lord hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name, and he said unto me, Thou art my servant in whom I will be glorified." And after complains of the obstinacy of the ungrateful synagogue; "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with God." And immediately after it is added, "And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, it is a light thing 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, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth." This oracle is precise and full; for it speaks of the nations in opposition to the tribes of Israel, and directly foretels that the Jews would neglect the instructions of the Messiah, and that upon their infidelity God would by the Messiah give saving knowledge to all nations. And in the same sense he speaks in the 54th chapter: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud thou that didst not travel with child: for more are the children of the desolate than of the married, saith the Lord."

Who is the desolate and barren, but the Gentiles without God in the world, whilst the Jews were honoured and blessed in the mystical marriage with him? And who are the children, of the forsaken that should be far more numerous than those of the married, but the believers of the christian church, in opposition to the Jewish church? And the other succeeding prophets concur in this prediction. Malachi the last speaks of it in such express terms, as are capable to convince any that does not wilfully renounce the use of his eyes and understanding. After God is introduced rejecting the Jews and their temple service; "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hands." He adds, to signify the calling of a new church, for "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." Thus that great wonder was clearly foretold by the prophets, and as a work to be performed by the glorious power of God. And accordingly it is accomplished. For who but God could have inspired the apostles to undertake an enterprize so contrary to human prudence, being equally dangerous and impossible? And who else could have made it successful beyond all imagination? When the pride of Pharaoh was humbled, and his strength broken by the most despicable creatures, even the magicians were compelled to acknowledge it to be the finger of God: but his arm was revealed when the spiritual Pharaoh with all his powers of darkness were overcome by such weak instruments. What furious winds from all parts of the world conspired to extinguish the first springing light of the gospel? The heathen emperors destroyed innumerable persons, presuming to drown the memory of Christ in the blood of the christians. But such were the faith and love of believers of all conditions to their crucified Redeemer, that with the same joy they ran to suffer the most terrible punishments, as if they had been to receive crowns. In vain the strongest combinations were made against the truth. For the knowledge of the only true God, and his incarnate Son Jesus Christ, overcame impiety with all its idols, and ignorance with all its numerous masters. What is become of all the heathen deities, so honoured, so feared, so obstinately defended? Where are their altars, their statutes,

their sacrilegious priests and sacrifices? They are buried in the ruins of their own temples, in the darkness of eternal oblivion. Where are all the sects of philosophers, the Platonists, the Peripatetics, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the rest that filled Greece with their fame, and so many volumes with their fancies and error? Like a torrent that rolls down with great noise from the top of a mountain; so for a time the speculations of their lofty minds poured along in a flood of swelling frothy eloquence; but now (and for how many ages since?) the very channel is dried up wherein they ran, so that scarce any visible ruins remain in Athens itself of the schools where they taught. The greatest among them, * Plato, adorned with the title of divine, could never see his commonwealth, framed by him with so much study, to be established in one city. Whereas if we consider the gospel of Christ, it is hard to determine whether the doctrine be more simple, or the apostles the first masters of it to outward appearance; yet without learning or human strength, in a short space they triumphed over the eloquence of the Greeks, † the power of the Romans, the rage of barbarous nations. They abrogated laws, changed customs, and renewed the face of the world. In this the prophetic parable was fulfilled, "The kingdom of heaven," that is, the dispensation of the gospel, "is like to a grain of mustard-seed;" one of the smallest grains, but of that spirit and quality that it suddenly springs up and spreads abroad.

This happy and stupendous success of the disciples of Jesus Christ, considered in itself, is an unanswerable proof that the christian religion came from heaven. For it was only possible to the divine power. It is no wonder the religion of Mahomet extended and established its conquests in many countries: for

* ἐν τοῖς γράμμασιν αφεῖς τὴν πολιτείαν, ἔτω κατελύσε. Chrys. de la. Paul. 4.

† Ὁ ταν ἔν δὲ ὁ κερύτλιον ιδιότης ἡ καὶ πένης καὶ ἄσημῳ δὲ τὸ καὶ πτόμενον ἐκέπαγαγόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ σκανδαλον ἔχον χον καὶ διακύνοντες πανήλης, καὶ ἀδυνεῖς, καὶ ἔθενῳ καὶ κίνδυνοι ἐπολληλοι καὶ νυνιχεῖς, καὶ τοῖς διδασκάλοις καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς, καὶ ὁ κατεγγελλομενος, εἰσαυρομενος τὶ τὸ πωήσαν κρατήσσειν ἐκ εὐδῆλον ὅτι θεία τις καὶ ἀπόρητῳ δυναμὶς, παντάπῃ δηλον. *Ibid.*

that seducer persuaded the barbarous people by force of arms, they must be his disciples or slaves. And can the mind form a clear judgment, or the will make a free choice, when under a tyrannous necessity of compliance, or losing all the comforts of life? Can violence and cruelty produce a rational faith? That may force them to a counterfeit compliance, but cannot make men sincerely believe; it is apt to breed form without, and atheism within. Now that a persecuted religion should live and flourish in the midst of flames, is as truly admirable as if a little stream should pass through an arm of the ocean, retaining its freshness and purity in the midst of salt and turbid waters. That when the minds of men were prepossessed with inveterate opinions contrary to its supernatural mysteries, and their wills overruled by carnal affections utterly averse from its holy precepts, the world was captivated to the belief and obedience of it, is the most noble effect of omnipotence. For other miracles, though above the laws of nature, yet were on the lower order of creatures without life and sense; but this internal miracle was wrought on the minds and hearts of men. To raise the dead, to calm a storm, to suspend the force of fire, to change waters into blood, is not so glorious a work as the converting rebellious souls to God, and making them a willing people to his holy laws. And if we further consider the prophecies so many ages before concerning it, and observe the harmony betwixt the works and word of God, there results a demonstration as clear and strong as is possible. The prediction and accomplishment are equally divine. The success justifies the truth of the prophecy, and the truth of the prophecy justifies the divinity of the christian religion. For by the apostles and their successors the heathens were turned from idols, to the service of one God the creator of the world: which was foretold by the prophets, not only as a thing that should arrive, but to be performed by the power of God. To ascribe then this glorious work to human artifice, as if his providence had been prevented by others, from doing that that he promised should be done by his own power, is so directly contrary to his wisdom and his truth, that common reason abhors the thoughts of it. Therefore the christian religion is divine, having God for its author. Thus the truth of the gospel is victorious over the Jewish, or the profane infidel.

It may be argued against the Jews, that their God foretold his

Messiah should convert the nations. No other but one authorized from above could do it. Jesus Christ has done it, therefore he is the Messiah. And consequently they are either blind with prejudice, or maliciously deny the known truth. To profane infidels it may be urged, none but the divine providence could foretel so great and marvellous a change of the world, none but the divine power could effect it, therefore it was the true God that made the project and event so exactly to correspond in all things.

Add further, that by comparing the prophecies of Christ and his kingdom with their accomplishment, the two sorts of enemies against the gospel, are made useful to convince one another. The Pagans by the Jews, that these things were foretold, the Jews by the Pagans, that these things were fulfilled. * St. Austin relates that the heathens seeing the exact agreement between the prophecies in the Old Testament so clear in words, and their accomplishment in the New so clear in the effects, had nothing to reply, but that they were written after the things were done, and feigned to be predictions of ancient date. † As Virgil weaving fables of Æneas, feigned him to be in the Elisian fields, and to receive from Anchises a prediction of his descendants in a long succession and order of men and times; which was the story of what was actually passed when he wrote it. In answer to this pretence, he breaks out with wonder and joy, *O gloria regis nostri!* the cause is gained, and the victory of truth could not be more glorious. For whereas the many nations in Europe, Asia, Africa, subdued by the arms of the Romans, were compelled to observe the rites of their religion: the Jews only were permitted to enjoy their sacred books, and their own worship, and were dispersed into all countries. And thus by the admirable counsel of God, they give credit to the gospel among the Gentiles. For if we consider the reverence they bore to the writings of the prophets, that with the greatest care they have

* Aliquando Pagani faciunt nobis hujusmodi questionem, cum vident quæ scripta sunt sic impleri, ut negari omnino non possint. Audent, ut dicant videtis ita fieri, & tanquam prædicta sint, conscripsistis. *Serm. 67. Divers.*

† Sparsi sunt ubique Judæi, portantes codices, quibus Christus prædicatur. Si enim in uno loco essent terrarum, non adjuverant testimonio prædicationem Evangelii quæ fructificat toto orbe terrarum. *Serm. 67. Div.*

preserved them as the most precious inheritance left by their fathers, and their mortal hatred of Jesus Christ and his gospel, that willingly they would spend their blood to deface the memorials of it, it is an invincible argument that the predictions concerning the state of the christian church recorded in their scriptures, are sincerely delivered, and of divine authority. This their malice is an advantage to the faith of the gospel, and by constraint they are the great confirmers of it. This is sufficient to reduce the heathens to silence and confusion. And the Pagan being convinced by the books of the Jews, * the Jew may be convinced by the testimony of the Pagans: for if the records so jealously kept by that nation were from divine inspiration, if they contain ancient prophecies which the heathens see verified in the gospel and the christian church, why do not the Jews acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the promised Messiah? If the veil were not taken from Moses' face, and laid on their hearts; they must clearly see that the "light of the Gentiles is the glory of Israel." It is equally unreasonable to doubt with the atheist that the Messiah was ever promised, or to believe with the Jews he is yet to come.

* *Ambos inde convinco: Judæum, quia id prophetatum, & impletum ego cognovi: Paganum, quia ego hac non convici.*

CHAP. V.

The testimony produced by St. John for the proof of Christianity, briefly considered. The witness from heaven, the Father, Word and Spirit; the witnesses on earth, the Spirit, Water and Blood, conspire in declaring JESUS CHRIST to be the Son of God, and Saviour of men. An answer to objections against the doctrines of the Trinity, the divine incarnation, and the mean state and sufferings of the Son of God in the world. The conclusion. The gospel so proved, deserves our firmest assent and adherence to its doctrines. Carnal or spiritual lusts hinder the belief of it. It sets before us the most powerful motives to love God. We are obliged by the strongest reasons to obey its precepts.

THE sum of all that has been said, is comprised in the testimony that St. John produces to prove that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world." This I will briefly open: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." All the divinity gave testimony of this important truth. The Father not only by the miracles wrought by his power to confirm the mission of Christ, but (which is here principally intended) by a voice from heaven: first at his baptism, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And at his transfiguration before some of his disciples, a shining cloud, the sign of the divine presence, encompassed them, and a voice came forth of the cloud, "This is my well-beloved Son, hear him." Upon this glorious voice they were struck with such an impression of fear that they fell on their faces. And when our Saviour near his passion prayed, "Father, glorify thy name, a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it, and will glorify it." Now can there remain any doubt after such an high attestation from the most sovereign authority?

The Son also, besides the perfect holiness of his life, the exquisite wisdom of his doctrine, the wonders of his works, his resurrection from the dead, that were authentic proofs of his celestial person and calling, after his ascension gloriously appeared

from heaven in divers visions to the preachers of his gospel. To Saul in his journey to Damascus, calling to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." This is an unexceptionable testimony that he is the Son of God, being risen from the dead, and returned to heaven from whence he thus discovered himself. Now that this was real and no fantastic illusion is evident by the marvellous effects of it. Those who were companions in the journey were seized with great terror, and himself struck blind by the overpowering splendour of the apparition. But especially the effects of it upon his soul are convincing, who it was that spake to him. For Saul was by sect a pharisee, that of all others most passionately adhered to the Jewish religion: by temper hot and violent, by profession a persecutor of the christians. One that breathed forth threatening and slaughter, that excited the fury of the highpriests, solicited their cruelty. In short, a fierce spirit that envied Nero the title of the first persecutor of the church. Yet this man by this vision and voice from heaven, of a furious persecutor in an instant became a zealous apostle; of a wolf became a pastor. He presently expressed his entire submission, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is nothing so hard to do, nothing so dreadful to suffer, but I will readily undertake for thine honour, and the propagating thy truth. Now from whence came this change so strange, so new, in a person confirmed in the opposite party? From whence this resignation of will so entire and perfect, so unexpected and sudden? What gave him courage to contradict to their faces the highpriests, whose instrument he was, and declare that Jesus whom they called a deceiver, was the Son of God, and their judge? What animated him to appear before kings and emperors, to testify this dangerous truth? What made him with unparalleled activity, with the most ardent affections, propagate the gospel, and after a thousand perils by sea and land, a thousand disgraces and injuries, at last to confirm the faith of Christ with his blood? It is therefore past all contradiction that he had the greatest assurance that the Son of God spake to him.

Another vision of the WORD from heaven was to St. John, when he was pleased to reveal to him the future state of his church, its combats and victories: he then appeared in a form expressive of his majesty, power, and providence, requisite for

the ordering all the great events that should befall it : and said, " I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I live for ever, and have the keys of hell, and of death : " wherein he appropriates to himself the incommunicable titles of the Deity ; and then declares those two astonishing miracles, that the Prince of Life that had an eternal principle of it in himself, was dead ; and that one who had been dead, was alive. This riddle the gospel unfolds ; the Son of God was made man, and by that admirable union allied eternity and time, life and death together. As it is a common form of speech, that a man dies when the body is deprived of life, though the soul be immortal : so it was true, the Son of God died when his body was crucified, though he was incapable of the least diminution of his divine life. And after three days he rose by the divine power to enjoy an immortal life ; " and have the keys of hell, and death. " The irresistible force of death all men must yield to, and from the grave there's no redemption by finite power. But Jesus Christ has sovereign authority and power to open the grave, and raise the dead to an happy immortality. This glorious appearance made St. John to fall as dead at his feet, and could not recover himself, till assured by the reviving words of his favour.

The Spirit also appeared from heaven to give testimony concerning the divine person and office of Christ : first, by descending as a dove on him when he was baptized. This was the completion of the prophecy ; " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to publish deliverance to the captives. " And in the second of the Acts the Spirit descended in the form of fiery tongues upon the apostles, to qualify them for preaching the gospel to the world : and it is worthy of observation, that the apostles were before this very defective in wisdom and courage, so that their divine master, though goodness itself, yet taxed them for their stupidity, and in his sufferings they all forsook him. But after the effusion of the Spirit upon them, they were endued with that admirable wisdom and resolution, that nothing could gainsay and overcome. They presently spake in various languages the things concerning Jesus Christ, that the world was astonished, and many converted by this testimony from God, for the honour of our Saviour, and others confounded in their obstinacy. Now

since this miraculous descent of the Spirit was to ratify the promise that he made to them, "If I go away, I will send to you another comforter:" what more clear and valuable testimony can we have that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world? If infidelity should reply, if we had heard these voices, and seen those glorious visions, we should be convinced; but what assurance have we there is no deceit in these relations? I answer, there never was clearer ground of the belief of any thing done without the compass of our own senses, than of what the apostles testify, as hath been evidently proved before. And certainly as those who saw and heard those things, were by the divine characters in the external objects, and by their efficacy on their spirits, fully persuaded they were not deceived; so we have as strong proofs that they did not deceive us in their reports.

I shall briefly consider the other testimonies. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The spirit is to be considered in two different manners in the testimonies attributed to him, either in respect of those representations by a dove and fiery tongues, or in respect of his virtues and influences communicated to the christian church: the first was his testimony from heaven; the second his testimony on earth. And these were his extraordinary gifts, so liberally dispensed at the first preaching of the gospel: "To one was given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith;" that is, extraordinary confidence in the divine power, for the producing miraculous effects; "to another the gift of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues." Now because these operations more eminently declare the presence and power of the spirit than his ordinary graces, they are called by that name. For understanding the second witness, the water, two things are observable.

1. That in the rituals of Moses, frequent washings were enjoined for the purifying of the Jews from legal pollutions contracted by them. And as those corporeal stains were resemblances of the vicious habits of the mind; so the cleansing by water was typical of sanctifying grace that purifies the heart. And for this reason under the new covenant to represent the

sanctification of christians by an outward sign, baptism in water was appointed.

2. The apostle John in the narrative of the sufferings of Christ, tells us that a soldier pierced his side with a spear, so that "blood and water came out." This is not recited by St. John merely as a circumstance of the history, or as a certain proof of his death, but the following words "he that saw this, testifies it, and his testimony is worthy of belief; and he knows that he says true, that you may believe," declare it to be of singular consequence. And accordingly he says, "that our Saviour came by water and blood," with respect to that which was done at his crucifixion, which was so ordered by divine wisdom for high ends: that is, the water issuing out of his side, was a fit emblem of that sanctifying grace that is given to all that have communion with him in his death.

3. For the testimony of the blood, it is also to be observed, that by the Mosaic institution daily sacrifices were offered up, and a most solemn one, by the highpriest in the day of atonement, to expiate the guilt of ceremonial uncleanness, and to restore those who for that were excluded from external communion with God in the sanctuary. Now as that legal guilt arising from those outward pollutions, and the separation of those who were so polluted, from the service of God, was a representation of the moral guilt and punishment that follows the vicious habits and actions of men; so the shedding the blood of the sacrifice and offering, was typical of the true propitiation that was to be made by the blood of Christ. And this is peculiarly remarked by the apostle, that "Jesus came not only by water, but by water and blood; and it is the spirit that testifies of it, and the spirit is the truth." By which we must understand something distinct from the former, that is, that the flowing of his blood signified the reconciling efficacy of his death, by satisfying divine justice, and consequently the remission of sins given to those who believe in him. Now briefly, to show the force of their conspiring testimony that Jesus is the Son of God and our Redeemer, these things may be considered absolutely in themselves, or as the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. In the last respect they afford us a great assurance of this truth. For all was expressly foretold. "And it shall come to pass in the

last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy." This promise was universally acknowledged to refer to the coming of the Messiah. For that of water, (that is, sanctification) not only the washings under the law were figures of it, but it was also clearly prophesied of in many places, and most expressly in Ezekiel, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." And for the third testimony, besides that the typical blood of the Messiah ran down from all the sacrifices, it was also foretold expressly by Isaiah what his sufferings should be, and the benefits accruing from them.

Now if we compare the oracle with the event, who can justly doubt that the Messiah is come? But if we consider the things themselves they afford an uncontrollable testimony of Christ's divine mission. Compare the primitive church either with the Jews or the Gentiles, and see the difference between them. The spirit that was communicated but as it were in a few drops to the Jews, after the ascension of Christ fell in a main shower upon the christian church, enriching them with supernatural gifts: some favoured with revelations of sublime truths, above the discovery of the human understanding; some foretelling things to come that were beyond the discovery of the most sharp-sighted reason; some speaking diverse languages wherein they had never been instructed; some having such an extraordinary faith in the divine power and goodness, that innumerable miracles were done by them in the name of Christ. If we look into the state of the Gentiles, how thick and prodigious was the darkness that overspread that chaos of impiety? In the Roman empire, that comprised the flower of wit and learning, what foolish and extravagant opinions of the Deity were commonly received? What idolatries, what impurities, what abominations were freely practised? But by the preaching of the gospel how clearly were the minds of men instructed in the true knowledge of God? And what a change was made in their lives? The world that was as

a barren desert, was suddenly changed into a paradise, fruitful in all good works. Innocence, humility, purity, justice, charity, love to God, resignation to his will, were eminently visible in all nations, and all sorts of persons that were converted to the faith of Christ. Now who caused such a marvellous and holy revolution in the world but God? What less than a divine power could raise men above sense, and make them victorious over the lusts of corrupt nature, fortified by custom, a second nature? Is it conceivable, supposing the doctrine of Christ were not from heaven, that it should produce such admirable effects? And is it conceivable that God would adorn with all his graces the image of his own excellency, his most precious benefits, those who did not honour him according to his will? Can there be found such astonishing contrarieties joined together, as the most impious error and depravation of the mind, with the greatest purity and rectitude of the will and affections? For if Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, those who worshipped him were in a mortal delusion.

The third testimony the apostle produces is the blood: that is, peace with God and conscience, the blessed fruit of justification by faith in the blood of Christ. The heathen world was in a dark state of fears, or slept securely in the shadow of death. Some were in a hectic trembling, continually haunted with the apparition of their sins, as so many infernal furies: others, though guilty of most fearful crimes, were secure from stupid atheism: others were quiet, from a presumption cherished by opinions unworthy of God, as if he would neglect his own glory to show mercy to them. Now the gospel to conquer the fears of sensible afflicted sinners, and to establish a lively hope in God's mercy, reveals that the Son of God became man, and offered up his life and blood to divine justice, as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. 'This reconciled God, whose honour was abundantly secured by that satisfaction. This appeased all the unquiet agitations of the spirits of believers, and produced the peace that passes understanding, a joy unspeakable and glorious. This delivered them from the fear of death, under which the world was so long in bondage. And it is worthy the observing, that no principles of nature ever produced such a generous contempt of death, as the christian religion did in the professors of it. The Alexanders, Scipios, and Cæsars had trembled at the sight of

these savage beasts that were let loose upon the martyrs, at the preparations of cruelty to torment them. Whereas they regarded them with tranquillity, nay with joy, as the matter of their triumph. This was true valour indeed, for the confession of the most important truth, and superior to the courage of those who were called Fulmina Belli, the most renowned soldiers. For in a battle, by martial sounds, by violent motions the spirits are fired, and men scarce feel their wounds, and are inconsiderate of their danger. But the martyrs had nothing to heighten their courage, but in cool blood deliberately and without alteration encountered that terrible enemy. Besides, soldiers in the sharpest conflicts have some hopes of victory, or else of a sudden and honourable death, *Aut cita Mors, aut victoria læta*. And he that rusheth into perils with a seeming bravery, when there are hopes of escaping, has not resolution to look death in the face when it is inevitable. There is an eminent instance of this in a famous captain of late memory, the duke Biron : none was more bold in fight ; but when he was to receive the sentence of death for his crimes, none more disordered by fear : sometimes he was in a rage against his judges, and after his passion was evaporated, fell into the other extremity, unmanly cries, complaints, and low submissions to obtain favour. But the more than heroic constancy of the martyrs contemned death in its nearest approaches, and most fearful pomp. The christian religion has often transformed the most tender women and children into men, or rather into angels, making them suffer with joy, that which our nature cannot see without horror. It changed as it were flesh and blood into a celestial substance, insensible of fire and sword, and the most cruel violences.

Now this unshaken resolution in christians encountering the last enemy, was from the lively sense of God's favour reconciled by the most pure and precious blood of his Son, and the hopes of everlasting happiness in his presence.

To conclude this argument, it is to be observed that there is no proof more proper that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of the world, than the joint testimony of the spirit, water, and blood ; for whereas sin was the only cause of our ruin, the office of our Saviour is to repair that ruin, and consequently he that effectually does it, is to be acknowledged, believed and embraced as our Saviour. Now the worst effects of sin are the ignorance of

the mind, the depravation of the affections, and the terrors of conscience from the apprehensions of vengeance. Therefore since the gospel of Christ has brought celestial light, purity, and peace into the world, it is an infallible proof that he is the Redeemer of it. The sun that visits the world with its refreshing beams, has no clearer marks of the divine wisdom in making it, and ordering its motions, than the spiritual light of the gospel that irradiates the minds of men, before in deep darkness. The riches of the earth in variety of fruits is not a more convincing argument of the divine goodness, than to see the souls of men that before were as dead earth, under the curse of heaven, to abound in all the fruits of righteousness. The separating the sea from the land, and setting bounds to its impetuous waves, is not a greater effect of God's power, than the calming the tempests of an unquiet conscience, and establishing tranquillity in it. And these blessings we entirely owe to Jesus Christ, in whose name they are obtained, by whose spirit they are conferred, and for whose glory they are designed.

Now what more is requisite to afford us satisfaction that JESUS CHRIST came from God, and revealed his will in order to our happiness? Can it be reasonably expected that new miracles should be wrought to satisfy every sceptic that is still unsatisfied? Indeed the fountain of them is not dried up, the power of God is not weakened, nor his mercy lessened, but in extraordinary cases, when the gospel is first preached to a nation, it may be expected that to convert them from gentilism to the christian faith he will make himself known not only by word, but power, in supernatural operations. But the vein of miracles is not still current in the church, there being sufficient motives of belief for the conviction of all that are not obstinate, without the performing new. Must the Son of God present himself to all men in a visible glory? Or must his divine Father give another majestic testimony from heaven concerning him? If we have not such sensible evidence, we have as sure: the accomplishment of scripture prophecies is a permanent miracle, a more certain proof to us than that oracular revelation. For God spake but once in that voice, but he speaks by the prophets to the end of time. That was more astonishing, but less instructive to us than prophecies, that are continually unfolded and verified by events.

Before I finish this argument, I will briefly consider what is

objected against some doctrines of the gospel, viz. The Trinity, the divine incarnation, the mean state and sufferings of the Son of God in the world. These points have been opposed by the Jews, and other infidels, as mere impossibilities, directly contrary to the reason of mankind.

To this I answer ; we must distinguish between what is incomprehensible to human reason, and what is repugnant to it ; between the things which reason cannot perfectly understand how they can be, and the things which it perfectly understands that they cannot be. Natural light may not be able to discover the being of some things, and the manner of their existence, which really are. But what it sees to involve a contradiction, is absolutely impossible. Now there is no point in the whole complexion of the christian faith that is repugnant to reason. The unity and supreme equality of the three persons in the Godhead transcends our conception, but reason cannot prove it to be impossible. For the essence of God is not of the same condition with created substances ; so that although in the whole compass of the creatures there is no like instance, but one nature is always joined with one subsistence, yet it does not follow that the divine nature may not subsist in three persons. All the difficulty that is pretended to be invincible is this ; that the manner of it is incomprehensible. And it is necessarily so ; for it is impossible that what is infinite should be comprehended by a finite mind.

The incarnation of the Son of God, wherein the essence of christianity consists, is not contrary to reason. Indeed it is impossible that the divine nature should be substantially changed into the human nature, and God cease to be God in becoming man, but the union of the Deity to the human nature is not impossible. For what repugnance is there, either in respect of God or the creature ? * Is it impossible that the supreme goodness should communicate itself in the strictest degree of union to the reasonable creature, or is the reasonable creature incapable to receive the highest favour ? This is a great mystery ; but the divine omnipotence is not to be limited by our narrow thoughts. It is most reasonable to believe that God can do what we cannot dis-

* *Aug. Epist. 5. Volus. Deum deum aliquid posse, quod nos fatemur in vestigare non posse. In talibus rebus, tota ratio facti, est potentia facientis.*

cover how it is performed. * Seneca prudently observes that extraordinary effects in nature are unaccountable to us, as to their immediate proper causes, whilst we only consider the usual principles by which it works. Nay, in the most common works of nature how many things are so perceptible to sense that none is so stupid as to deny them, yet imperceptible to reason as to the manner of their production? Who understands the admirable conjunction of the soul and body in man? How two metals of so precious and so base alloy, gold and lead, a spirit and matter, the one celestial the other earthly, should so strictly combine, and notwithstanding such diversity in their natures and properties, embrace with such concord in their inclinations? Now if the sharpest eye, fixed with the greatest attention cannot discern the manner of this natural union when the thing is above all doubt, can there be any pretence to disbelieve supernatural mysteries because we are not able to comprehend how they are affected?

3. There being infallible proofs that Jesus Christ was sent from God to make known his compassionate counsels for the salvation of man, the consequence is clear and necessary, that the doctrines of his gospel are to be received, though never so incomprehensible to the natural understanding. There is no demonstration more sure than the principle of faith; God has declared so, therefore it is true. It is injurious to his honour to require any other proof of his word than his word. It is incomparably more certain that God cannot deceive us, than that our understandings are not deceived. Now what is the main subject of the gospel? It instructs us that "the word was God, and the word was made flesh." Can there be a more plain declaration who Jesus Christ is, that we may conceive aright of his natures, his virtues, his prerogatives and merits? It is not possible without violence to interpret the words otherwise than they plainly signify, that a divine Being assumed the human nature, and was God-Man. This was also declared by Jesus Christ. For when the Jews, supposing him to be a mere man, taxed him for the violation of the sabbath, in his doing a miraculous cure on that day, he re-

* Quare quicquam nobis insolitum est? quia naturam oculis non ratione comprehendimus, nec cogitamus quid illa facere possit, sed tantum quid fecerit. *Natur. Quæst. lib. 6.*

plied to their exception, "My Father works hitherto, and I work : " That is, as God is not subject to the law of the sabbath, but uninterruptedly does the works of his merciful providence ; so I his Son work in all times without limitation. This expression the Jews truly understood to import no less than an equality with God, a Son being of the same nature with his Father, and therefore charged him with blasphemy. Our Saviour allows their interpretation, but vindicates it from impiety by a further declaring his communion with God in his will and power, that he performed divine works ; that he might " receive the same divine honour as the Father had. And shall we not believe this testimony that Jesus Christ gives of himself ? Did not the * WORD understand the meaning of his own expressions ? Could truth deceive ? Was it possible for wisdom to speak improperly ? Was power defective and unable to declare what it would have us to understand ? How unreasonable is it then to object how can this be ? What pride is it to rebel against the divine revelation ? What obstinacy to remain unsatisfied, unless we discover how terms so distant in themselves, the highest Being, GOD, and the lowest in the sphere of rational beings, man, should be so strictly united ? How they should be so intimately joined without confusion of natures in one person, that it is truly said, God was humbled to the form of a servant, and man is raised [to the right hand of God. Here it is our duty to subject our noblest faculty, the understanding, to divine revelation. In the doctrines of faith as well as in the disposures of providence, it is sufficient to check presumptuous curiosity, that God is the author.

I shall add one consideration more : if Jesus Christ was not what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, he was a most impious man. For it is impiety in the supreme degree, for any in the pure order of creatures to assume divine honour : but the quality of his doctrine, and sanctity of his life, infinitely clear him from such a vile charge. For is it conceivable that a person guilty of the highest even sacrilegious pride, should be an

* Aut forte qui verbum est significationem verbi ignoravit ? & qui veritas est, loqui vera nescivit ? & qui sapientia est, in stultiloquio erravit ? & qui virtus est, in ea fuit infirmitate, ut non possit eloqui quæ vellet intelligi ?
Hilar. lib. 8. de Trinit.

instructor of the most perfect humility to the world? It is the special character of his religion that distinguishes it from all other institutions, that it preserves the divine glory entire; that it makes the profoundest impressions in the hearts of men of their meanness and vanity, and inspires them with an humble sense of their infinite distance from God. And for the holiness of his life, I shall produce a testimony that can be liable to no exception; it is of Porphyry a platonic philosopher, who excelled as in learning and eloquence, so in malignity, the most furious enemies of christianity; yet he was by irresistible evidence compelled to acknowledge, "That Jesus Christ was a most pious and excellent person, and that after his death he ascended into heaven". And is it credible that the same person, whose life was a glorious example of holiness and righteousness, should be guilty of the most transcendent wickedness? It is not possible for an unprejudiced mind to entertain such a suspicion.

That the Son of God was here below in a mean state, that he was exposed to the most cruel and ignominious death, if we consider the great end of his condescending goodness, it will appear to be most worthy of him; and that there is no contradiction in the things themselves, but in the perverse minds of infidels: for,

First, He was to redeem the world not in the way of majesty, but by humble obedience, and sufferings. Thus it was ordered by divine wisdom for the honour of God's attributes and government. Now if he had appeared in sensible glory, the design of his coming had been frustrated: who would have dared to condemn him to the infamous death of the cross? Who would have shed his blood, the price of our redemption? And it is very observable that our Saviour made no use of his supernatural power, when the doing a miracle before Herod would have struck him with the reverence of him as a divine man, and might have preserved him from death. Nay, when the glittering host of heaven, all the orders of angels were in arms ready upon his least call to have come swifter than lightning for his rescue, yet he meekly yielded himself up a bloody sacrifice to God, and an ignominious spectacle to men. For thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness.

Secondly, another great end of his coming was to found a spiritual eternal kingdom; he was constituted a new Adam, to

regenerate men to an holy blessed life; that were condemned in the first Adam to death and misery. Therefore his life was a continual exercise of self-denial, a pattern of innocence and patience, of doing good and suffering evil. Thus he convinces us that nothing is valuable in God's account but holiness. Thus by his own example he instructs us in the divine philosophy, to despise the good and evil things here, in order to our everlasting happiness. He ascended to heaven by the way of sufferings, and calls us to follow him. The fruit of blessedness is ingrafted on the thorns of poverty and persecution for his name sake. The laws of his kingdom are inscribed on the body of his cross, and must be copied in the hearts of his subjects. And for this reason when the apostles, (who after his resurrection had some reliques of their carnal conceit, that the kingdom of GOD should come with observation for its external splendour) asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" To raise their thoughts and affections above earthly things, he answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses of me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the utmost ends of the earth." Their preaching his life and death should be attended with the power of the spirit, to dispense vigorous influence into the hearts of men for his imitation. And certainly his example is of admirable use and profit. For thus he sweetens and makes honourable those virtues, the exercise of which were very difficult and displeasing either in respect of their quality, being contrary to fleshly lusts, or as they expose to contempt in the opinion of the world. For who can refuse, or be ashamed to practise the most severe self-denial, when in that he is made a copy of so divine an original as the Son of God? Now considering what an influence his afflicted state has to procure eternal happiness for fallen man, and to prepare man for it, was it unbecoming him to descend thus low? Is it unbecoming that God loves as God? That as infinite wisdom and power appeared in the creation, so infinite mercy appears in our redemption? What is more divine than infinitely to exceed all the ideas we can frame of perfect love? To do greater things for his enemies, than men are willing to do for their dearest friends? And where sin abounds, that grace superabounds? Thus the eye of reason cleared by revelation, sees that the voluntary humiliation of the Son of God for a time, is so

far from diminishing, that it exalts his majesty. This is the great argument and motive of the adoration and solemn praise that reasonable creatures shall for ever pay unto him, wherein his derivative glory consists.

From what has been discoursed we may see the just grounds of our firm assent and perfect adherence to the doctrine of the gospel. There are not only sufficient but abundant motives to induce our belief, so that it is an extreme wonder that any to whom it is revealed, should not see the truth so illustriously visible. The only account of such infidelity is given by the apostle: "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them." The love of some lust fleshly or spiritual, renders men averse from receiving it. The mysteries of godliness are not confined to the speculative mind, but are for moral ends, to regulate our lives. From hence it is that the cordial belief of them very much depends on the temper and disposition of the soul. The sincere humble inquirer has an eminent advantage in the discovery of the truth and spiritual excellencies of the gospel, above those who are over-ruled by corrupt habits. For the carnal heart either wholly turns the mind from thinking on those most sacred and concerning objects, or weakens its intention that it does not seriously and duly consider them. Men will studiously apply themselves to secular arts, and can discern the truth of abstruse mathematical theorems, that are not distasteful to their evil affections; yet though the principles of christian faith are as unquestionable as the clearest propositions in geometry, they will not ponder those things that may convince and persuade them to believe what is directly opposite to their lusts. Besides, as corrupt humours vitiate the palate, and make what is pleasant bitter to the taste; so vicious desires darken and deprave the mind, and incline it to judge of doctrines to be true or false as they are favourable or disagreeable to them. Carnal persons fortify every objection that may render the mysteries of godliness unlikely and incredible, and will be partial for sensuality. Of this we have a great instance in the first rejection of the gospel. The Jews expected the Messiah would come with pompous wonders, and external magnificence; that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and found an universal monarchy for them, and

according to those carnal fancies they would understand the promises concerning him. Now though JESUS CHRIST approved himself to be the Son of God, the true Messiah, by the sanctity of his life, the rectitude of his doctrine, and the divinity of his miracles, yet for the poverty and meanness of his condition, being without any sensible show of greatness and glory, they despised him as most unworthy that divine relation and office. Though in him all the characters of the Messiah were conspicuous, and the scriptures declare expressly, "that the Messiah the Prince should be cut off, but not for himself, but to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness:" yet they were so prepossessed with the ideas of a terrene felicity, that they would interpret all the scriptures by that measure, as if the Messiah should come into the world to repair no other ruins but of their temporal state and liberty: therefore they spake of him with scornful titles; "as for this fellow we know not from whence he is:" and "is not this the carpenter?" Shall the glorious prophecies of the Messiah be accomplished in him? "Shall he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth? Shall all kings bow down before him, and all nations serve him?" There was nothing to satisfy their sight in his outward appearance and retinue; and his miraculous condescension, so much below their expectations, was more powerful to harden them in unbelief, than all his supernatural operations to induce them to believe in him. And as the Jews from their affection to secular things, were enemies to the gospel; so the heathen philosophers from spiritual pride: for they vainly affected the praise of knowledge and virtue, as the fruit of their own mind, and the product of their own will. They did not consider God as the fountain of truth; and whether the ray of his knowledge comes directly and immediately into us, or by reflection from others, the glory of it is entirely due to him. Besides, the great mysteries of godliness not being suitable to their first opinions, were rejected with disdain as foolish impossibilities. And in every age since, even in the pale of the church, there are some secret infidels that esteem the government a fable, and some who peremptorily deny the fundamental articles of Christianity. Those who are slaves to their eyes and appetites will raise clouds to obscure that truth that forbids their dear lusts upon pain of damnation. The pretended difficulty of belief, is

but a thin transparent pretence, the difficulty of practice is the true cause of their rejecting the gospel. They would not have the precepts of it to be their duty, and therefore are unwilling to acknowledge the doctrines of it to be true. And those who set up a tribunal in their own understandings to which divine revelation must submit, will not believe what is above their presumptuous reason. But that the soul exempt from passions and prejudice has no just temptation to disbelieve the christian doctrine, is evident; in that so many persons in whom the concurrence of wisdom and virtue was equally flourishing and excellent, after the most exact discussion, embraced it as the heavenly truth. If there were falseness in its principles, or weakness in its proof, how could it escape their discovery? And that they were sincere in their belief is above all doubt; for they willingly sacrificed all that is valuable and dear in this life for the profession of it. Now was it ever known that any person would knowingly choose an error so destructive? The will seduced by sense embraces sometimes that that is condemned by reason, but it never adheres to those that are contrary both to reason and sense. By this it appears that infidelity has no just plea from the insufficiency of the proofs of the christian religion, which have fully satisfied the wisest, the most considerate and sincere, part of mankind. A corrupt heart is the spring and principle of the illusions of the mind in things that concern salvation.

2. The gospel propounds to us the most proper and powerful motives of love to God. In the visible world there is a representation so conspicuous and full of his divine majesty, power and wisdom that formed and regulates all things, that it is not possible but the attentive regarding of it, will make impressions of reverence and fear, will raise our esteem and admiration. But those are dead sentiments without love. And that in the guilty creature fearful of God's wrath, must be first excited by the hopes of his pardoning mercy. Now "the love and kindness of God our Saviour appeared to man in his redemption" in the most eminent manner. Though in that blessed work the divine perfections are reluctant in various effects, wisdom designed it, power accomplished it, holiness and righteousness were gloriously declared in it; yet, as it is applied to the benefit of man, it is the sole effect of wise, almighty, holy, tender love. Mercy softened God's bowels, opened heaven, sent down his Son to be one with

us in nature, that he might exchange his merits and blessedness for our guilt and misery. Miraculous love! to make his only begotten Son our brother, to humble him to the condition of a servant, that we most unworthy to be his servants should be advanced to be his children: nay, to expose him to the death of a malefactor, equally ignominious and painful, that we malefactors might obtain life and glory. If ever love deserved the title of excess, it is this; for though not without reason, yet it is without all bounds and measure. It is so far above our thought, that it is hard to have a firm belief of it. What the Psalmist speaks of the temporal deliverance of the church, is more justly applicable to its spiritual eternal deliverance. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like to them that dream." As if a poor man fancying in a dream that he is a king adorned with the ensigns of royalty, and between hopes and fears should inquire of himself, Am I awake and in my right mind? Is this sceptre, this robe, this crown real? Or, is it all the pleasant deceit of imagination? And how can we reflect upon the amazing grace of God that brings salvation, but such thoughts will arise? Is it true that God did not spare his most innocent and dear Son to absolve us guilty rebels? Did he die for his Father's enemies and his own? Unparalleled love! only to be fully conceived by an infinite understanding. That the divine Father should seem to love us more than his only begotten Son, in giving him up to death for us; that the Son of God should love us more than his own life, in dying to reconcile us to his Father, were incredible but for the testimony of God himself. Who can resist the sweet violence, the powerful attractives of this love? How can any person that has the use of reason to consider this great love, not be inflamed with affection towards his Saviour? How is it possible that these wide extremes should be found united, the infinite goodness of God, and the equal unthankfulness of men? That they hate and offend whom they are obliged by the dearest titles to love and serve. Methinks such unnatural ingratitude should only be found in hell; where despair of redemption has blotted out in those lost souls the memory of the love and merits of the Redeemer. But that on earth where his most precious blood was shed, and is applicable for the salvation of all that will receive him by faith and love, that here injuries are returned for his inestimable benefits, is the most enormous impiety. * 'What

* Paulia.

shall we render unto him for our evils which he hath suffered, for his benefits which he gives to us? All that we can endure for his sake, is not comparable to one thorn of his bleeding crown. Let us return love, that is so infinitely due to him. Woe to us if we do not love him.'

Consider further, that the same most free love that gave the Redeemer for us, has revealed him to us. For who could have imagined that the Son of God should descend from his throne in heaven, and from the bosom of his Father into the womb of a virgin-mother, and become man, to save us by his sufferings? Who could have any hopes that the human nature, our low and heavy earth, should ascend above the heavens? The world by natural light knew no more of his coming to recover it from misery, than it perceived when the same Word in the creation raised it from the abyss of nothing. This should make us most sensible of his favour. But every one will pretend to love his Saviour. Now that we may not deceive ourselves with a flashy affection, the rule of trial is plain, our love to him must correspond in its kind and quality with his love to us, and that was declared in doing and suffering what was requisite for our salvation. The precious tree does not heal the sore by its fragrancy, but must be wounded to give it a sovereign balm. Our Saviour did not only express in words his compassionate sense of our misery, that alone had been sufficient, but "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood." After his resurrection he showed his pierced hands and side to the disciples, not only the real proofs that he was Jesus that suffered, but of his love. They might see his heart open and hands rent for them. And such a love is due to him. That which is only productive of leaves and blossoms, of affectionate words of our Saviour, but unfruitful in the works of holiness, may deceive men by a fair appearance, but not his eye, who judges of the truth and strength "of our love to him, by our keeping his commandments." In short, as an active heat proceeds by an emanation from the fire; so a cheerful readiness and zeal to do the will of Christ naturally flow from love consecrated to him. But to enforce this the more, let us further consider.

3. We are obliged by all the titles of gratitude and justice, of natural and divine reason, to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ.

First, The dignity of the author requires this of us. The Son of God came down from heaven; and if the allusion may be allowed,

— *circum caput omne micantes*
Deposuit radios, propiusque accedere jussit;

laid down his glory, that he might familiarly teach us our duty in order to our happiness: "And if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord?"

Secondly, The perfection and plainness of this rule. It is a wise observation, * 'That those laws are best for government, that are so clear and particular that nothing is left to the will of the inferior judge, who is not usually so capable, and pure from by-respects as the lawgiver.' The gospel is a light wherein all virtues shine in their bright eminence, and all vices blush in their odious deformity. It excludes all obscurity, that the meanest understandings may see the way to happiness. There can be no palliations and excuses for those who will rather argue than obey. For the revelation of God's will is so full and open in it, that it is direct rebellion not to yield entire subjection to it: "and they who know their master's will, and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Thirdly, To commend it to our practice we have an example of perfect obedience set before us. If Jesus Christ had represented in the world no other person but of "the word and wisdom of his Father;" as a master to regulate and guide us by his commands, had revealed to us the secrets of another world, and then ascended to heaven; the highest reverence and observance had been due to his laws. But to encourage and edge our industry he was pleased to exhibit in his life a pattern of universal obedience. He gave us rules of such perfect holiness, that there seemed no necessity of his practice for our instruction: and the living image of his laws was so visible in his actions, that his sole example affords us a model of entire sanctity. There is no kind of virtue from the lowest to the most heroic, of which he might not say as he did to his disciples in his last supper, "I have

• Arist. Rhet,

given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." And what should be more powerful in the breasts of christians than a sacred ambition to be like the Son of God, than a dear affection to be conformed to their Saviour?

Fourthly, To excite us to our duty, the gospel offers such a reward to encourage obedience, and threatens such prepared plagues against disobedience, that unless a man be miraculously transformed into a stupid beast, he cannot but be moved by them.

Now what darkness of mind, or rather what perverseness of heart is it, if the great interest of the one and the other eternity, the blessed and the miserable, be not sufficient to work upon us? But alas! how many who pretend to be the disciples of Christ, do not obey him as their master, love him as their Redeemer, nor fear him as their Judge? They live as if Christ had commanded them to please, not to "crucify the flesh, and the lusts thereof:" as if he had bid them set all their affections, their loves, desires, hopes, joys in the present perishing things, and not in everlasting to come; to labour for the riches of this world, as if they were eternal inhabitants on the earth, and not strangers and pilgrims in the way to heaven. These are worse enemies of our Saviour than the heathens that do not know him, or the Jews that deny him. For, wearing the livery of his servants, they * defame his most holy profession, obscure his glory, and blaspheme him in their lives. If infidels that never heard the sound of the gospel, should see their conversation, what judgment would they make of the excellence of Christ, and the holiness of his law? They would † blaspheme his goodness without defence. Unholy christians are the most guilty sinners in the world. And their punishment will be heightened accordingly: for they exasperate mercy, and make the blood of atonement to cry for vengeance against them. If it be extreme perverseness to disbelieve the gospel after so clear a revelation from God; what degree of folly and wickedness is it, for those who believe its truth, to contradict the evidence and design of it in their lives, as if there were no doubt of its falseness?

* Quæ cum ita sint, magna videlicet prærogativa de nomine Christianitatis blandiri possumus, quia ita agimus, ac vivimus, ut hoc ipsum quod christianus populus esse dicimur, opprobrium Christi esse videamur.

† Æstimari de cultoribus suis potest ille qui colitur. Quomodo enim bonus Magister est, cujus tam malos videmus discipulos. 2 *Salm. De Gubern.* *lib. 4.*