

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIM. iii. 16.—*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

THE next head which falls to be touched is the holy scripture, the rule which God has given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. We are poor blind creatures, that know not our way, neither how we should glorify God, nor how we may come to the enjoyment of him. Therefore God hath given us the revelation of his mind in that great point. The connexion betwixt this and the preceding question is abundantly obvious; the one points out the end for which we were made, the other the rule to direct us how to attain to that end. And in this text we have two things.

1. The divine authority of the scriptures asserted. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God.* The word *scripture* signifies *writing* in general; but here it is appropriated to the holy scripture. It principally here aims at the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were written by men of a prophetic spirit: but seeing the New Testament was written by such as were endowed with the same Spirit for writing, upon that reason, what is applied to the Old belongs also to the New Testament. It is said to be of divine inspiration, because the writers were inspired by the Spirit, who guided their hearts and pens; he dictated, and they wrote; so that it is his word and not theirs; and that is extended to the whole scriptures.

2. The use and end of the scriptures: *It is profitable for doctrine, &c.* If ye desire to know the truths of religion, or what we believe, the scripture is *profitable for doctrine*, teaching us what we are to believe concerning God, Christ, and ourselves, and the great things that concern salvation. If ye want to refute the contrary errors, it is *profitable for reproof*, to convince us of the nature and importance of divine truth and point out what errors we are to avoid. If ye desire to amend your life and practice, casting off sinful practices, it is *profitable for correction*, that is, for reformation of manners. If ye want to know what is duty, and what is sin, it is necessary *for instruction and righteousness*; shewing us how to lead a holy and righteous life before God, and instructing us in the true righteousness, which is the foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him, the righteousness of Christ. And what more is necessary for salvation, for faith and obedience, for the whole of salvation?

Two doctrines offer themselves from the words, viz.

Doct. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

Doct. II. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

Doct. I. 'The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.'

Here I shall shew,

I. What is meant by the Old and New Testament.

II. What are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

III. The necessity of the scriptures.

IV. That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God.

V. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall shew what is meant by the Old and New Testament. It is the covenant of grace which is called a *testament*, and it is properly a testamentary covenant, without any proper conditions as to us, Heb. viii. 10. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Christ is the testator; he made the testament, and confirmed it with his death. The spirit of Christ drew the testament, dictating it to the holy penman. This testament of Christ's is one and the same as to substance, though sometimes more clearly revealed than at other times. The Old Testament is the more obscure draught of Christ's will, and the New Testament is the more clear one. Thus they only differ in circumstances, while the substantial of both are one and the same; one Mediator and testator, one legacy or promise of remission of sin and eternal life, and one faith as the way of obtaining it*.

II. I proceed to shew what are the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The scriptures of the Old Testament are those which begin with Genesis, and end with Malachi; and the scriptures of the New Testament are those which begin with Matthew, and end with the Revelation. And it is worthy of our special remark, how the Old Testament and the New, like the cherubims in the most holy place, stretch forth their wings touching one another; the Old Testament ending with the prophecy of sending Christ and John the Baptist Mal. iv. and the New beginning with the history of the coming of these two.

* See more on this subject in the author's *View of the Covenant of Grace*, head 4. title, *Christ the Testator of the Covenant*.

The books of the Old Testament were divided by the Hebrews into three, the law, the Prophets, and Ketubim, written books. The law contains the five books of Moses, the Prophets are twofold, former and latter. The former are the historical books of the Old Testament, as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; and they were so called, because they told things already done. The latter related things before they were done; and are of two sorts; the greater, which are three, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the lesser twelve, viz. Hosea, Joel, &c. The written books were called so, because they were written by such as had the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Hebrews speak, but not of prophecy. And of that sort are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The Hebrews ascribe this division of them to Ezra; and it seems our Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the same, while he tells his disciples, Luke xxiv. 44. of the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The books of the New Testament are divided into three sorts, Histories, the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation, which is prophetic.

The books of both the Testaments were written by different authors. As to the Old Testament, Moses wrote the Pentateuch; only some verses in the end of Deuteronomy, where Moses' death is recorded, could not be written by him, but are said to have been written by Joshua; who also wrote the book that bears his name; or, according to the opinion of some, it was written by Eleazar, Aaron's son. Samuel is supposed to have written the book of Judges, and, it would appear, the last part of the book of Joshua, containing the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar: Some think that the Judges did write every one the history of their own time; and that Samuel at last did put them all into one volume. The book of Ruth also was written by him, as the Hebrews tell. He wrote also the first book bearing his name, to the 25th chapter, where his death is narrated. The rest of the chapters of that book, and the whole of the second book, are said to have been written by David. The books of the Kings are supposed to be written by David and Solomon, and other prophets that lived in these times; so that each of them did write what was done in his own time. Job is supposed to have written the book that bears his name. David wrote the Psalms, but not all: such as are not his have the author's name prefixed; as Asaph, Heman, &c.: and they were all by Ezra collected into one volume. Ezra is said to have written the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Mordecai, that of Esther; and Solomon, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets,

wrote every one their own prophecies, containing a short sum of their sermons.

As for the books of the New Testament, without controversy the evangelists wrote the Gospels, according as their names are prefixed to them. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles; and the remaining books, the Epistles and the Revelation, were written by those whose names they bear. Only, as to the Epistle to the Hebrews, there has been some doubt, some ascribing it to Luke, some to Barnabas, others to Apollos, and others to Clemens: but many learned men have given good reasons to prove it to be written by the apostle Paul.

But the principal author is the Holy Spirit, whence the scripture is called the Word of God. The penmen were but the instruments in the hand of God in writing the same. It was the Spirit that dictated them, that inspired the writers, and guided them. But the inspiration was not the same in all points to all the penmen; for some things were before utterly unknown to the writer, as the history of the creation of the world to Moses; the prediction of future events in respect of the prophets; which therefore the Spirit did immediately reveal to them: Other things were known to the writers before, as the history of Christ to the four evangelists, &c.; in respect of these there need no new revelation, but a divine irradiation of the mind of the writer, giving him a divine certainty of those things which he wrote. By this inspiration all of them were infallibly guided, so as they were put beyond all possibility of erring. And this inspiration was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the words wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer, 2 Pet. i. 21; Psal. xlv. 1. Upon this account the scripture is attributed to the Holy Spirit, without making any mention of the penmen, Heb. x. 15.

Quest. But what opinion are we to form of the books called *Apocrypha*, And why are they so called?

Answ. These books, which are found placed in some bibles betwixt Malachi and Matthew are called *Apocrypha*, which is a Greek word, signifying *hidden* or *absconded*. The reasons of this name are given thus (1.) Because they were not acknowledged by the church to be of divine inspiration. (2.) Because the names of the authors were hid. (3.) Because they contain some things unknown to Moses, the prophets and apostles. (4.) Because, for the foresaid reasons, they were judged unworthy to be publicly read in the church. Concerning these books, we believe that they are not of divine inspiration, and therefore no part of the canon of scripture; that is, they are not to be admitted as any part of the rule of faith and manners: and therefore they are of no authority in the church of God for the determin-

ing of controversies in religion; and so, though they may be of use as other human writings, yet they are no otherwise to be made use of nor approved. The reasons are,

1. They were not acknowledged by the church of the Jews for canonical: to whom the Apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 2. 'the oracles of God,' under the Old Testament dispensation 'were committed.' They even forbade their children to read them till they came to mature age.

2. They were not written in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek; and the authors of them were posterior to Malachi, who was the last of the prophets, according to the saying of the Hebrews, that the Holy Ghost went up from Israel after the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. And 1 Mac. iv. 46. plainly shews, that there was no prophet among them, to shew them what they should do with the stones of the polluted altar. And it may clearly appear to any unbiassed person, how the interposing of these books betwixt Malachi and Matthew does cut off the beautiful connexion betwixt the end of the Old and the beginning of the New Testament, and how Malachi's prophecy is designed of God to close up the scriptures of the Old Testament, in that he prophecies most distinctly of the coming of Christ, and John the Baptist his forerunner, with the accomplishment of which Matthew begins his gospel, as I observed before.

3. The primitive church for the first four centuries received not these books; and when they came to be read, the reader stood but in an inferior place, they being then read as profitable books, though not of divine authority.

4. They are no where cited by Christ and his apostles. Yea, they are not obscurely rejected by him, while he divides the scriptures into Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, Luke xxiv. 44. And whereas the Apostle tells us, that 'prophecy came not of old by the will of man, but *that* holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' 2 Pet. i. 21. the authors of these books pretend to no such thing. The author of Ecclesiasticus in the prologue intreats the reader to pardon them, (*viz.* him and his grandfather), wherein they may seem to come short of some words which they have laboured to interpret. Such an apology is there, 2 Mac. xv. 38. 'If I have done well, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.' 2 Mac. ii. 23. the author tells us, he will essay to abridge in one volume the five books of Jason of Cyrene. Ver. 26. he tells how he hath taken on him the painful labour of abridging; that it was a matter of sweat and watching to him: And ver. 27. 'But for the pleasuring of

many,' says he, 'we will undertake this great pains.' And more of this stuff has he there; which plainly speaks forth nothing else than human learning and pains, which men desire to have much accounted of amongst others.

Lastly, They neither agree with themselves nor the holy scriptures, as may plainly appear to those who will consider them diligently. 1 Mac. vi. 16. compared with ver. 4. it is said, that Antiochus died at Babylon. Yet 2 Mac. i. 13, 14, 15, 16. it is said, that when he was come into Persia, he was slain in the temple of Nanea, whom he pretended that he would marry, and would receive money in name of dowry, by her priests. Yea, 2 Mac. ix. 28. he is said to have died in a strange country in the mountains. The book of Tobit is stuffed with absurd stories; it makes the angel Raphael to tell a lie, and to teach Tobit's son a devilish art, to drive away the devil with the heart and liver of a fish; and when the evil spirit smelled the smell, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, &c. The author of the history of the Maccabees commends Rasis for self-murder, and prayer for the dead, 2 Mac. xii. 44, 45. These things plainly shew, that these books are not from the Spirit of God.

All this shews the darkness of Popery that receives these books as canonical, and the dregs remaining in the church of England, who, though they do not receive them for canonical, yet mix the reading of portions of them in their churches with the scriptures, while in the mean time, several portions of the holy scripture are passed over, and not read publicly in their service. And whilst we blame the church of England for reading in her service books that are not canonical, impartiality obliges us to say, that far too small a portion of the books that are canonical is read in the public service of our own church. This is equally culpable.

And as there is none of these to be admitted into the canon, so neither can we gratify the Papists with yielding, that there are any books of the scripture lost, lest we reflect on the providence of God, that to a miracle has preserved these books to this day, and has insured the preservation of far less parts than whole books, Mat. v. 18.

III. I proceed to shew the necessity of the scriptures.

1. There was a necessity of the revelation of the doctrine of the scriptures. For though the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable, Rom. i. 20. and ii. 14, 15. yet they are not sufficient to shew us either how we should glorify, or how we may enjoy God, and so are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, that is necessary to salva-

tion. For (1.) There is no salvation out of Christ, Acts iv. 12. 1 Cor. iii. 11. there is no salvation through him but by faith, Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 16. and xvii. 3. and there can be no faith nor knowledge of Christ but by revelation, Rom. x. 14,—17. (2.) They who have only nature's light, and so do not enjoy divine revelation, are without God, and have no hope, Eph. ii. 12.; and therefore there was a necessity for preaching the gospel, 1 Cor. i. 21. (3.) Whatever knowledge men may attain to of God by nature, yet saving illumination and conversion can only be got by the revealed will of God written in his word. See Psal. xix. throughout.

2. There is a necessity of the scriptures, or written word, though the Papists whose kingdom is supported by darkness, deny it. It is true, God did teach his church a long time before Moses without the written word; but then the same doctrine that we have in the scriptures, the patriarchs had by extraordinary revelation often repeated; and their long lives gave them opportunity to keep what was so revealed uncorrupted, and so to hand it down to others. But now both these are gone, and therefore the written word is necessary, (1.) For preserving the doctrine from corruption in such times of apostasy, 2 Pet. iii. 1. (2.) For the better propagating of the truth, Matt. xxviii. 19. The apostles could not with their voice teach all nations, but by their writings they could. (3.) If the written word were wanting, the church has nothing to look to but uncertain traditions; but the written word is a sure touchstone of doctrines, Isa. viii. 20. a light in a dark place, 2 Pet. i. 19. both of which are most necessary.

3. There is a necessity of it not only for beginners, but for those who are more perfect. The scripture is written for all indifferently, Col. iii. 16. Even the most perfect will find enough there, and more than they are able for: 'Open thou mine eyes,' says David, 'that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,' Psal. cxix. 18. It is but the blindness of enthusiasts to pretend, that it is only for the weaker, and that the more perfect must follow the Spirit: for if that Spirit teach any thing contrary to the written word, it is a spirit of darkness, Isa. viii. 20.; yea, if it teach another doctrine, an anathema is pronounced against it, Gal. i. 8.

Thus it plainly appears, that nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, and that in an objective way; that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead men to salvation. But something else is requisite to make this rule effectual for that end. No skill or wisdom of men representing them in the clearest point of view, nor all the power of the most elaborate and persuasive reasonings, can produce this effect. This work is the province of the Spirit of

God, which he accomplishes by an internal illumination of the mind, giving blinded sinners a saving discovery of divine truths; by powerfully subduing man's obstinate will, and enabling it cheerfully and readily to obey the will of God and the authority of Christ; and by working upon our affections, exciting in us ardent desires after God and Christ, and a high esteem of divine truth, and removing the prejudices in our minds against it, and opening our hearts to receive the word, and comply with the design thereof.

IV. I shall next shew that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God. Christ is God's personal word, but the scriptures are his written word, Hos. i. 2.

The scriptures appear to be the word of God, if we consider,

1. The antiquity of some parts of them, which are more ancient than any human writings, and give us such an history as none but God himself could do, viz. the creation of the world; for how could men tell what was done before man had a being?

2. The preservation of it to this day, notwithstanding the malice of devils and wicked men against it. If it had not been of God, it could not have continued till now, considering the attempts that have been made to destroy it.

3. The candour and sincerity of the penmen of these sacred writings, who honestly declare what they delivered was received from God, plainly tell their own faults as well as those of others, and every way write as men over-ruled by the Spirit of God.

4. The exact performance of scripture-prophecies. Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus should deliver the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, not only before that captivity took place, but more than an hundred years before that prince was born. Jeremiah, a little before that captivity, foretold it should last seventy years, and that was the precise duration of it. How remarkably have all the prophecies relating to the fall of the Babylonish, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies been fulfilled! And what an exact accomplishment has there been of the several prophecies relating to the birth and death of Christ, and the spreading of his kingdom in the world! The scripture contains many other prophecies which time has shewn exactly performed, and many that are yet to be fulfilled.

5. The blood of many martyrs hath confirmed the divinity of this book, while they joyfully laid down their lives for the truth of it; in which it is evident they were carried up above what human power could do.

6. The scriptures have been confirmed by incontrovertible miracles. All miracles are wrought by God himself; and it is inconsistent with his holy nature to work miracles for confirming a lie

or a cheat. Many miracles were wrought by Moses, by Christ, and by his apostles. If then these miracles were done by them, the doctrine they taught was true. Now, we have all rational grounds to suppose, that these miracles were really wrought. It is certain, that the general consent of those who have heard of them goes that way. Now, if it be supposed a cheat that such things were done, then that cheat took place either among those who were said to have seen them, and were witnesses to them or else among those who lived after that generation which is said to have seen them was dead and gone. But neither of these two can be said here. Not the first, for two reasons. (1.) Because these miracles were such things as men's outward senses (their eyes and ears) could be judges of. (2.) They are said to be done, not in a corner, but in the face of the world. Therefore it was impossible that that generation could be imposed upon. If a man should say, that yesterday he divided the river Tweed in presence of us all, and brought us all through on dry land, it would be impossible for him to make us believe it, for we saw no such thing, nor waded so through that river. Or if he should say, that he came to the church-yard, and raised a dead man in our presence, whom we now see among us, he could never cause us believe it, nor cheat us into a persuasion of the same. Neither could any in after generations invent such a story, and impose the cheat upon others. (1.) Because there are some things done in memory of these miracles. (2.) Such observances did commence from the time that such things were done, as circumcision, the passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. If then the forger would impose it on others, he must make them believe, that these observances have been constantly in use since that time, which, if they were not, could not be believed, because it contradicts the senses: for it would be impossible to make a nation believe that they were all circumcised or baptized, when there was no such thing; and especially that such things were done to them in memory of such a thing as they never heard of.

7. The scriptures must either be from God, or the creature. They cannot be from the creature; for if so, they must be from angels or men. Neither of these can be said. Not the first; for then they should either be from good angels or evil angels. From good angels they cannot be, in regard, they say, they are the word of God, and this would be a most gross cheat which cannot be attributed to good angels; for angels imposing such a cheat on the world could no more be looked on as good, but as evil. With what shadow of reason can it be imagined, that good angels, remaining so, should abuse the name of God, as to speak in his name, what he

never said? Evil angels it cannot be either, in regard the scripture doth natively tend to overturn the devil's kingdom; it pronounces their doom, discovers their malicious designs, brings men out of their service, and from doing what is pleasing to them. The same way may we reason concerning good or bad men their being the principal authors of the scriptures. And you know what torment the scripture assigns to liars. It remains then that the scripture is of divine inspiration.

Besides, such things are found in the scripture themselves, as do plainly demonstrate they are the word of God. As,

1. The heavenliness of the matter of the scripture, shews it to be of a divine origin. Therefore they are called *the holy scriptures*, Rom. i. 2. See Psal. xii. 6. Nothing carnal or earthly is delivered therein, but all is what becomes those who live above the world, and shall shine in glory. I take this heavenliness of the matter to respect two things. (1.) The sublime mysteries therein revealed, which nature ever so much elevated could never attain to the discovery of. Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the spiritual union betwixt Christ and believers. The light of nature improved by the learned to the utmost advantage, could not teach these things; yet a few fishermen plainly delivered them. (2.) The most exact holiness of its precepts, commanding all holiness, and forbidding all impurity of heart and life under the pain of damnation; and that so universally, as all the writings of philosophers have come far short of. Here we are taught to love our enemies, to be truly and thoroughly humble and self-denied; and this urged by such arguments as may be most effectual for inciting men to the practice of these duties. Sure this could neither be the work of men, being so opposite to corrupt nature, nor of devils being so opposite to their kingdom and interest, but of that God who is holy, and loveth righteousness.

2. The efficacy of the doctrine, in its convincing and searching the conscience, Heb. iv. 12.; converting the soul from its most beloved lusts, even when nothing can be expected from the world for such a change but the cross, Psal. xix. 7.; rejoicing the heart under the deepest distresses, ver. 8. This efficacy lies not in the bare words, letters, or syllables, which have no other power than to signify the things; but it is the ordinary means which the Spirit makes use of for these ends, without which it will be but a dead letter.

3. The majesty and sublimity of the style, an elevated and grand diction which runs through many passages of the scriptures, particularly in the books of Moses, some parts of the Psalms, in the book of Job, and the writings of the prophets. There are in several pas-

sages of the Old Testament such a loftiness of style, so grand an assemblage of bold images and representations, such a collection of noble and majestic sentiments, and so much magnificence and pomp of language, as cannot be found in any human writings whatever. There is something so truly majestic and sublime, so grand and magnificent in the style of the sacred writings, as has forced heathen philosophers to acknowledge it, and select passages therefrom as instances of the true sublime; as does Longinus with regard to the words of God, *Let there be*, and some other passages. At the same time let it be observed, that there is nothing affected, no flights of false eloquence, no exertions of a luxuriant genius, no laboured strokes of a warm imagination, no forced images, no distorted metaphors, no quaint allusions, or unnatural comparisons which are frequently found in the most admired productions of ancient and modern writers; but the utmost plainness and perspicuity, a noble simplicity, and an elegant familiarity, level to the capacity of the illiterate, reign throughout the sacred volume. So that its style must engage the attention and regard of the learned philosopher and poet, and delight the unlearned peasant. Thus God is frequently brought in speaking to and by the prophets, and his majesty set forth in a majestic style, as Is. lvii. 15. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy,' &c. There is no affectation of words there, being below the majesty of the divine law: none are spared, but the scripture speaks as freely and plainly to the great as to the small, to the rich as to the poor.

4. The consent of all the parts of scripture; though written by several hands, and at different times, yet all of them so agreeing in their precepts, narratives of matters of fact, and designs, that there is no irreconcilable difference to be found amongst them. But here the Socinians call us to consider this point at more length; for they say that there is some repugnancy in the scriptures in some things of little or no moment, and that not a seeming but real repugnancy. But we believe that in nothing does one holy writer differ from another in the scriptures, but that such things as seem to be repugnant do in themselves most exactly agree. This principle I shall endeavour to prove.

(1.) There are no things in the Scriptures of little or no moment; and if so, the writers could not err in them. That there are no such things in it; the scripture plainly teaches, as in the text, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*, &c. Rom. xv. 4. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures,

might have hope.' The Jews said, that there was not one point in scripture but mountains of mysteries hang on it. See Matth. v. 18. It argues a profane spirit to talk of the scriptures at that rate. The people of God know that many a time they have read over a scripture in which they could see little or nothing, but afterwards they have seen a great deal in it when the Spirit hath been commentator: and though in some things we never see any weighty thing, must we therefore conclude that there is none there?

(2.) The holy penmen were, in all that they wrote, acted and guided by the Spirit of God, or wrote all by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as says the text, and 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. If all scripture was given by inspiration, if no scripture be of private interpretation, nor came by the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, how can there be any error in any passage of scripture? If the scriptures be the word of God, they must be altogether pure, Psal. xix. 7, 8.

(3.) Those things in which there is some repugnancy betwixt the penmen of the scriptures, are either a part of the canonical scripture, or not. If they be, then [1.] All scripture is not given by inspiration of God. [2.] The scriptures are holy scriptures, Rom. i. 2.; but errors, whether in greater or lesser things, are unholy, and cannot be a part of the holy scriptures. If they be no part of the holy scriptures, why do they charge the holy scriptures with errors therein?

(4.) If it be so that there is such repugnancy in the scriptures, then they cannot found certain and divine faith; for a fallible testimony can ground only a fallible belief. And how shall we know when they are right, and when they are wrong? One says that he is guided by the Spirit, and tells us such a thing; another says the same, and tells us the contrary: Whom shall we believe? If you say it must be determined by the greater number of the holy penmen, it is well known, that amongst those who are fallible, one may be righter than many. But this is plainly to lean to human testimony; for one speaking by the Spirit is as much to be believed as ten thousand. So that this truly dissolves the authority of the whole scriptures.

In short, we refuse that there are any real inconsistencies or contradictions in the holy oracles of God. Whatever seeming inconsistencies or repugnancies there may be, they may be easily reconciled, and have been actually reconciled to satisfy every sober person, by many learned divines, whose writings may be consulted on this head.

5. This scope of the whole scriptures, which is to give all glory to God. The design of them is to exalt none but the infinite majesty

of Heaven, to humble all mankind, and empty them of themselves, that God's grace may be all, and men themselves nothing, but entirely dependent on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

6. The full discovery it makes of the way of man's salvation. Who could ever have told of the Son of God his dying for the sins of the elect, and have made a discovery of the way of salvation by faith, which the scripture hath plainly set down ?

7. The entire perfection of the scripture; that is, the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture.

There are two ways how matters of faith and life are set down in the scriptures. The one is when the thing is set down expressly in so many words; as the unlawfulness of murder, when it is said, 'Thou shalt not kill;' the ordinance of baptism, as in that, 'Go and teach all nations, baptising them,' &c. The other is by good and necessary consequence, which is when the thing itself is not found in the scriptures in so many words, but doth evidently (in itself) and necessarily flow from the express words of scripture, as the baptising of infants is by good and necessary consequence drawn from that, 'Go ye, and baptise all nations.'

Here I shall first prove, that, besides what is to be found in express words in the scriptures, good and necessary consequences deduced therefrom are also to be admitted, as truly binding as what is declared in express words there, whether in fundamentals or in such things as are built on the foundation. If one can prove any thing by good and necessary consequence from the scripture, it is all one, as to the binding power on men's consciences, as if it were expressly set down in so many words.

(1.) Good and necessary consequences are such as the word is designed for. What is deduced from them, so is indeed the sense and meaning of the words; and if you have the words without the meaning of them, or without the full meaning of them, in so far ye come short of the true intent of the words. If I bid a man draw near the fire, do I not desire him to warm himself, though I speak not one word of his warming himself? Were not the scriptures written for that end, that 'we through patience and comfort of them might have hope?' Rom. xv. 4. But this cannot be obtained without the use of consequences. Are they not profitable for doctrine,—'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?' 2 Tim. iii. 16. But can this be had without the use of consequences?

(2.) The great fundamental article, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, before the New Testament was written, could not be proved to the Jews by express scripture testimony, but by good and necessary consequence; yet Christ tells them that there could be no salvation for them without the belief of this. 'If ye believe not that I am he (the Messiah),' says he, 'ye shall die in your sins.' John viii. 24.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, while he would prove the fundamental article of the resurrection against the Sadducees, does not seek after a text that said in express words, that the dead shall rise again, but proves it by good consequence, yet no less firmly than if he had produced an express text for it, Matth. xxii. 32. And it is no less evident that the apostles follow him in this method; as in treating of the resurrection of Christ, Acts ii. 25. of the resurrection of all mankind, 1 Cor. xv. and of the justification of a sinner before God, in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

(4.) Such as reject all arguing from scripture by consequences, must either confess that by no scripture this way is condemned, or else they must adduce some express scripture text forbidding it. The last they can never do. If they say the first, then it is approved; otherwise the scripture is no perfect rule of faith and practice, which we shall immediately shew to be false. If they say that the scripture leaves it indifferent, then I ask, how dare they condemn it?

(5.) Refusing to admit good and necessary consequences from scripture, overturns all religion, both law and gospel, faith and practice. For how shall it be proved, that John or James are obliged to obey the law, and believe the gospel but by consequence? where will they find an express text for these? Only the law speaks to all, the gospel to every hearer of it, and consequently they oblige thee and me. This way, then, of any doctrine its being set down in the scripture being admitted, we are to prove next.

That the scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manner; or that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down therein, &c.

1. God hath expressly forbidden to add any thing unto his word; therefore it needs no addition, and so is perfect Deut. iv. 2. 'Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you.' Consider what ye speak of; even of statutes and judgments; statutes, ceremonies, and rites of worship; even to these he will have nothing added. So we have all additions prohibited, Prov. xxx. 6; and that under a severe penalty, Rev. xxii. 18.

2. 'The law of the Lord is perfect,' as is expressly asserted, Psal. xix. 8. There it is said of it, (1.) it converts the soul; (2.) makes wise the simple; (3.) rejoiceth the heart; and (4.) enlightens the eyes. The apostle plainly asserts the perfection of it, while he tells us, 2 Tim. iii. 15. that it is 'able to make a man wise unto salvation.' How can it be so, unless it teach all things necessary to salvation? *It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, &c.* What can be desired more? And that ye may be sure there is nothing wanting in it, he tells you, it is given for that purpose, 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' So Christ saith, 'They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them,' Luke xvi. 29.; clearly importing, that in them is contained what is sufficient to salvation.

3. Consider the end for which the scriptures were written, even 'that believing men may have life,' John xx. 31.; that 'through patience and comfort of the scriptures they might have hope,' Rom. xv. 4. If any thing necessary to salvation were not in them, how would they answer the end for which they were written?

4. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples all that he had heard of the Father, viz. necessary to their salvation, John xv. 15. He commissions them to teach all others, even to the end of the world, what he commanded them, Matth. xxviii. 20. But this they could not do *viva voce*; therefore they did it in their writings. And whoso considers how exact the apostles were of teaching things of lesser moment, as what day the collection for the poor should be made, &c. cannot think they would neglect any thing necessary to salvation, unless they could not through ignorance or forgetfulness; neither of which can be imputed to them in their writings, being led by the Spirit of God infallibly.

5. The nature of the scriptures teaches us their perfection. For if they be not perfect they cannot be a rule; for a rule must always be commensurable to the thing to be regulated. They are Christ's testament, to which nothing is to be added, being confirmed.

I shall now deduce some inferences from this subject.

1. The holy penmen of the scriptures had a command from God to write, and did not write only occasionally without a command. For that inspiration was an internal command, whereby the Spirit moved them to write, 2 Pet. i. 21.

2. The penmen of the scriptures were infallible in their writing, so that they were not mistaken in any thing, even of the least moment: far less is there any real contradiction among them, being all guided by the same Spirit, who inspired the very words, and kept them from all error, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

3. The authority of the scripture in itself, that is, the power it hath to bind the conscience, does not depend on the church, but wholly on God, the author of it. For,

(1.) The church is built upon the scriptures, Eph. ii. 20. 'Upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles.' This foundation is not personal; 'for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ:' but it is doctrinal, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles. Now, it is clear, that the superstructure depends on the foundation, not the foundation on it.

(2.) If the authority of the scriptures depended on the church, then they behoved first of all to believe the authority of the church without the scriptures, and our faith should be built upon human testimony, which is fallible; but we believe the church for the scriptures, and no otherwise, Isa. viii. 20. and human testimony cannot found divine faith.

(3.) Whence can any prove that the church is to be believed but from the scripture? and then to say, that the scriptures must be believed for the church's testimony, is a circle unworthy of men of sense.

(4.) Either the church had reason to receive the scriptures or not. If they had no reason to receive them, they have as little reason to impose them on others. If they had, what was it, but that it was truth, and worthy to be received? Therefore their testimony does not make it truth, or worthy to be believed and obeyed.

(5.) The scripture is God's own word, 2 Tim. iii. 16. How blasphemous is it then to deny faith unto God in the scriptures, while he speaks to us in them, unless the testimony of men give authority to his word? This is as much as to say, that God hath his authority from the church, and that he ought not to be believed or obeyed, unless the church commanded it; which is most blasphemous. Of this blasphemy is the church of Rome guilty, who roundly assert that the authority of the scripture depends on the church. I shall only add, that this is the high way to keep Christians off from convincing Turks, Pagans, and Jews, as to the New Testament, while we tell them that the authority of the scripture, wherein our religion is laid down, depends on the church, and that the scriptures are true, because the church says it.

4. The authority of the scripture as to us is not from the church, but from itself; that is, the reason why we receive the scripture as the word of God, it is not because the church says it is so, but because it evidences itself to be so. For as God's works do themselves tell their Maker, so his word declares the Speaker; so that a spiritual discernor must needs say, on the reading of it, though none

should recommend, it is the voice of God, not of men. Can we discern an unlearned man's letter from that of a learned man? and doth not God's word bear a divine character? It is a light, a lamp, &c. the nature of which is to discover itself. Thus there is objective evidence enough in the scripture; though indeed the subjective evidence cannot be had but by the Spirit of God; so that to him bearing witness by and with the word, we owe the full assurance that it is God's word, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 14. And this is the reason why great scholars may be less persuaded of this truth, than the most unlearned peasants; because, though the sun discovers itself sufficiently, yet blind men cannot see it.

Now, that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word, I shall prove by the following arguments.

I. The scripture makes this inward illumination of the Spirit of God necessary for understanding the scriptures, while it ascribes the same wholly unto the Spirit, Matth. xvi. 17. 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it, [Christ's being the Son of the living God] unto thee, but my father which is in heaven;' 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 12. 'God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' If the Spirit of God take the same unto himself as his own proper work, how can any arrogate it to themselves, as if by the power of nature they were able for it?

2. There is an utter inability in man by nature to know savingly the things of God. They are above his capacity while he remains in his natural state, and nothing can act beyond the sphere of its activity. This is plain from 1 Cor. ii. 14. where not only the act of receiving them is denied to natural men, but the very power of discerning them; and the reason is given, 'because they are spiritually discerned,' and he wants the organ of discerning spiritually. And this discerning is appropriated to the spiritual man, ver. 15. Had not the Israelites in the wilderness very great external helps to gain the knowledge of the things of God, Deut. xxix. ? but all was ineffectual. What was the want then? See ver. 4. 'The Lord hath not given you (says Moses, to them) an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear.'

3. If it were not the spiritual illumination that gave this saving understanding of the things of God, then the greatest adepts in

human literature would have most of the saving knowledge of such things as are revealed in the word. This plainly follows: But that it is not so, the scripture testifies, 1 Cor. i. 20, 26, 27, 28. 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' Many times it is seen to be quite otherwise. And what makes the difference? See Matth. xi. 25. 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth (says Christ), because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' Even as he hath put this treasure in earthen vessels, to the end the praise might be of God, that it may be seen it is not the act of the preacher, but the power of the Spirit, that gives true understanding.

4. Men without the saving illumination of the Spirit are so far from attaining sufficient knowledge of the things revealed in the word of God, that they judge them foolish, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The doctrine concerning Christ crucified was to the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, who excelled in human learning, foolishness, 1 Cor. i. 23.; yea, no less than madness, Acts xxvi. 24. Nay, even the godly themselves, when without the actual influence of the Spirit, are not far from reckoning as they do who are in nature; as in the case of the apostles, looking on the account brought them of the resurrection of their Lord as an idle tale, and not believing it, Luke xxiv. 11. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection seemed to the disciples as *idle tales*; how much more so to men utterly destitute of the Spirit, who many times are besides judicially blinded? 2 Cor. iv. 4.

5. The Lord promises his Spirit to the end men may be taught to know the truths of God savingly, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. John xiv. 16, 17. and xvi. 12, 13. Has he promised his Spirit in vain? or are we sufficiently furnished already? If so, why does he promise his Spirit?

6. The prayers of the saints for this illumination prove the necessity of it, Psal. cxix. 18. Eph. i. 17, 18. Col. i. 9. And they pray so, because they feel the need of it: the experience of the Spirit is that against which there is no disputing.

7. Let us consider that passage, John vi. 45. 'And they shall be

all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' It is plain that by coming unto Christ is meant saving faith in him. Now, in order to this there is a promise, that they shall all, viz. all the elect, for faith is the saving faith of God's elect, be taught of God, viz. by the Spirit, not merely by external revelation, because whosoever thus hears comes unto Christ: but it is certain that all come not to Christ that hear, and learn of the Father by external revelation only. From all, which it is evident, that unto the sufficient understanding of the things revealed in the scripture the teaching of the Spirit is necessary; and that all who attain to the saving knowledge of these things do believe.

What then remains upon this head but, that we diligently read the holy scriptures as being the word of God, and the rule which he hath given to direct us both as to faith and practice; and that we fervently pray to God, that he may give us his holy Spirit to enlighten our minds in the saving knowledge of the word, without which we will remain in the dark, and the word will be but a dead letter to us? Lord open our eyes, that we may understand thy word.

THE UTILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A RULE.

I proceed to the consideration of another Doctrine.

DOCT. 'The scriptures are the rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy God.'

Here I shall only give the properties of this rule.

1. It is a perspicuous or clear rule. For though all things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due sense of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

(1.) With respect to all things necessary to salvation, whether for faith or practice, it cannot be denied, but there are portions of the scripture very obscure, which possibly are not rightly interpreted even to this day; but in such things as are necessary to salvation, they are clear. And in this respect it hath been said, that the