

THE
ARROGANCY OF REASON

AGAINST

DIVINE REVELATIONS,
REPRESSED;

OR,

PROUD IGNORANCE THE CAUSE OF INFIDELITY,

AND OF

MEN'S QUARRELLING WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

THE

ARROGANCY OF REASON, &c.

John iii. 9.

Nicodemus answered, and said unto him; How can these things be?

IN the beginning of this chapter you have a lecture read by the great teacher of the church, to a scholar that was newly entering into his school. He is yet but a catechumenus in preparation to be a Christian, rather than one indeed; having good thoughts of Christ, but not believing in him as the Messiah, nor engaged by baptism to be one of his disciples: and accordingly doth Christ suit his doctrine to his condition, and teach him first the great principle of Christianity. What success it had first, we find in the text, but not what was the issue at last; though by other texts we may probably conjecture.

First, The scholar is, by name, Nicodemus; by sect, a pharisee; by place, a ruler of the Jews, or one of their great council. For the frame of his mind, the degree of his preparatory knowledge or belief, you may discern it; 1. By the season of his coming: 2. By the motive that prevailed with him to come: and, 3. By the confession that he makes of his belief. From all which you may see, First, That he believed that there was a God, and that it belonged to God to teach mankind; and that it was his way to teach by men; and that it was man's duty to seek after God's teaching from his messengers, and come to them and request it; and that whoever could give sufficient evidence of his mission from God, should be heard by men; and that Jesus Christ did truly and undoubtedly work miracles; and that such miracles as Christ wrought were an undoubted proof that God was with him. All these things, it is apparent, he did believe, by these words: (Ver. 2:) "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him."

Secondly, From hence also you see, that it was the evidence of Christ's miracles that had thus far convinced him, and drove him to Christ, as a teacher come from God, and consequently one that was to be credited : but that he was the Messiah, here is yet no confession.

Thirdly, And as his belief was but preparatory, so this change upon his heart doth appear to be no better, for he hath not yet learned the lesson of self-denial, and preferring the known truth and duty (of seeking after the mind of God from his messengers) before the credit of the world, or his life ; and therefore he comes to Jesus but by night, as being afraid to own him in the face of his enemies.

Yet doth not Christ cast this cowardice in his teeth to his discouragement, but fitteth his medicine to the strength of the patient, as well as to the disease : for there was more malice and raging zeal against the truth, among the Jews, than among the gentiles ; and so more dangers and sufferings, which a novice might not be so fit to encounter with. And, therefore, Paul, when he went up to Jerusalem, did preach the Gospel privately to them of worldly reputation, which, among the gentiles and inferior Jews, he preacheth publicly, lest, through the prevalency of men's pride or cowardice, his physic should not do its work, but he should run or labour in vain. (Gal. ii. 2.)

The first and great thing that Christ presently falls upon, is to let this man know, that this much will not serve his turn, (to confess the miracles, and so the divine mission of Christ,) but that he must also truly believe the office that he is sent upon, even to be the Messiah, the Mediator, and the Redeemer of the world, and must openly be engaged to him as such a one by baptism, and so own him and confess him before the world, and receive his renewing Spirit, for the illumination of his understanding, the purifying and quickening of his heart, and the reforming and after-guidance of his life.

This work Christ calleth by the name of the new birth, or regeneration, and tells Nicodemus, " That except he be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Not that there is the same necessity of the washing by water, and the purifying by the Spirit. For by " water" is principally meant that covenant which baptism did sign ; even the confession of Christ, and dedication to him in the relation of redeemed ones, children, disciples, and subjects, on our part, and his re-engagement and relation to us ; yet

“water” itself is the thing nearly signified in the word, and the use of it is of divine appointment, and not to be neglected where it may be used; but the necessity to salvation is placed in the relation, or thing signified. As it is common to say to a soldier of the enemy’s, ‘If thou wilt change thy general, and take the prince’s colours, and fight for him, thou mayest have a pardon for thy rebellion.’ Where taking colours is a duty; but the necessity is placed in the change of his relation and practice, for if there were no colours at hand to give him, yet if he be listed as a soldier (or if not listed, yet, if by open profession and action joined to them) it will be accepted; or else, as Grotius expoundeth it, “By water and the spirit is meant, a washing, cleansing spirit;” of which see him *in loc.*

This change that is here called the “new birth,” is not the new creation of a substance, or destruction of our former substance or faculties: for we have still the same natural powers of understanding and willing; but it is the change of the disposition, habits, and acts of those faculties: and, with submission to the contrary-minded, I conceive that it is not only our real, qualitative change that is here called the “new birth;” but that the word is more comprehensive, as I before expressed, including our new relation to God in Christ, as sons and disciples to Christ, and servants, subjects, or soldiers under him: with a removal from our former relations which we were in by corruption, and are inconsistent with these. So that it comprehendeth both our new relations to God, to the Redeemer, and to his church; where we have a new father, husband, lord, and fellow-servants: new brothers, and sisters, and inheritance, though yet we renounce not our natural brethren, parents, and inheritance, as the popish, monastical votaries conceive, any further than as they are contrary to the interest of Christ.

The reasons that persuade me to take regeneration in this extent, are,

First, Because it is the entrance into our whole new state that is here so called, without any limiting expression.

Secondly, Because we are said to be born of water as well as the Spirit: and certainly baptism doth as nearly and truly signify our justification, and relative change, and new covenant engagements, and adoption, and church membership, as it doth our qualitative renovation. Nor do I see how any fair exposition can be given of that saying, “Except a man be born of water,” which shall not include the change of our relation, as

well as of our dispositions. And the like I may say of other texts, which mention regeneration, which I will not now so far digress as to recite.

Having seen what Christ teacheth Nicodemus first, let us next see the success of his doctrine. Nicodemus fastening too much upon the metaphorical term of "being born again," and withal not understanding the meaning of it, nor the scope of Christ, he presently expresseth his ignorance and unbelief by this question, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Hereupon Christ returning an explicatory answer, telling him not only the nature of the new birth, but also the mysteriousness of its causes in the effecting it, and showing a plain reason from natural agents, why the mysteriousness of this should not make it seem incredible; yet doth Nicodemus return a second answer like the first, "How can these things be?" Which words do impart not an absolute unbelief of the truth of what Christ had said, but a great ignorance of his meaning, and a not-discerning of that evidence fully which should have caused full belief; but a strong apprehension of the improbability of the thing affirmed, and thereupon a great doubting of the truth of the affirmation.

And note here the aggravations of Nicodemus's fault:

First, They were the words of one that he himself confessed to be a teacher come from God, and that sealed his doctrine by such miracles as none could do, except God were with him; and doth God send any messenger with a lie, or any teacher that knoweth not what he teacheth; or will he seal untruths, or senseless absurdities, with such unquestionable miracles? Surely, a man that was once convinced that God sent the messenger, and sealed the message, should be confident that the matter of it is divine, and should never once suspect it of untruth.

Secondly, Though Christ did, with frequent asseverations, aver the truth of his doctrine, yet did Nicodemus stagger through unbelief.

Thirdly, It was the very catechism and rudiments of piety, and Christianity, which were so strange to him.

Fourthly, The term, by which Christ expresseth spiritual things, he understandeth all in a carnal sense; yea, and after that Christ had told him plainly what birth he means, not carnal, producing a fleshly creature, but of water and the Spirit, producing a spiritual creature, yet doth not Nicodemus understand him for all this?

Fifthly, Yet was this man a ruler of the Jews, even one of the great Sanhedrim, and one reputed skilful in the law; one that professed himself a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which had the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law; one of those that boasted of God, and of the law. (Rom. ii. 17—20.) Yet he that should teach others had not learned these rudiments himself.

Sixthly, And when Christ used a familiar instance, to show him that things are not therefore incredible, because invisible, or because invisible, or because we know not the nature, cause, and end of them. We may know that it is, when we cannot know what it is, or whence, or why it is, or whither it tends, as in the blowing of the wind, is evident; yet doth not Nicodemus cease his doubting on this account, but asketh "How can these things be?" The spirituality and mysteriousness of the thing made it seem improbable to his uninformed intellect; and the seeming improbability made him doubt of the verity. Because it was past his apprehension to conceive how it should be, therefore he doubted whether it were true or not. He had not so much rational consciousness of his own ignorance, or so much confidence in a teacher sent from God, and sealing his doctrine by miracles, as to acquiesce as a learner in his teacher's credit, concerning the verity of the thing, while he was seeking to get a clearer discovery of its nature, rise, and ends.

So that here were all these sins together manifested in this answer, great ignorance, even in a ruler; unbelief, doubting of the conclusion, when he had acknowledged the premises; an unteachableness, in part, when he professed himself to come to learn; an arrogant conceit of the capaciousness of his understanding, as if Christ's words, or the plain truth, should be sooner suspected, than his shallow capacity.

From this picture we may well conclude what is the ordinary shape of man's corrupted disposition, and we may all know ourselves by knowing Nicodemus; and from hence I may raise this observation of us all:

Doct. The corrupt nature of man is more prone to question the truth of God's word, than to see and confess their own ignorance and incapacity; and ready to doubt whether the things that Christ revealeth are true, when they themselves do not know the nature, cause, and reason of them.

They will make every thing which they understand not to seem

improbable, and all such improbabilities will make it seem incredible, and the incredibility of a part makes the whole seem incredible ; and thus men will be infidels, or feel their infidelity by every thing that themselves are ignorant of ; and make it the chief reason why they will not believe or learn, because they do not already know and fully understand the things to be learned and believed : and so God must be accused in every thing that moles and worms are ignorant of.

When the Jews acknowledged the prophets to be of God, and sometimes would profess to receive and obey any message that God should send by them, yet when they heard what it was in particular, which he sent, then, if it did not suit with their interest and carnal reason, they would not believe it, or obey it, but rather persecute the messenger, and think, that surely such a message could never come from God ;—so that they must like the particular matter before they would believe that it was of God : and so God's word shall not be God's word, unless it please the blind and carnal reason of man.

So you may find they used the prophet Jeremiah ; (Jer. xlii. ;) they entreat the prophet to go for them to God, by prayer, and for advice, and bind themselves with seeming resolution to obey ; saying, “The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things, for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us ; whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey,” &c. One would have thought that these men would have believed, and obeyed any thing that God should send to them, after such a vow as this ; and yet, when they heard that the message was contrary to their own minds and opinions, (c. xliii. 1, 2,) it is said, that “all the proud men” gave this answer ; “Thou speakest falsely, the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say this.”

A full instance you have of the like corrupt disposition in John vi. When Christ doth but tell them that he is the bread that came down from heaven, the Jews murmur ; (ver. 41 ;) but when he insisted on it, that “He was the living bread, and that he would give his flesh for the life of the world, and that he that eateth him should live for ever,” these spiritual things they did not understand, but understood him carnally, and thereupon reject the truth, because they understood it not ; so that (ver. 52) they fall a striving among themselves against

Christ's words; saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Even like Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" They will not believe it is true, or that it can be, till they know, themselves, "How it can be:" and when Christ yet pressed home the mystery further, even some of his own "disciples, when they heard this, said, This a hard saying, who can hear it?" (Ver. 60.) And though Christ proceeded to open the mystery to them, and spake that more plainly which he had spoken allegorically; yet it is said, (ver. 66,) that "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him;" insomuch, that he asked the twelve, whether they would go also, intimating the greatness of the number of revolters upon this slight occasion; forsooth, because he spake that which they understood not, and would have taught them, what they had not humility and patience enough to learn; and because they did not reach it at the first hearing, therefore they thought it improbable and incredible. Many more such instances we might give you from Scripture, but, alas! it is a truth that needs no further proof; there are as many living witnesses of it as there are men on earth; the unregenerate being conquered by this corruption, and the regenerate weakened and hindered much by the remnants of it.

For the further improvement of this observation, I shall, first, open further the nature and workings of this corruption; secondly, and then show the reasons of it; and, lastly, make some application of all.

1. Sometimes the weak intellect of man is stalled at the quiddity or nature of things; and then, being arrogant as well as ignorant, it will not believe that there is such a thing, because he cannot reach to know what it is.

On this account, some question, whether man have an immortal soul, because they cannot reach to know, as they expect, what that soul is: and some will not believe there is such a thing as the Spirit of God dwelling in his people, because they know not what that Spirit is: and some think that there is no such thing as inherent, sanctifying grace, or the image of God renewed upon the souls of the regenerate; but that all talk of these spiritual, supernatural changes are mere fancies and conceits; and all because they know not what this sanctity and gracious inclination is. They think there is no such thing as communion with God, because they know not what it is; nor any such thing as a spirit of prayer, because they know not what it is.

And, indeed, if this were a wise and right reasoning, then there should be nothing in being, but what we know the formal nature of, which is as gross a conceit as most in the world. What if you know not what an angel or spirit is, doth it follow that there is none? What if you know not what is beyond the visible creatures out of sight, doth it follow that there is nothing beyond our sight? By this rule you may say that there is no God; nay, all the world must needs say so, if this were right reasoning, for no man hath a true formal knowledge of God's essence, and therefore must say there is no God, because they know not what God is; nay, it is a great question whether such men must not deny the being of almost all God's creation; for it is but little that we know of the forms of things, in comparison of what we are ignorant of. You know not what the fire is, nor what the light is, nor what the air and wind is; for all the great pretences of the world. Men are ignorant of the formal nature of these: and will you therefore say that there is no such thing as fire, or light, or air, or wind? You know not the formal nature of the sun or moon: is there, therefore, no sun or moon? Alas! there is not a pile of grass, nor the smallest creeping thing, that you thoroughly know, and yet you know that such things there are. A beast knows not what a man is, and yet he apprehendeth that there is such a creature: and no man thoroughly knoweth what he is himself, and yet he knoweth that he is.

And, for the soul itself, it is a most easy and obvious truth, that we have such a soul; but it is not so easy to give a definition of it. As the way to know that you have eyes in your head, and eye-sight, is not by seeing those eyes or eye-sight, but by seeing other things by them: for the eye was not made to see itself, nor do we see the sight of the eye; but by that eye and sight we see other things, and thereby know that we have eyes and sight: for he that hath not eyes and eye-sight, can see nothing at all; so the intellective soul was not made directly to understand itself, and its own intellection, but to understand other things, and thereby to know that we have an intellectual soul: for he that understandeth, doth understand something, and thereby he understandeth that he doth understand, and so, that he hath an intellectual faculty: for he that hath not an intellectual soul can understand nothing at all; yet I will not presume to determine the controversy, whether the intellect do know its own and the will's elicit acts, by direct

intuition of the act itself. It is as unreasonable a thing, then, to doubt whether we have such intellectual souls, because they know not themselves directly or fully, as long as they know other things, as it is to doubt whether we have eyes, because they see not themselves, as long as they see external objects.

2. Moreover, this corruption doth often discover itself, in that men will not believe the truth of the thing revealed, because they cannot reach to understand the causes of it; so many will question God's decrees of predestination and preterition, because they cannot reach the cause. And many will deny the very work of creation, because they cannot know the way of creation. They will question whether they have immortal souls, because they cannot tell how they are caused; whether by seminal traduction and propagation, or by immediate creation? They will deny the work of God's differencing effectual grace, because they know not how it is given out, or wrought in the soul.

And as well might they deny that they have flesh or bones, till they better know how they were caused in the womb; and they may as well deny that they have any blood in their bodies, any nutrition or augmentation, till they better know the mystery of sanguification and other nutritive works; and as well may they say that the sun doth not shine, or warm us, till they know how it is that these are caused by the sun. They know not how the plants are animated and specified, nor how they suck their nutriment from the earth, and yet they know that such things are. They know not how the silly snail doth form her shell, or nature for her; or how the feathers of the peacock are so beautified; and the several sorts of birds, beasts, plants, fruits, are so diversified and adorned: and yet they know that such things are: or, as Christ telleth Nicodemus here, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and you hear the sound thereof, but know not whence it cometh," &c. And do we, therefore, say that there is no wind, because we know not whence it cometh, or what is the inferior cause of it? Will you say that the sea doth not ebb and flow, or there are no earthquakes, thunder, and lightning, because men do so little know the causes of them. *Felix qui potuit*, &c. It is not every man's lot to reach such causes; nor any man's on earth to know the causes of all things which he knoweth to be, nor fully the causes of any one.

3. Moreover, this folly of man's heart doth discover itself thus: in that men will not believe the truths revealed by God, because they cannot see God's ends and reasons, and the use of

the things. Many an evident truth is rejected by the proud wit of foolish man, because God hath not told them why he hath so determined and ordered the business; or, if he have told it, yet they understand it not. So many infidels and Socinians do deny Christ's satisfaction as a ransom and sacrifice for sin, because they cannot see any reason for it, or necessity of it. They cannot see, but God may pardon sin without satisfaction: and then, what need of all this ado, or what likelihood, that God would lay so much on his Son, or make so great a business of this work for our good, and his glory, if all was needless? and thus many deny the universal extent of his satisfaction, as being for all mankind, because they are not able to see the reason and use of it. They thrust in their dead *quorsum* as a sufficient answer to the most express words of God, and ask what good will it do men to be ransomed, and not saved. They fear not to say that this is a thing unbecoming God, and such a weakness as men would not be guilty of: so that if we can prove that such a thing there is, they will not fear to charge it on God as his unreasonable weakness. The like we might show in many other points.

And must God unlock to us the reasons, ends, and uses of his truths and works before we will believe that such things are? We will allow parents to conceal the reasons and ends of many precepts from their children, and a prince to conceal the reasons of many laws, and to keep to himself the *arcana imperii*, the mysteries of state; and must God open all before he can be believed? Is not the wisdom and the will of God the most satisfying reason in the world? Must you have proper reasons and intentions in God; or will you have a cause of the first cause, or an end of the ultimate end of all? Alas! how little do the wisest men know of the use and ends of many a creature, over their heads, and under their feet, which their eyes behold; yea, how little know they of the use and ends of many a part of their own bodies! And yet they know that such things there are.

What abundance of 'whys' hath an arrogant infidel upon the reading of Scripture, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, which must all be satisfied before he will believe. Of all which God will one day satisfy them; but not in the manner as they would have prescribed him.

4. Another expression of this arrogant ignorance is, when men will not believe the several truths of God, because they are not able to reconcile them, and place each one in its own order,

and see the method and body of truth in its true locations and proportion ; nay, perhaps they will believe none, because they cannot discern the harmony.

What abundance of seeming contradictions in Scripture do rise up in the eyes of an ignorant infidel ; as strange apparitions do to a distracted man ; or as many colours before the inflamed or distempered eye. These self-conceited, ignorant souls do imagine all to be impossible which exceedeth their knowledge ; and because they cannot see the sweet consent of Scripture, and how those places do suit and fortify each other, which to them seem to contradict each other, therefore they think no one else can see it ; no, not God himself. They are like an ignorant fellow in a watchmaker's shop, that thinks nobody can set all the loose pieces together, and make a watch of them, because he cannot : when he hath tried many ways, and cannot hit it, he casts all by, and concludeth that it is impossible.

And upon this account many cast away particular truths, though they will not cast away all. Some cannot reconcile the efficiency of the Spirit with that of the word, in the conversion and confirmation of sinners ; and therefore some exclude one, and some the other, or own but the empty names ; some cannot reconcile the law and the Gospel : and too great a part of the teachers in the christian world have been so troubled to reconcile God's grace with man's free-will, that, of old, many did too much exclude grace ; and, of late, too many exclude the natural liberty of the will, upon a supposition of the inconsistency ; only the names of both were still owned.

Many cannot reconcile the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction with the necessity of man's endeavours, and inherent righteousness ; and therefore one must be straitened or denied. Many cannot reconcile common love and grace with that which is special and proper to the elect ; and therefore some deny one, and some another. The like might be said of many other cases, wherein the arrogance of man's wit hath cast out God's truth : if both parts are never so express, yet they are upon this unbelieving, questioning strain, 'How can these things be ? How can these agree together ; how can both be true ?' when yet it is evident, that God hath owned both.

It is certain, that the truths of God's word are one perfect, well-jointed body, and the perfect symmetry or proportion is much of its beauty. It is certain, that method is an excellent help in knowing divine things ; and that no man can know God's

truths perfectly, till he see them all as in one scheme or body, with one view, as it were, and so sees the location of each truth, and the respect that it hath to all the rest; not only to see that there is no contradiction, but how every truth doth fortify the rest. All this, therefore, is exceedingly desirable, but it is not every man's lot to attain it, nor any man's in this world perfectly, or near to a perfection. It is true, that the sight of all God's frame of the creation, *uno intuitu*, in all its parts, with all their respects to each other, would acquaint us with abundance more of the glory of it than, by looking on the members piecemeal, we can attain; but who can see them thus, but God? at least, what mortal eye can do it? And we shall never, in this life, attain to see the full body of divine, revealed truths, in that method and due proportion, as is necessary to the knowledge of its full beauty. It is a most perfectly melodious instrument; but every man cannot set it in tune, so as to perceive the delectable harmony.

What, then, because we cannot know all, shall we know nothing, or deny all? Because we cannot see the whole frame of the world, in its junctures and proportion, shall we say that there is no world, or that the parts are not rightly situated, or feign one to be inconsistent with the rest? We must rather receive, first, that which is most clear, and labour by degrees to see through the obscurities that beset the rest; and if we first find, from God, that both are truths, let us receive them, and learn how to reconcile them after as we can; and if we cannot reach it, it is arrogancy, therefore, to think that it is not to be done, and to be so highly conceited of our own understandings.

5. Another way by which this arrogant infidelity worketh, is this: when men will not believe any revealed truth of God, unless they can see a possibility of accomplishing the matter by natural means; and, therefore, whenever in reading the Scripture, they come to a work that passeth the power of the creature, the Nicodemites stagger at it through unbelief, and say, "How can these things be?" and the fixed infidels, with Julian, deride it. When they read the Scripture miracles, they cannot believe them, because they are miracles. 'Is this a likely matter,' say they, 'that such and such things should be?' And, why is it unlikely? Because it is too hard for God? What! doth his creature know his infinite power? And can you set him his bounds, and say; 'Thus far God can go and no further! Thus much God can do and no more! Is it ever the more dif-

ficult to God because it is impossible to such as we? Will you say, that a horse cannot carry you on his back because a fly cannot? Creatures may be compared to creatures, but between the Creator and the creature, there is no comparison. Have you read how God posed Job in point of power and knowledge. (Job xxxviii. 39—41.) But who is he that hath posed God? What is that work that should be difficult to him, that by his word or will, did make all the worlds? Are they greater works than those which he hath certainly done, that you speak of so incredulously? If you had never seen the sun, or moon, or stars, or earth, or sea, and had merely found it written, that God made such a world, it is likely you would as doubtingly have said, "How can these things be?" If you had no more seen the light or sun, than you have seen the angels, or souls of men, it is likely you would have as little believed that there is such a thing as light or a sun, as you now do that there are angels and immortal souls: but I hope you are satisfied with the things you see; and may not they shame your incredulity of the things you do not see: you see there is a sun, and moon, and firmament, and earth; you know these had either a maker and cause, or else were eternal, and as an eternal cause to themselves. If they were eternal, or made themselves, then they are the first being and cause, and so are gods. And is it not more reasonable to believe one God than so many? and to believe that God is a perfect, incomprehensible, superintellectual Being, than to believe, that the senseless earth is a god? Is it not more reasonable to conclude, that this one perfect, eternal God, made all things, than that every stone did make itself; or that the sun, or moon, or any creature, made itself? If you believe, that all things are the works of God, then you see that with your eyes that may shame your foolish, dark incredulity. Do you see a greater work, and think it unlikely that the same power should do a less? Do you see so much of the world that was made by a word, and do you ask, "How can these things be?" when you read of any miracle or unusual work. If it were yourself, or such as you, that had been the doer of such works, you might well say, "How can these things be?" But God is not as man in his works or word.

6. Yea, many times when men do but hear, read, or think of some objection against the truth of God's revelations, which they cannot tell how to answer themselves, they presently begin to stagger at the whole truth, and question it on every such slight

occasion. If any new difficulty arise in their way, they are in the case of Nicodemus; saying, "How can these things be?" Though they have heard never so many arguments to confirm them, and have been long receiving them, and seen an evidence of truth in them, yet every new cavil or hard objection doth seem to enervate all this evidence.

If men were as foolish and incredulous in the matters of the world, their folly would easily appear to all men. When a man hath studied physic seven years, or twenty years, he shall meet with many new difficulties and doubtful cases, and many old difficulties will never be overcome; and yet he will not, therefore, throw away all, and forsake his study or profession. Will a student in law give over all his study, upon every occurring difficulty or seeming contradiction in the laws? If any students in the universities should follow this example, and doubt of all that they have learned upon every objection which they are unable to answer, they would be but ill proficient: or if every apprentice that is learning his trade, will forsake it every time that he is stalled and at a loss, he would be a long time before he set up shop; on this course, all men should lose all their time, lives, and labour, by doing all in vain, and undoing again, by going forward and backward, and so know nothing, nor resolve of any thing.

It is most certain that all men are very imperfect in knowledge, and especially in the highest mysteries; and there is none so high as those in theology about God, and man's soul, and our redemption, and our everlasting state; and, doubtless, where men are so defective in knowledge, there must still be difficulties in their way, and many knots which they cannot untie. Can you expect, till you are perfect in knowledge, to see the whole frame of truth so clearly as to be able to answer every objection that is made against it? Why do you not lay together the evidences on both sides, and consider which of the two is the clearer case? What if you cannot answer all that is brought by the devil and cavillers against the truth, can you answer all that Christ and his servants say for it? I dare say you cannot, unless you take every impertinent vanity or falsehood for an answer. God needs not you to be the defenders of his truth. He is able to vindicate it himself against all the enemies in the world: otherwise, if he had called you chiefly to this work, he would have furnished you for it; but he first calleth you to be scholars to learn that truth, that he may help you over all difficulties in his time and way.

We are next to show the causes of this unhappy distemper; why it is, or whence it comes to pass, that men are so prone to doubt of God's truth, upon every difficulty or mystery that is in their way, and to question all when they are stalled in any thing; and to deny the very things that are certain, when they are puzzled, and at a loss, but about the manner, cause, reason, or ends of them: and among others, the causes of this great sin are these following:

1. Man is naturally desirous of knowledge, and to see things in their own evidence; and, therefore, he is often an unmannerly, impatient suitor, to be presently admitted into the presence of the chamber of truth, and to see her naked without delay. Nature will hardly be satisfied with believing, which is a receiving of truth upon trust from another; no; though he give us the most convincing arguments of his veracity: no; though it be God himself: nothing will satisfy nature but seeing. If the wisest man in the world tell them, that they see it, or know it; if the workers of miracles, Christ and his apostles, tell them, that they see it; if God himself tells them that he sees it; yet all this doth not satisfy them, unless they may see it themselves. They think this is but to be kept at a distance without door, and what may be within they cannot tell: every man hath an understanding of his own, and therefore would have a sight of the evidence himself, and so have a nearer knowledge of the thing, and not only a knowledge of the truth of the thing by the testimony of another, how infallible soever; and therefore we are all prone, when difficulties seem great, to say, with Thomas, "Except I see, I will not believe:" (John xx. 25:) but, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (Ver. 29.) How far this desire of knowledge is in nature as from God, and how far it is in nature as corrupted, I will not stand to debate; but, that it is in us, we feel, and this is a preparative reason of our doubting and dissatisfaction, if not a proper cause.

2. This nature of man is yet so much more desirous to know, that though it do see things in their own proper evidence, yet is it not satisfied, unless it also see the whole, and comprehend all things, with all their reasons, causes, and modes. Man affecteth a certain infiniteness in knowledge; he would know all that is to be known, and so would be as God in knowing: and if he be ignorant of any part, he remaineth unsatisfied, and so is ready to quarrel with all; and like froward children that

throw away their meat or clothes, or what else they have because they cannot have what more they would have. Every little child will be asking you, not only, 'What is this?' or, 'What is that?' but also, 'Why is this so or so?' and, 'To what use is it?' And so do men in the matters of God, and if you satisfy them not in all, they will scarcely be satisfied in any thing.

3. Besides this, there is indeed a great dependence of one truth upon another; and they are (in morality) as a well framed building, or as a clock, or watch, or the like engine, where no one part can be missing without great wrong to the whole. Now, when these men cannot see all, they do indeed want those helps that are necessary to the perfect seeing of any part; and then they have not the skill of making use of an imperfect knowledge, but are ready to take it for none, till they conceit it full and perfect; and thus are still detained in unbelief, and quarrelling with that which they did, or might know, because of that which they did not, or could not know.

4. Moreover, it is most certain that when God calls us at first to the knowledge of his truth, he findeth us in darkness; and though he bring us thence into a marvellous light, (Acts xxvi. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 9,) yet he doth this by degrees, and not into the fullest light or measure of knowledge at the first; so that we are at the beginning but babes in knowledge. It cannot be expected, that a man that was born blind, with an indisposition of understanding to spiritual things, and that hath lived in blindness long, should presently know all things as soon as he is converted. They do not so come to knowledge in earthly things, which they are more disposed to know, and which are nearer to them, much less in heavenly things. The dispositive blindness of the best convert, is cured but in part, much less his actual blindness. For (as I have said before) if a man have his eyes never so perfectly opened, who before was blind, yet he will not see any more than is near him, within sight: if he will see other countries, places, or persons, he must be at the pains and patience of travelling to them. And so in this case, when God hath opened the eyes of the blind, they must yet expect to know, but by degrees. O what abundance of things are young converts ignorant of, that are fit to be known! They are but entered into Christ's school to learn, and can they think to know all the first day or year? But, alas! many that are nominally entered, bring not with them the true disposition of disciples, and therefore quarrel with their master and his teach-

ing, instead of diligent seeking after knowledge. Men have not the patience to stay at school, and wait on Christ's teaching till they have got so much knowledge as might dispel their doubts. They must be taught all at once, though they are incapable of it, and must know all presently, or in a little time, and with little pains; or else they will not believe that Christ can teach them. And so they run away from him, like foolish, impatient scholars, because he did not bring them to more knowledge, and will not stay the time that their own ignorance doth naturally require for so great a work.

5. And there is also much diligence necessary, as well as time and patience, before men can come to so much understanding in the heavenly mysteries, as to be able to resolve the difficulties that occur. If you stay never so long in Christ's school, and yet be truants and loiterers, and will not take pains, no wonder if you remain ignorant. And yet these men will expect that they should know all things, and be satisfied in the answer of every objection, or else they will suspect the truth of Christ. Will sitting still in Christ's school, help you to learning? Do you look that he should teach you, when you will not take pains to learn what he teacheth? You know in law, in physic, in the knowledge of any of the sciences or languages, no man can come to understand them, much less to defend them against all opposers, and to resolve all objections, without so long diligence and pains-taking in his studies as the greatness of the work requires: and shall every young, lazy student in theology, or every dull, unlearned professor, think to see through all Scripture difficulties so easily, or else will he suspect the truth which he should learn? It may be you have been professors of Christianity long, but have you studied the Scriptures day and night, and consulted with men of judgment in such things, and diligently read the writings that should unfold them to you, and held on in this way till you come to a ripeness of understanding and ability to defend the truth against gainsayers? If not, what wonder if every difficulty do puzzle you, after all your unprofitable duties and profession.

6. Moreover, there is a great deal of other knowledge necessary to the thorough knowing of the sense of Scriptures. Though the unlearned may know so much as is of absolute necessity to salvation, (and will save, if it be heartily believed and improved,) yet there is much learning necessary to the fuller understanding of them, and to the resolving of all doubts and

difficulties that may occur : and this is not because Christ hath delighted to speak obscurely, but because our distance and imperfection, and the nature of the thing, doth make such learning to be necessary. For if Christ speak in the Syriac tongue, and if the Scriptures be written in Hebrew and Greek, (which were then fittest to divulge it,) how can it be expected that Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, or any that understand not those languages, should understand them so fully as those that do ? For no bare translation, though never so exact, can give us the full sense of the original words. Besides this, all countries have their peculiar, proverbial speeches, which are familiar with them, but would seem nonsense, or of a contrary sense to others, that were unacquainted with them : and Scripture must and doth contain such proverbs as were usual with those to whom it was written, or the matter spoken. They had also many peculiar customs of their countries, which are supposed in Scriptures, which if we understand not, the plain text will seem dark to us. The like we may say of matters of geography, about the situation of places ; and of chronology, for the due computation of times ; and of other history, to know the state of church and commonwealth, and many other parts of learning which the very nature of the matter proclaimeth to be necessary for the resolving of Scripture difficulties. Now, when unlearned men, or young, raw scholars, that want all or most of these necessaries, will yet expect that they must understand all, and see through all difficulties, and be able to answer every cavil, what wonder if they be frequently stalled, and tempted to unbelief, and say, “ How can these things be ? ”

If you say that then it seems none but learned men must be able to resolve these doubts, and defend the Scriptures against opposers ; and we must take all upon their words.

I answer, you must explicitly know all that is of flat necessity to salvation, and learn as much of the rest as you can : but if it be undeniable, that you do not know more, that is enough for the resolving of the aforesaid doubts ; why should you be offended that we tell you so ? Either you do indeed see through all difficulties, or you do not : if you do, then you are established ; you are none of those that I speak of ; you will not suspect the truth, nor say, “ How can these things be ? ” but you are able to confute all that would seduce you. But if you do not see through these difficulties, should you not humbly confess it, and not quarrel with those that tell you so ? And

for taking it on others' words, you must in reason do it, if you have no other way ; and if you have reason to think that they know that which you do not know : but if you think that the most learned men do know no more than yourselves, and are as unable to resolve these doubts as you are, you go against the full light of the whole world's experience. Let their writings bear witness, wherein they do indeed resolve them ; and do you call them to a trial, and see whether they are able or not : and let any that understandeth the matter, and is competent, be the judge.

7. Yea, some men are so far from having all the fore-mentioned qualifications for knowledge, that they have not a natural strength of understanding, or capacity to conceive of difficult things ; and yet they will expect that all should be made plain to them, who cannot understand a plain case in law, physick, or any other profession that they are not versed in, no, nor any great difficulties in the things that they are more conversant with.

8. Besides this, it is most certain, that when the best men have done all that they can, they will here know but in part. Perfection of knowledge is reserved for the time of our perfect blessedness ; and he that knows but in part, is not like to see through every difficulty : and this imperfection, joined with the corruptions which we shall anon mention, doth cause these suspicions of the truth that should be entertained.

9. There are some truths also which are not well understood without experience ; and it is only sanctification that giveth that experience : and, therefore, the unsanctified take them but for fancies, and suspect the truth of that word which doth assert them.

10. But one of the greatest causes of this sin, is the pride of men's hearts, which makes them forget their great ignorance, shallowness, and incapacity. Men have such arrogant understandings, that be they ever so empty, they think themselves immediately capable of receiving any truth that shall be delivered to them. And if they understand not what they read or hear, they never suspect their own wit, but the writer or speaker ; because they are at age, and are now past childhood, they think they need no more to make them capable. Little know they the nature of that knowledge which they want ; and how it must be attained : they know not that there is a certain higher order among truths ; and that one presupposeth another ; and

all the lower are pre-requisite to the higher: they know not how many hundreds of the lower preparatory truths must be known before some of the higher can be well understood. They would go to the top of the stairs, without going up the lower steps. It would make a sober man wonder to see the impudent pride and arrogancy of some ignorant men, that when they have need to sit many a year at the feet of some teacher, and humbly learn that which they know not, they will as confidently pass a present censure on the things that they understand not, as if they were as thoroughly acquainted with them as the best: and if they see not the evidence of a truth, they will as confidently and scornfully call it an error, as if they were indeed most capable of judging of it; when men of true understanding do see that truth as clear as the light.

If they hear a confident seducer, that hath a glossing tongue, and plausible cavils against a truth, these arrogant wits will presently conclude, that he is in the right, and cannot be answered; as if nobody can do it because they cannot; when, alas! men of understanding may presently discern gross ignorance and absurdity, in that which shallow brains are so confident of. We can scarcely meet with the man so grossly ignorant, but he is confident of his own understanding, and wise in his own conceit. So that when we may expect that they should say, 'What ignorant, foolish wretches are we, that cannot understand the word of God!' they are ready to accuse and suspect the word, and say, "How can these things be?"

11. And this arrogancy is much increased by the very nature of ignorance, which is, to be even ignorant of itself. He that never saw the light knows not what light is, nor what darkness is as differing from light. A dead man knows not what death is: a brute knows not what brutishness is, because he knows not what reason is.

There is a good measure of knowledge necessary to make some men to know their ignorance. What can show a man his error, but the contrary truth? This is it, therefore, that hinders men's conviction, and makes them confident in their most false conceits; seeing they want both that light and that humility which should take down their confidence. We have as much ado to make some men know that they do not know, as to make them know that which they know not, when once they will believe that they do not know it: especially, if men have but any plausible, natural wit, or a little taste of learning, or a

little illumination in some greater matters, which in gross ignorance they did not understand ; they presently think that all things should be now plain to them. It is the ruin, or dangerous perverting, at least, of many young zealous professors, that formerly lived in great ignorance and ungodliness ; that when God hath showed them their error, and brought them to see the excellency of a holy life ; the new light seems so glorious to them that they think they know all things, and need but little more : and now they are illuminated by the Spirit of God, they think that they should understand all truths at the first hearing, and see through all difficulties at the first consideration ; little knowing how much lamentable ignorance doth yet remain in them ; and how much more glorious a light is yet before them ; and how little they know yet, in comparison of that which they do not know. So that it is the nature of the ignorant, especially half-witted men, that have some little knowledge which may puff them up, to think they have that which indeed they have not ; and so to have this arrogancy of understanding, and speak against the darkness of truth, when they should lament the darkness of their own understandings ; and to think the candle is put out, or the sun is darkened, because this web is grown over their eyes.

12. Moreover, infidelity is a natural, deep-rooted, obstinate sin ; and, therefore, no wonder if it be hardly overcome, and will be striving in us to the last. The first sin of man, in believing the serpent before God, hath left a vicious habit in our nature. Man is now so estranged from God, that he is the less acquainted with his voice, and the more distrustful of him. We are so much in the dark, that we are the more diffident. When a man knows not where he is, or who is near him, he is still fearful ; when he knows not what ground he stands on, whether firm, or quick-sands, he is naturally apt to distrust it : an unknown God will not be well believed. Were it easy to cure infidelity, all other sins would be of much more easy cure. He is a conqueror indeed, that thoroughly conquers his unbelief : but the most are captivated by it to their perdition.

13. And it somewhat addeth to this disease, that man is conscious of deceitfulness in himself, and from thence is apt to suspect all others. Because he finds himself both fallible and fallacious, he is ready to think that God himself is so too : for corrupt man is prone to question whether there be any higher virtue than he hath experience of in himself.

14. Also, it is a great occasion of this sin of infidelity and

arrogancy, and questioning all that men do not understand, that they know not the true nature of the christian state and life, and build not in the order that Christ hath prescribed them. Christ's method is this: that they should first understand and believe those essentials of Christianity, without which there is no salvation, and then engage themselves to learn of him as his disciples; and so to set themselves to school to him, and live under his teaching, that they may know, by degrees, the rest of his will: and his teaching is jointly by his word, ministers, and Spirit. Men must first lay the foundation in an explicit faith, and hold to those fundamentals as of infallible certainty, and not expect to know the rest in a moment, nor without much diligence and patience, but wait on Christ in the condition of disciples, to learn all the rest. All this is expressed in Christ's commission to his apostles, (Matt. xxviii. 19—21,) where he first bids them disciple the nations; which contains the convincing them, at age, of the fundamentals, and procuring their consent; and then to baptise them, that they may be solemnly engaged; and then teach them to observe all things whatsoever he commandeth them; and this must be the work of all their lives.

Now, here are two gross errors, contrary to this established order of Christ, which professors do often run into, to their own perdition. The one is, when they do not first lay the fundamentals as certainties, but hold them loosely, and are ready, on all occasion, to reduce them to doubtful and uncertain points; or to question them, though their evidence be never so full, because of some defect of evidence in other points.

A most foolish and perverse course, which will hinder any man that useth it, from the true understanding of any science in the world; for in all sciences there are some undoubted principles, which must be first laid, and it must not be expected that all points else should be of equal necessity or evidence as they: but if we should meet with never so much doubtfulness in any of the superstructure, yet these principles must still be held fast; for he that will be still plucking up his foundation, upon every error in the building, is never like to perfect his work.

The second common error is, that as professors do not lay the foundation as certain, so they do not unfeignedly set themselves in the true posture of disciples or scholars, to learn the rest, but think themselves past scholars when they have gone to school, and engaged themselves to Christ, their teacher. This is the undoing of the greatest part of the visible church.

If they come to the congregation, it is not as scholars to

school, but as judges to pass sentence of the doctrine of their teachers, before they understand it; and if they read the Scripture, it is in the same sort. When they are at a loss, through any occurrent difficulty, they do not go to their teachers, as humble scholars, to learn the true sense of the word and the solution of their doubts, but they go as confident censurers, and as boys that will go to school to dispute with their masters, and not to learn; and, therefore, no wonder if they turn self-conceited heretics or infidels; for Christ hath resolved that the most learned and worldly-wise, if they will come to school to him as his disciples, must come as little children, conscious of their ignorance, and humble enough to submit to his instructions, and not proudly conceited that they are wise enough already; and they must wait upon his teaching, year after year, and not think that they are capable of a present understanding of each revealed truth.

15. Lastly, besides all the former causes of this sin, some men are judicially deserted, and left to the power of their arrogancy and infidelity. When God hath showed men the light of fundamental verities, and, instead of hearty entertaining and obeying them, they will imprison them in unrighteousness, and receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved, God often gives them over to believe a lie, and to reject that truth which would have saved them, if they had received it.

I have noted many professors that have lived in pride, flesh-pleasing, or secret filthiness, or unrighteousness, or worldliness, and would not see, nor forsake, their sin, but hold on in their professions and their lusts together, that these are most commonly given over to gross heresies or infidelity; for when they are once captivated to their fleshly lust and interest, and yet read and know the damnableness of such a state, they have no way left to quiet their conscience but either to believe that Scripture is false (and then they need not fear its threatenings) or else to leave their sins with confession and contrition, which their carnal hearts and interest will not permit.

Use. From what hath been said already in the opening of this point, we may see what a corrupt and froward heart is in man, as to the matters of God and his own salvation; three notable corruptions are together comprehended in the distemper, which we have here described and expressed in the common, incredulous questioning, "How can these things be?"

First, you may hear in this question, the voice of ignorance:

men have lost the true knowledge of God, and of his works, especially in spirituals. "The natural man discerneth them not, for they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) We are as blind men groping in the dark, at a loss upon every difficulty that occurs; evidence of truth is no evidence to us, because our understandings are unprepared to receive it, and be shut against it. When we should love the truth, we cannot find it; when we should glorify the God of truth, we know him not, but in our hearts say as Pilate, "What is truth?" and as Pharoah, "Who is the Lord?" We are grown strangers to the way that we should go home in; and strangers to the voice that should tell us the way, and to the hand that should guide us in it; and strangers to the everlasting home that we should go to; so that instead of a cheerful following of our guide, we are crying out at every turn, "How can these things be?"

2. And here is comprehended, and manifested also, the perverseness of man's understanding, that will needs begin at the wrong end of his book, and will read backwards; and when he should be first inquiring, 'Whether these things be so, or not?' he will needs be first resolved, 'How they can be so.' And he will not believe that they can be so, till he knows how they can be so; whereas common reason would teach us, in other things, to know first whether it be so or not, before we come to the 'How can it be so?' we may easily be certain of the being of a thousand things, when we cannot be certain how they be.

3. And, lastly, here is manifested, also, the irreverent arrogance of man, that will presume to call his Maker to account, and to know of him the reasons of his works, and how they can be, before he will believe them; and so he will needs question the very power of God; for to say, 'How can it be?' is as much as to say, 'How can God do it?' as if we were fit judges of his ways, and able to comprehend his infinite power, and the several paths of his unsearchable counsels. "He is great in counsel, and mighty in work." (Jer. xxxii. 19.) "He made the heaven and the earth by his great power, and nothing is too hard for him." (Ver. 17.) The prophet Isaiah's answer should suffice to all such incredulous questions: "This cometh from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." (Isai. xxviii. 29.)

Hence also we see what unteachable scholars Christ hath in his school, and, consequently, how patient and gracious a mas-

ter he is. When we should be submissively inquiring, we are incredulously disputing; and we will needs be wiser than our master, and question whether he teach us right or wrong. It is a wonder of mercy, that he should pardon so great dulness and unprofitableness in us; and shall we after this be so insensible of that sin of ours, and of that grace of his, as to fall a questioning of him, and his truth, and lay the blame on him from ourselves?

Object. But we must not believe all things; and, therefore, we must inquire, and try the spirits, whether they be of God, or not, even the Spirit of Christ himself.

Ans. The Spirit of Christ fears not a just trial: had not Christ brought sufficient evidence of his truth, he would not have condemned the unbelieving world for not receiving it. I have showed already how fully he hath sealed his testament, and with what attestations he hath delivered his doctrine to the world. But why do you not acquiesce in these confirmed verities? When once Christ hath given sufficient proof of his doctrine, must it be questioned again, because it is wonderful; and because that the manner of it is beyond your reach? Inquire, first, whether it be a revelation from God, or not: and if it had no divine attestation, or evidence that it is of God, then you might reject it without sin or danger, when you find it to contain things so far beyond your reach; but when God hath put his seal upon it, and proved it to be his own; if after this you will be questioning it, because of the seeming contradictions or improbabilities, you do but question the wisdom and power of the Lord; as if he had no more wisdom than you can reach and fathom; yea, than you can censure and reprove; or, as if he could do no more than you can see the way and reason of, and are fit to take an account of.

I do, therefore, exhort all that fear the great name of God, and love their own souls, that they take special heed against this dangerous sin; think not the proved, sealed word of God is ever the more to be suspected, because that the matters in it do seem strange, and unlikely to their reason. And think not that you should comprehend the mysterious counsels and ways of God. Let your understandings meditate on Scripture difficulties, that you may learn to resolve them; but suffer not the apprehension of those difficulties to make you once question the truth of God; but abhor such a thought as soon as it ariseth, and cast it with detestation out of your hearts.

To persuade you the more effectually, I beseech you do but weigh impartially, besides what is said before, these following considerations :

1. Consider who that God is whose ways thou dost so presumptuously pass thy censure of, and whose word thou callest to the bar of thy judgment ! Is infinite wisdom fit to be examined by thee ? or the works of infinite power to be tried by thee ? If there were nothing wonderful in his word or works, they would not be like the majesty of God ; nor the Saviour of the world, whose "name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." (Isaiah ix.6.) God's name must be written upon his word and works, and all must bear some part of his image ; and, therefore, hath something in them incomprehensible. Shall the infinite God have no word or work, but what may be comprehended by such as we ? I seriously profess, that it often amazeth me, to think that we should know so much of God, his will, and ways, as we do, when I consider the infinite distance between him and us, I must admire that we are made so much acquainted with his mind, and that he hath told us so much of his mysteries as he hath done, and must say, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou so visitest and regardest him ?" (Psalm viii. 4 ; Job vii. 17.) When I consider how little a poor worm, or bird, or beast, knows of me that am made of the same flesh with him ; and how much man knows of the mind of God, who is infinitely distant from him, it makes me admire the Providence that hath so ordered it. If a beast could so far consider, and discourse, would it not be a folly in him to call my writings, words, and ways, to the bar, and to suspect those as false that are beyond his reach, and to say, "How can these things be ?" Why, alas ! they are ten thousand thousand times nearer to us, than we are unto God. O then let us thankfully open his books, and look upon his words and works, and bless him that hath condescended so far to man, and lifted up man so near to himself in knowledge, in comparison of other inferior creatures ; and make much of that measure of knowledge which we have : but do not think to measure the creation of God, nor to comprehend his secrets ; much less himself. Methinks the reading of those four chapters in Job, before cited, containing God's expostulation with him, might do much to humble an arrogant wit, and to make it submit to infinite wisdom. Alas ! the very angels cannot comprehend God ; and whether any creature can immediately see his essence, we cannot now affirm ; admirations do better beseech

the highest of his creatures than bold expostulations. The flaming mount might not be touched. You cannot endure to gaze upon the sun, which is God's creature; should you approach too near it, you would be consumed by its heat. And dare you be so bold with the highest Majesty? It were not greater folly to imagine that you can span the earth in your hand, or, that you can reach the sun with your finger, than to imagine that you are meet to expostulate with God, and that all must be unreasonable in his word or works where your wit is not able to discern the reason. Surely, "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways: but as far as the heaven is above the earth, so far are his thoughts and ways above ours." (Isai. lv. 7—9.)

And as you cannot comprehend the thoughts and ways of God, so you are surely unfit to contradict them. The child will submit to the wisdom of his father, and the scholar of his master, and will believe them when they cannot reach the reason of their sayings: they will not set their wits against them, though they be reasonable creatures, as well as they. It was the humble expression of men of old, when they would contemn themselves, in comparison of their superiors, to call themselves a dead dog, or a flea. (1 Sam. xxiv. 14, and xxvi. 20.) David himself doth so to Saul. What may we then call ourselves, in comparison with the Lord, but even nothing, and less than nothing, and lighter than vanity? and should nothing contend with immensity and eternity? Should a flea dispute with a learned man, and say, "How can these things be?" How much less should we so dispute with God.

If a man do but look up to the height of the visible heaven, or look down into some exceeding depth, it will make him be ready to tremble. With what dread and submissive reverence, then, should our minds look to the height and depth of the counsels of the Lord. Dare not, therefore, any more to quarrel with his wisdom, but say, as Job, when God had nonplussed him, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee, who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I know not." (Job xlii. 3.)

2. Consider, also, what we are ourselves, as well as what that God is with whom we do expostulate. The Lord knows we are silly creatures for such an undertaking. Can such breathing

lumps of earth, such walking dust, such bags of filth, be fit to enter a dispute with God? And though they are noble souls that are thus meanly housed, yet never endowed or fitted for such a task. A spoon or shell may as well contain the whole ocean, as our narrow understandings comprehend the counsels of God. Are our understandings infinite, that we should think to comprehend the reasons of the words and ways of the Lord, any further than he hath condescended to reveal them? Our eyes may as well expect an unlimited vision, and think to see beyond the sun, as our understandings expect such a boundless intellection. It is a wonder that so much knowledge as we have should be found in a soul that is housed in clay; and shall we presume that we have so much more than we have? It was the sinful arrogance of our first parents to desire to be as God is in knowledge: and shall we go so far beyond them in our arrogance, as to presume that we are actually such indeed?

And it is observable what contradictions there be among sinful principles, and how proud infidelity doth condemn itself. These unbelievers have such low thoughts of man's soul, that they think it doth but gradually differ in its rational power from the soul of a brute, and therefore think it cannot be immortal: and yet the very same men that think not the soul so noble as to be immortal, do think it so capable of disputing with God, and comprehending the reasons of his truths and ways, that they are ready to deny the most confirmed truth, if they do not reach the manner, and ends, and reasons of it, and God shall not be believed, unless their reasons be satisfied in all these, and unless they are able to take so full a view of the whole body of truth, as to answer all gainsayers, and reconcile all seeming contradictions, they will not take God's word to be his word; yea, with the wretched atheist, God shall not be God, because he cannot comprehend him: he shall not be infinite, in immensity and eternity, because that he cannot comprehend this immensity and eternity. And so with the infidel, Christ shall be no Christ, and the Trinity no Trinity, because his shallow brain cannot comprehend the mysteries of the incarnation, the hypostatical union, and the Trinity. So that the same man will have his soul to be but as the soul of a dog for kind, and yet will have it more comprehensive than the very angels in heaven, and think it so competent a judge of God's counsels, that he will presume to condemn them, if he see not the reasons of them.

3. Consider, doth not certain experience tell you that you are utterly unable fully to understand the nature and reasons of those works of God, that are daily visible before your eyes? I will not say, only of the greater and more distant, but even of the least, or of any one of them. I am confident that there is not the least fly, or worm, or pile of grass, (much more the sun and other planets,) but that which we know of them, is much less than that which no man knows. And should such poor understandings, then, be so arrogant as to think to fathom the counsels of God, and reject his plain, revealed truths, because they see not how such things can be?

4. Consider, what a stream of experience do you sin against in this arrogance. Doth not every study that you fall upon, and every day's business that you are engaged in, most plainly discover the weakness of your understandings? Why else do you learn no faster, and know no more? Why are you not yet absolute masters in all sciences and arts? Yea, why are you so defective in all? And yet will you presume to dispute with God, and reject his truths as unreasonable, after all this experience of your own infirmity, and of your unfitness for works that are so much lower?

5. Consider, whether by this sinful arrogance you do not equal your understandings with God's? For if you must be able to see the reason of all his truths and ways, and will control them because you see not the reason of them, doth not this imply that you suppose yourself to equal him in understanding? And what greater madness can you be guilty of, than such a conceit? So, also, when you quarrel with the word as if it contained things that are unrighteous, and strengthen your unbelief by such conceits, what do you but say that you are more righteous than God? O, think not that the foolishness of man is wiser than God, or that our darkness is comparable to his incomprehensible light, or our unrighteousness to his perfect justice, or that we are fit judges of these his perfections. Hear that voice that Eliphaz heard from the Spirit that passed before him in the visions of the night: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly: how much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth: they are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it; doth not their excellency

which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom." (Job iv. 13—21.)

6. Consider, further, that it is the very nature of faith to believe the thing revealed or testified, upon the mere credit of the testifier or revealer. If, therefore, you will have no such implicit belief in God, you will have no faith at all. To see a thing in its own evidence is not to believe. The formal object of faith is the veracity of God. Reason assures us, first, that God cannot lie, and next it discerneth by evidence that this is God's word, or a divine revelation; and then we may well build upon this foundation, that each particular of this revelation is true. So that it is no true belief, if the credit of the testifier be not the reason of your assent; if, therefore, you must see the reason of God's revealed truths, and the very manner and end of all his works, before you will believe, this is as much as openly to proclaim that you will be no believers at all. You will assent to the words of the falsest liar, as long as you see the evidence of truth in the things themselves which they report. And will you give no more credit to God than to such a one? Will you believe God no further than you see a cogent evidence in the thing asserted, which shows that he cannot deceive you therein if he would? Why, thus far you will believe the worst of men; for, indeed, this is no believing at all. If you do not first believe that God cannot lie, and so that all that he saith is true, you have no belief in him at all.

7. If you are Christians, you are Christ's disciples, and therefore must wait on him in the humblest posture of learners: and he that will no whit credit his teacher, is not like to learn. If you will not believe him, but assent only to that which is evident of itself without his word, then how are you his scholars?

8. Will you allow your own children or scholars to do so by you? If they should dispute with you instead of believing you, and so should reject all that you tell them is false, that is beyond their capacity as to the reasons and manner; you would not think that they did their duty. When a schoolmaster is teaching his scholars their lesson, shall they, instead of learning, dispute it with their master, and in every difficulty, or seeming contradiction, unbelievably say, "How can these things be?" Be not guilty of that towards God which you would not have a child to be guilty of to a man.

9. Consider, also, if this course be taken whether ever you be like to come to knowledge: for the knowledge of things, whose

evidence is all in the revelation and the credit of the testifier, can be attained no other way but by believing. All things seem strange and difficult at first to those that have not learned them. If you understand all things already, what need you to learn any more? If you do not, then all that you understand will appear to you at first as darkness or contradiction. If, now, you will be so confident of your own understandings as to cast away all that you understand not already, because it seems contradictory or unlikely, how are you likely to know any more? If you will conclude that all is false which you understand not already, you are like to make but unprofitable scholars. Well, therefore, saith Solomon, "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." (Prov. xxvi. 12.) For certainly it is a double degree of folly for a man not only to be ignorant of the things of God, but also to be so ignorant of his own ignorance. And we must be more at pains to make such proud men know that they do not know, than to make the humble to know the truths themselves, which they perceive that they yet know not: and therefore, Paul doth not only bid us, "Be not wise in your own conceits;" (Rom. xii. 16;) but also intimates that ignorance is the cause of such conceits of wisdom, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits:" (Rom. xi. 25:) as Solomon saith of the foolish sluggard, that "he is wiser in his own conceit than seven men who can render a reason." (Prov. xxvi. 26.)

10. Consider, whether in this case you join not impudence and inhuman ingratitude to your arrogancy, when Christ condescendeth to become your teacher, and you are loiterers and dullards, and will not learn, but have lost the most of your time in his school; is it not a great mercy now, that he will yet entertain you and instruct you, and doth not turn you out of his school? And will you, instead of being thankful for this mercy, fall a quarrelling with his truth, and take on you to be wiser than he, when you have so provoked him by your ignorance and unprofitableness? Will you fly in his face, with audacious, unbelieving questions, and say, "How can these things be?" as if it were he that knew not what he said, and not you that did not understand him?

11. Consider, how easily can God evince the verity of those passages which you so confidently reject, and open your eyes to see that as plain as the highway, which now seems to you so

contradictory or improbable ; and then what will you have to say for your unbelief and arrogance, but to confess your folly and sit down in shame ? You know when any difficult case is propounded to you in any other matter, which you can see no probable way to resolve, yet when another hath resolved it to your hands in a few words, it is presently quite plain to you, and you wonder that you could not see it before. You are as one that wearieth himself with studying to unfold a riddle, and when he hath given it over as impossible, another openeth it to him in a word ; or, as I have seen boys at play, with a pair of tarrying irons, when one hath spent many hours in trying to undo them, and casts them away as if it could not be done, another presently and easily opens them before his face ; so when you have puzzled your brains in searching out the reasons of God's ways, and seeking to reconcile the seeming contradictions of his word, and say, "How can these things be?" In a moment can God show you how they can be, and make all plain to you, and make you even wonder that you saw it not sooner, and ashamed that you opened your mouth in unbelief. How plain is that to a man of knowledge, which to the ignorant seems impossible. If the certain event did not convince them, you should never persuade the ignorant vulgar, that learned men know so much of the motions of the planets, and can so long before tell the eclipse of sun or moon to a minute ; but when they see it come to pass, they are convinced : thus can God convince thee of the verity of his word, either by a merciful illumination, or by a terrible execution ; for there is not a soul in hell but doth believe the truth of the threatenings of God, and the devils themselves believe, that would draw thee to unbelief.

12. Lastly, take heed of the very beginnings of this sin, for it is the ordinary way to total apostasy : when men have once so far lost their humility and modesty, and forgot that they are men, or what a man is, as to make their shallow reason the censurer of God's word, because of certain seeming improbabilities ; and when they will not rest satisfied in the bare word of God, that thus it is, but they must needs know why and how can it be ; this opens the floodgate of temptations upon them, for the envious serpent will quickly show them more difficulties than their shallow brains can answer, and will cull out all those passages of Scripture, which are "hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable do wrest to their own de-

struction." (2 Pet. iii. 18.) He will show them all the knots, but never show them how to untie them. Such arrogant questioners and censurers of God's word, do often run on to utter infidelity, while they are incompetent judges, and do not know it; what can be expected from them but a false judgment: for though the light shineth in darkness, yet the darkness comprehendeth it not; (John i. 9;) and therefore presumeth to condemn the light.

O, therefore, let all young, raw students, and unsettled wits, take heed in the fear of God, that they exalt not themselves, and that they think not their weak understandings to be capable of comprehending the counsels of God, and passing a censure upon his word, upon the nature of the matter as appearing unto them. Nay, let the sharpest wits and greatest scholars stoop down before the wisdom of God, and behave themselves as humble learners, and enter as little children into his school and kingdom, and submissively put their mouths in the dust, and take heed of setting their wits against heaven, or challenging the infinite wisdom to a disputation. If they love themselves, let them take this advice, and remember that God delighteth to scatter the proud in the imagination of their own hearts, (Luke i. 51,) and to pull down aspiring sinners to the dust. As they that would set their power against God, would soon be convinced of their madness by their ruin; so they that will set their wisdom against him, are like to escape no better. "Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise: for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and again, the Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain." (1 Cor. iii. 18—20.)

Object. But would you not have men satisfied of the reasonableness of what they believe? Shall men believe that which is unreasonable? This were to make us mad, and not Christians.

Ans. You must believe nothing but what you have sufficient reason to believe: but then you must know what is sufficient reason for belief. Prove but the thing to be the testimony of God, and then you have sufficient reason to believe it, whatsoever it be. For faith proceeded by this augmentation, "Whatsoever God testifieth is true; but this God testifieth, therefore, it is true." You have as good reason to believe the major, as that there is a God: and he that acknowledgeth not a God, is unworthy to be a man. All that you have to look after, therefore, is to prove the minor, that this or that is the word

of God. And as concerning the Scripture, in general, it carrieth sufficient reason to warrant and oblige any man that readeth or heareth it, to believe it, in the forehead of it: it shineth by its own light, and it beareth the certain seal of heaven. So that we have good reason to believe the Scripture, or doctrine of Christ, to be the word of God: and then we have as good reason to believe it, and every part of it to be true. And then what ground is there for any further exceptions or objections? When you have seen the seal of God affixed, and perceived sufficient evidence of the verity of the whole, what room is left for cavils against any part of it?

Object. But it is certain that God never spoke contradictions. Therefore, if I find contradictions in the Scriptures, may I not rationally argue that they are not the word of God?

Answ. Yes, if you could certainly and infallibly prove your minor, that Scripture hath such contradictions. But that is not a thing that a sober man can be confident of proving. Because all things that men understand not, may seem to them to have contradictions. And you have far more reason to suspect your own shallow understanding, than the word. For those things, as I have showed, may be easily reconcilable by others that understand, which seem most irreconcilable to you. Are you sure there can be no way of reconciliation, but you must know it? It is easy, therefore, to see that your minor cannot possibly be proved.

Yea, it may be easily and certainly disproved, even by him that cannot reconcile those seeming contradictions. For God attesteth no contradictions; but God attesteth the Holy Scripture: therefore the Holy Scriptures have no contradictions.

The major is most evident to the light of nature, and granted by yourself. The minor is proved at large, before and elsewhere. God's attestation is discernible to reason.

It is, therefore, a preposterous course to begin at the quality of the word, and to argue thence, that God revealed it not, when you should begin at the attestation or seal of God, and argue thence that he did reveal it; and, indeed, the very quality beareth or containeth his image and seal, for you are more capable of discerning the seal of God attesting it, in the Spirit of miracles, holiness, &c., then you are of discerning presently the sense of all those passages that seem contradictory to you. You may easily be ignorant of the true interpretation, for want of acquaintance with some one of those many things that are necessary thereto; but I can be certain, that God hath attested the Scripture to be his word.

And, indeed, common reason tells us that we must first have a general proof that Scripture is God's word, and argue thence, to the verity of the parts, and not begin with a particular proof of each part. It seems that you would argue thus : This and that text of Scripture are true, therefore they are God's word : but reason telleth you, you should argue thus : This is God's word, therefore it is true. If you set a boy at school to learn his grammar, will you allow him to be so foolish as to stay till he can reconcile every seeming contradiction in it, before he believe it to be a grammar, or submit to learn, and use its rules ? or will you not expect that he first know it to be a grammar, and then make it his business to learn to understand it, and therein to learn to reconcile all seeming contradictions ? And should he not in modesty and reason, think that his master can reconcile that which may seem irreconcilable to him, and such unlearned novices as he is ?

For my part I am fully resolved, that if my reason could reach to none of the matters revealed in Scriptures, so as to see them in the evidence of the thing, yet if I once see the evidence of divine revelation, I may well be assured that it is wholly true, how far soever it may transcend my reason ; for I have reason to believe all that God revealeth and asserteth ; and I have reason to acknowledge the imbecility of my reason, and its incompetency to censure the wisdom of God.

And thus I abhor both the doctrine of them that say ; ' We have no reason to be Christians, and that the truth of Scripture is an indemonstrable principle that must be believed without reasons, and not proved by them ; ' and also the arrogant infidelity of them that will believe nothing to be a divine revelation, unless their reason can comprehend the thing itself, or, at least, if there be any thing in it that seems contradictory to their reason ; and so will begin at the wrong end, and examine the particular matters, by the test of their blind reason, when they should first examine the attestations of the whole, where the evidences are more fitted for the reason, even of the younger Christians to discern.

I easily confess that no man should groundlessly believe any thing to be a divine testimony, or believe any man, that saith, ' He speaks from God ; ' but when God hath given them sufficient reason to believe that the testimony and revelation is indeed from himself ; if after that, men will still be doubting, because their reason is stalled about the manner, and the causes, and

ends, and will believe no more than is within the reach of their reason in these respects ; nor confess that it is God's word, unless they can vindicate it from all objections, and know, why and how it is, as well as, that it is ; this is a mere unreasonable belief. It is ordinary with princes and other lawgivers, in wisdom, to conceal the reason of their laws : shall subjects, therefore, presume to censure them as defective in wisdom or justice, because that they know not the reason of them ? I say again, if there were nothing in Scripture, but what the reason of man could comprehend, it were not so like to be the product of the infinite wisdom of God. Let reason, therefore, stoop to the wisdom of our Maker ; and when he hath let us know that it is he that speaketh, let us humbly learn, and not proudly expostulate with him about the rest.

Though I shall not undertake to set upon the resolution of all the questions of incredulous men, which they commonly raise against the word of God, (for that would take up many large volumes of itself,) yet as I have dissuaded them from this arrogance of wit, so I shall make trial of a few of their most common and greatest objections, to show them that their infidelity is capable of a confutation, as well as of a dehortation.

Obj. 1. You tell us out of Scripture, that there are devils, most wicked, malicious spirits, addicted to do evil : who made these devils, or how came they to be so bad ? Certainly, God is good, and therefore made nothing but what was good ; and every thing must have a first cause. If they made themselves evil, then they were the first cause of their own evil ; and then you deify the will of the devil, in making it to be absolutely a first cause. If you say, as some, 'That sin is but a privation, and therefore hath no efficient cause, but a deficient,' then either that deficiency must be first from God (and then he should be the first cause of all sin) or from the will of the devil ; and then either he was before bound *non-deficere*, or not : if not, it was no sin ; if he were, then, first, he could *primo deficere*, though God did all that belonged to him to prevent it. Secondly, and he could have stood without any more help than he had when he fell, and so *quoad determinationem propriae voluntatis*, should have been the first determining cause of his own perseverance, or non-deficiency ; for if he could not stand, it was no sin to fall, being before innocent : moreover, their sin was not a mere privation, but materially an act (whether *velle* or *nolle*) and formally a relation of disconformity to the law.

Answ. 1. The devil himself was the first cause of his own pravity: God made him not evil, but he made himself so. God gave him free-will to be a self-determining principle; by this he was enabled to stand or fall, and left in the hands of his own counsel. By a sinful act he averted himself from the chief good, and became disposed to a further aversion, which might quickly habituate him to all evil; nor is it any deifying of the creature's will, to say it is such a self-determining principle, and so far a first cause, while it had the power of self-determination from God, and so absolutely is no first cause. It was the excellency of the creature, as being to be governed, to have free-will, or a self-determining power to good or evil. Though it be a higher perfection to be determined or determinable only to good, which *in patriâ* may be enjoyed, yet *in vidâ*, for one under government in the use of means in order to the end, it is most suitable to their condition to have a liberty of self-determination; and therefore this was part of the beauty of the frame of nature, and therefore not derogatory from the workman. As God intended, sapientially, or *per potentiam sapientiæ*, to govern the rational creature by laws and objects, so did he sapientially frame him in a capacity for such a sapiential government; and that was by giving him a free, that is, a self-determining will.

Indeed, the angelical nature, and soul of man, is so exquisite, and subtile, and sublime a thing, that no man can exactly perceive and comprehend the manner of its self-determination; but the thing itself is not to be doubted of, though the manner of it be yet past our reach. We may certainly conclude, therefore, that God made angels and men good; but some of those angels and men, by their inducement, made themselves evil: for God made them free agents to determine themselves to good or evil; and the ignorance of the nature of free-will, doth cause such infidels to rise up against God with their impious quarrels.

2. And see whether these blind wretches do not wilfully put out their own eyes, and reason against most certain sense and experience; for I would ask any of them, Whether there be, indeed, any sin or bad men in the world, or not? If they say no, then I would wish them not to blame any man as an evil doer, that shall rob them, or slander them, or beat them. The most likely cure for this error, is to beat them black and blue till they believe that he that doeth it, doeth ill; and why should not any man do it daily, if there be no ill in it? Is not he mad with infidelity, that thinks there is no bad man in all the world, when

there are so many, and so desperately wicked, and when he is so bad himself; or is he fit to be tolerated in any society, that thinks there is no evil? Surely, he will think that he may do any thing, and not do evil. But if he confess that any man is evil, or doeth evil, let him ask himself who made him evil? Did God, that is good, or did he himself? And if he can find out how man came to be evil, he may find a satisfactory answer to his question, how angels came to be evil? But what if we could not tell how this evil did first come, shall we therefore say that there is no such thing? Shall we deny that which we see, and hear, and feel, because we know not how or whence it came? What folly is this? Then let every murderer, thief, or other offender, at the assizes, come off with this argument, and say that he hath done no evil; for all things are of God, and God doeth no evil. As mad as this reasoning is, yet I have known them that have openly professed that they longed to see the devil, and would ride a hundred miles to see him, in mere confidence, that there is no devil, and that upon such vain imaginations as these.

Object. 2. The Scripture saith, that God made all things of nothing; when of nothing, nothing can be made. How can these things be?

Answ. Cannot God do it, unless such worms can tell how he should do it? Doth the infant know how he is formed in the womb? But why should it seem improbable that the first infinite being should create a finite being? He that gave all creatures their forms, can as well cause the first matter. What, if it were granted, that earth, or water, or air, were from eternity? Is it not as hard to make the sun and heavens of one of these, as to make one of these of nothing?

But, methinks, these infidels should consider, that either God made all things of nothing, or else that something of which he made them must be eternal, and without any cause. If so, then it is God; and if God, then either the one true God himself, or some other god. If God himself, then all creatures should be his substance, and so be God; and so they would make every stone to be God. If any other god, then they will incur the same inconveniences; besides, the feigning of many gods, because they will not confess the omnipotency of one. Is it not more reasonable to believe, that God made a stone, or earth of nothing, than to believe that it made itself? But thus will mortals ensnare and bewilder themselves, while they will

go about to comprehend and question omnipotency, and ask their Maker, how he can so make them.

Object. 3. Moses saith, that God made the light, and day, and darkness, and night, before the sun. When the light is the effect, and the sun the cause; and the darkness is but a privation of the light of the sun. How then can these things be?

Answ. 1. Whatsoever God can produce mediately by the sun, or other instruments, that he can produce as easily, immediately himself without an instrument. Is it not as easy for him to cause light without a sun, as to make the sun itself, with its light?

2. Are not philosophers yet unresolved, whether light be not a substance? and then why might it not be first created alone?

3. However, it might be the effect of the element of fire, disposed of by God for differencing day and night, without a sun, till the sun was made. And is it not agreeable to the rest of his works, that he should first make the elements, and general matter, before he form particular creatures thereof? As he made the water, before he confined it in its banks, and made it a sea, so might he make the light or fire, before he contracted so much of it into a sun; and if he can distinguish day and night by the sun afterwards, he might as easily do it by the element of fire, or light, before. You may see a pretence of further satisfaction to reason in this point, in Thomas White's Appendix, 'Theol. ad Institut. Peripat.,' (cap. iii. iv.,) which I intend not to recite.

Object. 4. Moses saith, (Gen. i. 16,) "That God made two great lights, the sun and moon;" whereas, it is certain that many other planets are greater than the moon, therefore he speaketh ignorantly.

Answ. But though they are greater than the moon, they are not greater lights to the earth than the moon, which is the thing that Moses affirmeth.

Object. 5. Moses makes the Garden of Eden to have a river arising in it, which divideth itself into four parts, but there is no such place now known in the world, where four such rivers as he describeth are so near.

Answ. Moses saith not that this river had its rise in Eden, much less in the garden; nor that the four divisions or branches of it were in the garden, but in Eden. It was not all Eden that was this garden, nor the garden called Eden: but Eden was the name of the country (at that time when Moses wrote)

in which the garden was. And this land of Eden was in Telassar, that is, in the upper part of Chaldea, where Babylon is situate; and there the river Euphrates divideth itself into those four streams which Moses here describeth, which river goeth through and out of Eden, though the spring or head be elsewhere: the four particular branches you may see described by Junius on the text at large; and the most probable conjecture of the situation of the garden is, that it was in or very near the place where Babylon now stands, and from whence came the Jews' suffering, as well as our first sin.

Object. 6. Is it a likely thing that a serpent should speak to Eve? or the subtilty of the serpent be a reason of the temptation? or that Eve, who was then perfect, should not know that serpents cannot speak of themselves; and if she knew that it was the devil that spake by the serpent, it would have affrighted and astonished her, rather than have been such a temptation to her?

Ans. 1. Though Eve was perfect as to her natural powers and capacity, yet not as to her actual knowledge. She that was newly then created, might be ignorant of the serpent's nature.

2. But suppose that she knew that it was the devil that spake by the serpent, (which seems to me most likely,) yet doth it not follow that she should then dread or abhor him, for how know you that Eve was acquainted with the diabolical pravity or malice? How know you when the angels fell to be devils? whether long before, or whether they were but newly fallen? (as Zanchy conceiveth by their unbelief). But most certain it is, that they were then no such hateful or dreadful creatures in the apprehension of man, as now they are: for it was upon man's fall, that God put that enmity between them and us, from which our hatred and dread of them doth proceed. When the devil had showed his malice to us so far, then did God put that fixed enmity in our natures, which we all since perceive. This was not in Eve, and therefore it is no wonder if she had no more dread of this evil spirit than we have of one another, especially when it is most likely that she well knew that there were good angels, but knew not of their fall, and of their malice unto herself, and for the subtilty of the instrumental serpent, it was the more likely to be the instrument of the subtle deceiver: and it is most likely that God would not suffer Satan to use any other instrument, that so the quality of the instrument might be fitter to excite a due cautelousness in the woman, Satan himself being

a spirit, is invisible to us, and therefore, when he will appear, it must be in some borrowed shape, and he usually fitteth that shape to the ends of his apparition. If it be to terrify, it is commonly in a dreadful shape, and for the most part, God will not suffer him to appear in any other, that man may the better know that it is the enemy that he hath to deal with. And so before our fall, when he would deceive, he speaketh by a subtle creature, and is permitted to do it by no other, that man might have the more reason to suspect that he came in way of deceit. We are incompetent judges of the full of these things, unless we better knew the acquaintance that man then had with the angelical nature, and what familiarity was between them, or what alteration is since made in the nature of the instrumental serpent by the curse. Why, then, should we unbelievably ask, how these things can be which God revealeth, when we may easily know that we are such incompetent judges?

Many more of these objections might be mentioned, and easily confuted, that are raised by infidels about the creation and fall; but because Junius hath confuted twenty-two of them already, after his 'Prelections on Gen.' (iii. p. 99,) against an antinomian that then urged them from Simplicius, the heathen philosopher, I shall refer them thither that need it, for satisfaction.

Object. 7. How could Cain fly into the land of Nod, or build a city, (Gen. iv. 16, 17,) when there was no more men on earth?

Ans. 1. At least, it is called the land of Nod, not because it was so called in Cain's time, but in the time when Moses wrote. 2. It is supposed to be between the hundredth and two hundredth year of his age, that Cain built this city, and by some, the three or four hundredth, for it is not said that he did it presently after his curse, though these things are laid close together in the concise narration. And why might not Cain's posterity be easily multiplied, in all that time to such a number as might build and replenish a city, yea, many cities.

Object. 8. Is it a likely thing that the Red Sea should be divided for the Israelites to pass through? or that the sun should stand still in Joshua's time, and not all the creation be overturned by it? or that Jonas should live without air in the belly of a whale; or not be digested in his belly as other food is? How can these things be?

Ans. And what must God do none but likely things? Is it not as easy with him to do all this, as for you to move a

finger, and much more? Is it not as easy to make the water stand still as move; or to gather it on heaps in the sea, as to gather it into the sea from the rest of the earth, and to keep its course in ebbing and flowing? And is it not as easy to cause the sun to stand still as to move? And so to move as it is supposed to do? If the sun had used to stand still, would you not have taken it for as incredible a matter that it should move? And have said as unbelievably, "How can this be?" And for the disordering of nature, it was sun, and moon, with all the moveable frame that stood still together, and not the sun alone: and so made no such alteration as is imagined, it must have done.

And for Jonas, that God that made him and all the world, and sustaineth it by his power, could easily do this. Perhaps these infidels will next say, that an infant cannot live in the mother's womb, for want of air or breath.

2. Are they not as great works which we every day see, in the being and course of sun, moon, and other creatures, as any of these?

3. Is it likely that Moses would have written of such a thing as the standing and opening of the Red Sea, and the Israelites passing through it, to those same Israelites, and that he would so often have used that as an argument to move them to obedience, and deliver them his law to be kept upon such an obligation or motive, if no such thing at all had been done? Would so many thousand people have believed such a man that told them they were led through the Red Sea as on dry land? And would they have followed him forty years through a wilderness, and so zealously have maintained his law, which was backed with such motives, if they had all known these things to be false? Or was it possible they should be false, and they not know them?

But I will stand no more in confuting these cavils against the Old Testament, but speak to two, or three, which they bring against the Gospel of Christ.

Object. 9. Is it a likely thing that a virgin should conceive and have a child? How can this be?

Answ. Is it not as easy for God to cause conception by the Holy Ghost immediately, as mediately by man? Doth God enable a creature to do that which he cannot do himself, without that creature? What madness were it to dream that this exceeds the power of God?

Object. 10. Is it a likely thing that God should become a

man, or that God and man should be one person, which is more condescension than for a prince to become a fly, to save flies from being killed ?

Answ. It is one thing to ask whether this be possible, and another, whether it were done. It is, indeed, the greatest wonder of all the works of God ; but there is no contradiction in it to prove it impossible. The Godhead was no whit really abased or changed by this union, but, at the utmost, relatively and reputatively only. God did not become man, by ceasing to be God, or commixing the human nature with the divine ; but only assumed a human nature to the divine. It is not, therefore, as if a prince should become an inferior creature, but only as if he should assume such a creature into so near a relation to him.

2. And that God hath indeed done this, his evident testimonies have proved to the world ; is it likely or possible that one should assert such a thing, and seal it in the face of the world, with miracles, and rise himself from the dead, and send forth a spirit of miracles and of holiness on his church, to confirm his affirmation, if all this were not true which he affirmeth ?

3. Is this the thanks that God shall have for his wonderful condescension, that though he prove it to be true yet we will not believe the mercy that he shows us, unless it seem likely to us in the way of its accomplishment ?

Object. 11. Is it not a contradiction to say, that there are three persons, and but one God ?

Answ. No ; because to be a person or substance in the Godhead, and to be a God is not all one. It is no contradiction that the vegetative, sensitive, and rational in man should be three, and distinct one from another, and yet not be three souls, but one. And that power, understanding, and will, should be three, and distinct ; and yet not three souls, but one ; and that power, light, and heat, should be distinct in the sun ; and yet not be three suns but one. Why, then, should the divine Trinity of subsistences seem a contradiction.

Object. 12. There are many contradictions in the Scripture : and, therefore, it is incredible. For example, "Before the cock crow twice." (Mark xiv. 30.) Matthew and Luke say, "Before the cock crow." And many the like.

Answ. 1. It is mere ignorance of the sense of Scripture, that causeth this conceit of contradiction. Expositors themselves are imperfect in the understanding of them ; yet if you

will well read them, you will see how easily and clearly they reconcile many things that seem irreconcilable to the ignorant. Read among others, Scharpius's 'Symphonia,' to that end.

2. As to the text instanced, the second cock's crowing was then specially and eminently called "the cock's crowing;" and, therefore, Matthew and Luke do name no more but "the crowing of the cock," meaning that second cock, which was specially so called; (of which see Grotius on the text;) whereas, Mark doth more precisely express the same in fuller words: what a vain mind is it that will pick quarrels with such expressions!

I give but a brief touch of these few common exceptions, leaving them to seek the resolution of such doubts, from commentators that have performed it, or from their judicious teachers who are at hand, and ready to doubt it.

The Lord acquaint unbelieving sinners with the greatness of their ignorance, and the shallowness of their capacities, that they may know how unfit they are to expostulate with their Maker, and what need they have to wait upon him as humble learners! For the meek he will teach his way; (Psalm xxv. 9;) and unto babes doth he reveal the mysteries of his will. For though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off. (Psalm cxxxviii. 6.) And the mysteries of the Gospel, which now seem incredible, he will one day open to the comfort of his saints, and the confusion of unbelievers; even at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.