

SERMON IV.

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THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

READER,

Be pleased to take notice, that the worthy author of this sermon, not long after he had preached it, by a very sad hand of God, fell sick and died; so that he had not opportunity himself to bring it forth into light. You have it here as it was taken by a good writer, yet so as it hath been compared with the author's own notes; which yet being for the most part written in characters, the comparer could not make so much advantage of them as he desired.

Had the Lord been pleased to spare him his life, this discourse had come forth more exact and accurate than now it doth; but such as it is, it here presents itself to thee; and it is hoped, though that is wanting which might please the learned eye, yet there is that in it which may profit the judicious Christian. You will here see the difference of treatises put forth by the authors themselves, and by others; which is as great as the difference betwixt the child whom the mother nurses herself, which is full, and fair, and lusty, and that which is put out after her death, which is too often infirm, lean, and starved.

If thou findest any thing in this sermon that is for thy profit, bless God for it; and pray that no more such hopeful instruments may be cut off in the prime of their days.

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

You have heard [that] “there is a God;” and you have had a discourse “concerning the Trinity.” I am now to clear and prove to you “the divine authority of the scriptures;” therefore I crave your attention to what the scripture reports of itself in 2 Tim. iii. 16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

It was motive enough to the Ephesians to plead and zealously to contend for the image of Diana, because they said it was that which fell from Jupiter. (Acts xix. 35.) Surely then you will have reason to plead for, and to hold fast, this blessed book which we call “the Bible,” if I shall be able to make it further evident, that it is that book which God himself hath written: an argument which you need to hear, and which you had need seriously consider. For, as I shall anon press it upon you, if you did believe the glory the scripture speaks of, and the dreadful misery that remains for impenitent sinners in hell; if things as they are stated in the scripture were looked upon as real truths; it would cause you presently to return to God by godliness.

There were even in the apostle's time seducers, (so you find in the beginning of this chapter,) persons that would resist the truth, as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses; not only in the present age, (which is like the dregs of the world in comparison of the primitive times,) but even then also there were seducers and deceivers; there are comets among the stars, as well as *ignis fatuus* that creeps upon the earth. What must Timothy do? "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (Verses 14, 15.) *From a child*—Josephus in his book against Apion tells us, the children of the Jews were so instructed in their laws, that they could scarcely name a law to them but they could tell it: more shame to us Christians that take no care to teach a religion that may much more easily be learned than the Jewish religion could! *From a child thou hast learned the scriptures*—And it would be a shame for a person so long instructed not to continue in this doctrine; a shame for an old professor, well educated, to desert the principles of his religion, and forsake the truths of scripture. Do not forsake them. "Why?" This verse gives two reasons: First, *It is of divine revelation*: Secondly, *It "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*

A little to explain the words:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God—"Scripture" in the text is the same with "the holy scriptures," verse 15. For you must know, that in the Bible the word "scripture" is commonly taken for "the holy scriptures." So, "Search the scripture." (John v. 39.) "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures." (Matt. xxii. 29.) "The scripture cannot be broken." (John x. 35.) So you must understand it here, "all scripture;" that is, not every thing that is written, but "the holy scripture."

Is of divine inspiration.—The meaning is, that the things written are not of human invention, are not the contrivance of any man's wit, or any man's fancy; but they are the real revelations of the mind and will of God. And yet those things which were thus revealed,—good men were excited to write them, and assisted in it. I say, the inspiration of God comprehends in it these two things: First, The truths contained in this scripture were not inventions of man's brain or fancy. Secondly, That they who wrote them were excited to it, and were assisted in it, by the Holy Ghost.

The text is both explained and confirmed by the parallel place: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 20, 21.)

That you may a little understand this text, give me leave to gloss upon it. In verse 16, the apostle said, "'We have not followed cunningly devised fables,' &c.; that which we have proposed and

preached unto you, was nothing cunningly devised by us ; ‘ when we made known to you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ We saw him transfigured. We did not go about to tell you the story ourselves. But if you will not believe that, ‘ we have also a more sure word of prophecy.’ There are predictions concerning Christ in the Old Testament, ‘ whereunto ye do ’ very ‘ well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.’ ” (Verse 19.) Not as some enthusiasts would interpret this, that men should mind the Old Testament till the Spirit of God should tell them the truth of this scripture, and then throw away the Old Testament. No ; it is “ a light that shineth in a dark place, *until* the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.” I will give two interpretations : either, first, that this heart is the “ dark place ” *till* the day-star arise ; and so the word “ until ” shall not refer to the word “ take heed,” but only to “ dark place ; ” man’s heart is the dark place. But I rather take it, *till* they saw the accomplishment of those prophecies ; *till* you see that really fulfilled which hath been prophesied. “ Take heed : ” Why ? “ Knowing this, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private *interpretation*,” &c. : so we read the word. In the Greek it is, “ They are not of any private *incitation and impulsio*n ; ” for the word hath reference to the custom of racers. Now, you know, racers do not set out when they please themselves, but when the watch-word is given. Now “ no prophecy is of any private interpretation : ” they did not go about nor set about it *till* God really put them upon it ; for it was not the effect of their own will, choice, or invention, “ but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Say the Papists, “ The scripture is of no private interpretation ; therefore you cannot understand it.” But that is just as if I should say, “ You must not put what meaning you will upon my words ; and therefore you cannot understand them.” The scriptures being from God, are not to any of private interpretation ; that is, to put any other meaning upon them than what God means. But it doth not follow [that] what God means cannot be understood. It is said that “ God spake by the mouth of the holy prophets,” &c. (Luke i. 70.) The apostles, before they preached, were endued with power from on high, as you read in the Acts. Paul saith of himself, it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, (Gal. i. 15, 16,) by the revelation of the gospel : “ If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Cor. xiv. 37.)

QUESTION.

The grand inquiry will be, *How may any man be truly satisfied, that this book is the word of God ? or that it hath divine authority, or divine inspiration ?*

SOLUTION.

I confess it is an undertaking too great for me ; but yet sometimes you have seen a little boat follow a great ship. That I may distinctly

do it, and offer my own thoughts in this great inquiry, I shall give you what I have to say in these seven propositions:—

PROPOSITION I. *That there may be a revelation from God, no man can doubt but an atheist that thinks there is no God.*—That there has been a revelation from God, is acknowledged by the Gentiles, for they looked upon their oracles as answers of their gods; and it is acknowledged also by the Jews, who tell us that Moses had their laws from God upon the mount, and all the prophets were moved and excited by God to deliver their errands to them. Since there is a God, God may make a revelation of his mind.

PROP. II. *That there should be a revelation of God's mind and will, every man cannot but grant it to be highly reasonable.*—For, alas! poor man is a sinner, a pitiful, dark, blind thing. Now he cannot but confess, though he hath no Bible, yet surely he is not what he was when he came out of God's hand; but he is now ignorant, and does not know all his duty; and he is backward to do that which he does know; and if he were not backward, he could [not] tell whether God would accept of it or not. Therefore man cannot but say it is a thing highly reasonable that there should be a revelation of the will of God, that he might know his duty; and if he did do it, God would take it kindly at his hand.

PROP. III. *We ought to have good satisfaction for that which we entertain as a divine revelation.*—For there are more persons come in God's name than have God's commission; a great many more say, "Thus says the Lord," than ever were bid to speak God's word. As we cannot believe we know not what, so we cannot believe we know not why. Whoever believes any thing, he hath some reason why he does believe it: "Continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of:"* (2 Tim. iii. 14:) not, those things which are concredited and trusted to thee; but, "those things of which thou hast been assured." Now, saith our Saviour, "Ye worship ye know not what;" (John iv. 22;) intimating [that] persons ought to understand what and why they worship. We are not born with this notion, that this Bible is a beam of the Sun of righteousness; we must therefore see why we entertain it. That rule is excellent: "Though I must not, cannot give a reason of every thing believed; (for many things far transcend all that my short understanding is able to reach;) yet I must, and I am bound to, give a reason of all that I believe, because God hath said it." When the gospel was preached, the Bereans were commended for examining whether those things were so or not. If I am satisfied [that] this book is God's word, I have reason enough to believe whatever is revealed; for God is too good to deceive, and too wise to be deceived; and therefore show me but that God hath said it, and that it is really God's mind, I have all the reason in the world to believe it; but now I must have some reason for which I believe that this book is the revelation of God's mind and will.

* *Επιστωθης, επληροφορηθης.*—HESYCHIVS. "Of which thou art become fully assured, or rendered perfectly certain."—EDIT. *Quorum firma seu plena fides tibi facta est.*—FULLERI *Miscell.* lib. i. cap. 19. "Of which a firm or full assurance is made to you."—EDIT.

PROP. IV. *Where we ought to be satisfied, there it is certain God hath given minds desirous of satisfaction to see some ground for it.*—I mean, since it is so great a matter, we ought not to be fondly credulous. No question but God hath given sufficient evidence of that [which] he would have us maintain as the manifestation of his own pleasure; for thus I argue: If we neither have nor can have any thing to discern what is from God, and what is not from God, then we must either resolve to believe nothing at all, as never knowing but that we may be cheated; or else believe what comes first to hand, be it what it will; therefore I say, Where God would have us entertain any thing of his mind, it is certain he gives us sufficient evidence [that] it is so. I say, God intended to give satisfaction to a mind that is desirous of it; not to a man that is peremptory, wilful, and resolute of his own way, let God say what he will. God will not satisfy every angry Jew that will hold fast his own prejudices; nor every sensual Gentile that lives in nothing but profaneness; but an ingenuous spirit, that willingly gives up himself to the truth of God, and lays down every prejudice, and is willing to be taught by him,—this is the person to whom God intends real satisfaction.

PROP. V. *All the evidence which we have of any thing, is either from reason or sensation.*—As it is impossible a man should give credit to that which can no way be made credible; so whatsoever is made credible to us, is made so from some faculty. Now all our faculties are either ratiocination or sensation; either the workings of our understanding, or else things [which] we feel. Believe such a thing: “Why?” I feel it, see it, hear it.

PROP. VI. *We have rational evidence [that] this book [which] we call “the Bible,” is God’s word, and of divine authority. Good men have inward sensations that this book is from God.*

Now I am come to the grand business. I have told you, there may be a revelation from God, since there is a God; it is highly reasonable there should be such a revelation; we ought to have satisfaction in what we entertain as a revelation of God; where we ought to be satisfied, God hath given it to a mind willing to entertain it; all the evidences we can have of a thing whereby we should be satisfied, must either be from our reason, or sense; and now we have rational evidence [that]-this book [which] we call “the Bible” is of divine authority.

I will dwell but upon this one argument; and before I speak to it, give me leave to ask you this one question: What would you desire, to give you assurance that any particular book or revelation is from God? This is a considerable question; for whatsoever a sober man could desire to give him assurance this book is from God, he hath it; and if God say, “Thou hadst all I could give thee,” it would nonplus all at that day if they be found unbelievers.

I can possibly desire nothing but these three things:—

First. *Methinks whatsoever should come from God should press holiness and godliness; should press such a religion, that if men love it*

they should be happy by it ; and should give such arguments to engage men to this religion, as should be proper to persuade.

Secondly. *I should think that the publisher of this doctrine should himself be an exemplary person ; for I could not easily imagine God would send such a person to bring in such a religion as should destroy it by his own life, and bring to ruin by his works what he had spoken with his mouth.*

Thirdly. *I should expect such a person should work miracles to give us assurance [that] he had a divine commission.*

Now let us make an inquiry whether we have not all these things. This great argument comprehends many things in it.

First. *This book presses holiness and godliness so as never did any in the world before or since, and gives such arguments for it as never were heard of, nor the wit of man could ever have thought of.*—He that would walk in the wilderness of Paganism, might here and there spy a flower growing amongst many weeds,—now and then a philosopher that gives you some good directions that concern righteousness and external behaviour : but the scripture is a garden wherein whatsoever hath been recommended by all the sober men in the world is put together ; and wherein they were defective, that is there made up. For they were defective especially in this one great point, deep humility ; and though you shall find many things that concern the exercise of some Christian graces, yet in the real practice of humility a man would wonder how incredibly they fell short.

But as for the scripture ; what would you have ? It bids you “live soberly, righteously, godly ;” (Titus ii. 12 ;) it bids you lie at God’s feet as his creature, to do with you what he will ; it would have you like God himself : that is the end of the promises, that we should “partake of the divine nature ;” (2 Peter i. 4 ;) it bids you be holy as God is holy ; (1 Peter i. 15 ;) it charges upon you whatever thing is good, is just, is lovely ; (Phil. iv. 8 ;) it commands your very thoughts ; it is so far from suffering you to do hurt to your brother, as not to suffer you to think hurt ; it is so far from allowing to act rapine and injustice, as not to allow to do any thing that savours of coveting ; it binds the very heart and soul. O what a place of universal calmness would this world be, should all serve one another in love ! Should all study each other’s good, we should never do injury ; if any did, we should forgive him ; we should endeavour to be perfect as God is. Therefore the Jew could not but say, the precepts of the gospel were “wonderful, great, excellent, and transcendent indeed.”*

Behold, the scripture is a “doctrine according to godliness ;” (1 Tim. vi. 3 ;) “truth according to godliness ;” (Titus i. 1 ;) “the mystery of godliness.” (1 Tim. iii. 16.) So that, in one word, whatever God would think fit for man to do to that God that made him ; whatever is fit for a sinner to do to a holy God against whom he hath transgressed, and between man and man ; all that is the design of the scripture. And what the scripture thus commends, it presses by incomparable arguments. Shall I name a few ?

* Τυρφο calls them θαυμαστα και μεγαλα.

1. Behold, *God is "manifested in the flesh" for this purpose.* (1 Tim. iii. 16.)—Is it nothing, sinner, that thou wilt live foolishly, vainly? What wilt thou think, to see God dwelling in human nature? to see God live a poor, scorned, reproached, contemned life? intimating this great truth, that it is not so unseemly a thing for the Son of God himself to live a poor, miserable life, as it is for a man to be an impenitent sinner. If you remain a wilful and impenitent sinner, thou wouldest in thy pride be like God, and have no superior above thee. Behold, God condescends and becomes like to thee, that, if possible, he might bring thee back again. Thou that art a sinner, suspectest whether God will do thee good, behold, how close he comes to thee, he dwells in thy own nature!

2. *Behold the beloved Son of God dying upon the cross for thee.*—What would you think if any of your parents should suffer their child to die on the behalf of an enemy? would you not think it should move that enemy? Behold, "my Son in whom I am well pleased!" (Matt. iii. 17.) Methinks God takes not a quarter of that content in the whole creation, which he does when he speaks of his Son; yet this Son "suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.) Methinks this love should "constrain us." (2 Cor. v. 14.) Poor soul, thou art ready to think God is become thine enemy; when sickness and death comes, thou art ready to say, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "Here is trouble in the world; how shall I know whether God intends good?" Behold, it is beyond peradventure; God intends good to a sinner, because he dwelt in our nature, and his Son died for us, and his Son felt pain and infirmity; and therefore he may love thee, and you need not question any thing of this nature is a hinderance of God's love. The case of a sinner is not so desperate, but that a man may be accepted and loved of God for Christ's sake: will not this move you?

3. *You have promises of eternal life, and threatenings of eternal misery.*—Never did any philosopher or any other man threaten, "If you will not observe such and such precepts, I will throw you into eternal torments;" nor ever did any man say, "I will give you such glory in heaven:" but the scripture does: Behold, "life and immortality are brought to light" by Christ. (2 Tim. i. 10.) There is a future resurrection; and this body is like an old house pulled down; by-and-by it will be a brave building again, a spiritual body, and we shall shine like the sun in the firmament, and be equal to the angels of God, (Matt. xiii. 43,) and be like God and Christ: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 1, 2.) And having this hope, who would not "purify himself even as God is pure?" (1 John iii. 3;) who would not "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?" (Titus ii. 12, 13.) If you did but apprehend

this glory, were not your mind senseless, it is impossible you could be quiet without getting an interest in it. And how great the day of judgment will be, it tells you; how our thoughts, words, and actions, and every thing we go about, shall come under a severe scrutiny.

4. *The worth of our souls.*—We mind our bodies, but a soul is better than a world. The scripture saith, the Son of God died for souls; we never understood so much what souls were worth as now we do, when we see God taking such care, and having such designs and thoughts from all eternity.

5. *The fairest and the most reasonable condition of eternal happiness, and the greatest strength to perform it, that is offered in the gospel.*—Suppose we were sensible we were liable and obnoxious to God's wrath, and could go to heaven and beseech God that he would be pleased not to execute that wrath upon us; do but think what terms you would be willing to propose to God. Would you come and say?—"Lord, punish me not for what is past, though I intend to do the same thing." But he that should say, "Lord, forgive me! I am sorry for that which is done, and it shall be the business of my life to live more circumspectly to thee;" this is the great thing [which] the scripture proposes to us. "Godliness," in the scripture, "hath the promise of the things of this life, and of things to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) Whatever is good here, we are sure of it in the practice of piety; and in the world to come, as sure of that happiness; but no more can tell what it is, than we can tell what the thoughts of all men have been since the first creation.

What arguments can you imagine possibly God himself could propose greater or stronger than these? What should hinder me from returning to God? That is the first part of the demonstration.

Secondly. *We would expect the publisher of this doctrine should himself be exemplary.*—And so was Christ. Austin said, The whole life of Christ was doctrinal, to lead us to piety and good practice; he went up and down doing good. Did any reproach him? he reproached them not again, Was he reviled? he "reviled not again." (1 Peter ii. 23.) When he came to suffer: "Father, not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke xxii. 42.) There is not such a word as that in all the pieces of philosophy, not such an expression of humility and surrender: "Father, not my will," &c.

An innocent person.—So saith the text; he is always denying himself, he will not be rich and great in the world. "Why?" He pressed you to lay up treasures in heaven; he hath not a hole where to lay his head. "Why?" Because he bids you to live upon God's providence. He lived a single life, because he would have you be as though you had not such and such relations. His very enemies could object nothing against him: "Have nothing to do with that just person," said Pilate's wife. (Matt. xxvii. 19.) "I find no fault in him," saith he that condemned him. (John xviii. 38; xix. 4, 6.) Not the Jews themselves were ever able to instance in any evil practice: they only charged him, (and so do still,) that he wrought miracles by the

devil ; (which was the greatest miracle ;) but they never could charge him with any evil practice.

“*Leaving us an example.*” (1 Peter ii. 21.)—“Learn of me, I am meek and lowly.” (Matt. xi. 29.) Now what servant would not be willing to do that which his master does before him ?

Thirdly. *We would expect [that] he should work miracles to testify that he had his commission from God.*—For he that shall come to set up a new law, a new economy, a new frame and constitution of religion, had need assure us that he is God’s messenger. If he work miracles, we cannot tell what to have more ; for we certainly conclude that God will not suffer a long series of things, extraordinary and quite beyond the course of nature, to be done to attest a lie. Miracles were begun by our Saviour, and continued many hundred years after, just as props that are set under weak vines ; so these, under the weak faith of the world, when it first began. One said excellently, that “those whom the speaking tongue did not convince, the seeing eyes might certainly convince.”* That these were proper to convince that Christ came from God, appears [from] Matt. xi. 3, 4 ; where, when John sent to know, “Art thou he that should come ?” that is, “Art thou the Messiah ?” [it is answered,] “Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (John iii. 2—5.) Nicodemus saith, “No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John iii. 2.) And the blind man saith, “He hath opened mine eyes ; and how come you to ask how he did it ?” (John ix. 25—27.) Great “signs shall follow them that believe ;” (Mark xvi. 17 ;) and these continued in Justin Martyr’s, Tertullian’s, Cyprian’s time, Gregory Nyssen’s time, and some part of Chrysostom’s time.†

1. Concerning these miracles, give me leave to lay down three propositions ; then you will see the strength of the whole argument :—

(1.) *They were famous and illustrious.*—For they were done before multitudes ; (Matt. ix. 8 ; xii. 22, 23 ;) “not done in a corner.” (Acts xxvi. 26 ; John ix.) When Lazarus was raised, they said, they could not deny it. At his [Christ’s] death the earth quaked, the temple rent, there was darkness for three hours, which was observed by Heathens as well as Christians.

(2.) As they were done before a multitude, *so there were a multitude of miracles.*—Insomuch that John saith, they were so many, that if all should be written, “the world could not contain the books that should be written.” (John xxi. 25.) That is a hyperbolical expression for a very great number.

A learned man hath observed [that] Elisha did but twelve miracles ; Elijah not so many ; Moses wrought about seventy-six ; and they which were done by them, and all the rest of the prophets from the beginning of the world to the destruction of the first temple, amounted

* Ἰνα οὐς οὐκ ἐπεισε κηρυττουσα γλωσσα, τουτους οφθαλμοι ελεγωσι μαρτυρουντες.—
BASILIUS. † Vide MONTACUTHI Apparatum in Prefat.

but to one hundred and fifty miracles. In three thousand three hundred and twenty-eight years, there were not, as we find in scripture, so many wrought. But now Christ went about healing all manner of sickness, and curing all manner of diseases; (Matt. iv. 23, 24; Acts x. 38;) unquestionless a very vast number.

(3.) *They were of all sorts and of all kinds.*—"A woman that had an issue of blood twelve years;" (Matt. ix. 20;) and "a woman that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years;" (Luke xiii. 11;) and one "that had an infirmity thirty-eight years." (John v. 5—9.) The dead were raised, the devils were cast out, the sea commanded, the winds obey: they are of all sorts and kinds.

Observe also this, that you do not read or find by any thing that there was the least of them done out of any ostentation; there was no such thing done by Christ or his apostles, to call men out and say, "Come, I will show you what I can do;" that should show any kind of arrogant affectation to themselves; but the greatest humility and modesty runs through all the exercise of this mighty power. And this practice was ordinary among the common professors then: yea, the Galatians,—they received that spirit by which miracles were wrought among themselves.

2. *Such famous miracles were a sufficient ground to make men believe this holy doctrine, who saw the miracles wrought by them that preached it.*—For if they did not, it must be either because they questioned whether the things were done, or whether done by God or not. They could not question whether the things were done; for they saw some raised out of their graves, &c. Nor could they question whether this was from God or not; for observe: where I see miracles wrought, there I am bound to believe that they give testimony to what is preached by him that works them; except that which is preached is that of which I am infallibly assured already [that] it cannot be true; except God does by some greater miracle contradict the testimony of those miracles: as now the Egyptians,—they wrought miracles; but God contradicted all their testimony by Moses. Now observe: the end of all Christian religion is to preach truth, to glorify God, to honour God, to save a man's soul. Never was there any exerting of God's power to contradict it: so that if a man may not believe a doctrine thus holy, a doctrine thus practised by him that published it, and confirmed by miracles; then a man is under an impossibility of ever being satisfied from any thing from God. For what shall satisfy? If God speak to us from heaven, we should as much suspect that, as if an angel come from heaven, we should suspect him. But since we believe and know there is a God, and he is just and merciful, it is impossible the Divine Goodness should consent to such impostors.

But you will say, "What are these miracles to us?"

3. I say therefore, thirdly, *They are a sufficient reason to engage us to believe the divinity of this holy doctrine, though we never saw them.*—You do not see Christ yourselves, nor did you see him die, nor work miracles; but would you have had Christ live always among you? If you would, he must then never die; and the great comfort

of our life depended upon his death. He died, is risen, and gone to heaven. Would you have him come down from heaven and die, that you might see it? and would you have him die quite through the world at the same time? Which must be, if you would imagine we must see every thing ourselves. It is a great piece of madness to believe nothing but what we see ourselves. Austin was troubled himself in this case: he had been cheated before, and now he was resolved he would believe nothing but what should be plain to him. "At length," says he, "O my God, thou showedst me how many things I believed which I saw not; I considered, I believed I had a father and mother, and such persons were my parents; how can I tell that?"* A man may say, it may be he was dropped from heaven, and God made him in an extraordinary way. So if I never were out of this town, it is madness for a man to say, "There is never another town in England;" or to say, "There is no sea," because I saw it not. Nay, if a man come and tell me there is this doctrine that teaches me all self-denial, mortification, weanedness from the world, and say this is of God, and when he hath done ventures life, children, family, have we not reason to believe it? If you will not believe, it is either because the first persons were deceived themselves, or else because you think they would deceive you. Now deceived themselves they could not be, when they saw so many miracles done; and deceive you, that they would not neither; for would any good man to deceive another undo himself? They died for it, and wrote this book, and sealed it with their blood; and therefore there can be no reason to doubt of it. They were witnesses, and delivered what they saw. (Luke i. 2.)

PROP. VII. *As we have rational evidence [that] the scripture is the word of God, so we have evidence also from inward sensation.*—Born we are with principles of conscience; and the truths in this book are so homogeneal to man, that he shall find something within himself to give testimony for it: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor. iv. 2.) Men believe not, because they "receive honour one of another;" (John v. 44;) and in scripture they that would not believe, are they that would not repent. (Matt. xxi. 28—32.) Men that practise drunkenness, whoredom, sensuality, covetousness, pride, and know that these things are sins, they are the great unbelievers, because they are loath to leave their sins. Offer the greatest reason in the world for a thing; if it be against a man's interest, how hard, and almost next to impossible, is it to convince him! A man would believe that the Romans were in England that reads the Roman History; but if he shall find the coin of the Roman emperor, he will much more believe it. Do a bad action; O the secret terrors that a man finds within him, as if he felt something of hell already! Do a good action; and the secret sweetness, joy, and peace that attends it, that he cannot but say, "I believe it; for I feel some degrees of it already!" (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, &c.) He speaks to the inward principles of his conscience. The reason men believe not the scriptures, is not because it

* *Confessiones*, lib. vi. cap. 4.

is unreasonable to believe them, but because they have a desperate love to sin, and they are loath to entertain that that should check their interest. There is in every life that certain sagacity by which a man apprehends what is natural to that life, what nourishes that life. A man that lives according to the law written in his heart, finds there is that in this revelation that feeds, nourishes, and encourages it; so that this man finds experimental satisfaction in it. "Doth the word of God tell me, the ways of God are pleasant? I thought, they were hard and difficult; now I find the yoke of Christ is easy, and that no happiness like this, and no blessedness like that. I thought, if I did not comply with such things I could never be blessed; now I find I need nothing to make me happy but my God." He finds and feels these things are certain, true, and real. Thus I have done with the demonstration.

You will easily observe, [that] I have neither taken notice of what the Papists tell us,—we must believe the scripture because the church saith it; seeing we cannot tell what the church is till the scripture hath told us.

And though I have not mentioned the testimony of the Spirit, yet I suppose I have spoken to the thing; for I cannot understand what should be meant by the testimony of the Spirit, except we either mean miracles wrought, which in scripture is called the testimony of the Spirit of Christ. (Acts xv. 8, 9.) The giving of the Holy Ghost, —it is the giving of those extraordinary miracles that fell down among them; so Heb. ii. 4; Acts v. 32. I say, if by "the testimony of the Spirit" you mean this, then you can mean nothing else but the Spirit assisting, enabling, helping our faculties to see the strength of that argument [which] God hath given us, and by experience to feel what may be felt; which comes under the head of sensation.

APPLICATION.

First. Then *study the scripture*.—If a famous man do but write an excellent book, O how do we long to see it! Or suppose I could tell you that there is in France or Germany a book that God himself wrote, I am confident men may draw all the money out of your purses to get that book. You have it by you: O that you would study it! When the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was studying the prophet Isaiah. He was not angry when Philip came and, as one would have thought, asked him a bold question: "Understandest thou what thou redest?" (Acts viii. 27—30;) he was glad of it. One great end of the year of release was, that the law might be read. (Deut. xxxi. 9—13.) It is the wisdom of God that speaks in the scripture; (Luke xi. 49;) therefore, whatever else you mind, really and carefully study this Bible.

Secondly. *In all inquiries into the truths of the mind of God, consult those sacred oracles*.—Here are mines of truth; O dig here, make them the rule of faith and life. While a Papist makes the church his rule, and the enthusiast pretends to make the Spirit of God his rule, do you live by scripture: "Consider what I say:" "Consider,"

there is thy duty ; “ what I say,” there is the scripture ; yet Timothy was as good a man as any of us : “ and the Lord give thee understanding,” there is the work of the Spirit to assist our faculty. (2 Tim. ii. 7.)

“ But how shall I find out truth by scripture ? ” For thy own satisfaction remember this : Have an *explicit* faith in all that plainly appears to be God’s mind, and have an *implicit* faith, resolving to be of God’s mind, in all the rest. Be it what it will be, believe it, because it appears to be of God. While a person resolves to be of the church’s mind, be thou of God’s mind : only use all means whereby thou mayest come to know it ; to wit,—

1. *Take heed of passion and sensual lusts.*—You read of some that “ will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers.” (2 Tim. iv. 3.) A lust or passion is like a whirlpit, a man is sucked up in it ; ambition, sensuality, any of these, darken and blind a man’s mind. When a man studies any thing, the mind had need to be quiet : lusts and passions are always busy and boisterous, and make a man have a great interest against God.

2. *And beware of prejudice.*—Christ said, “ Go, preach to all nations ; ” (Matt. xxviii. 29 ;) but Peter lived under prejudice, and he said, “ Lord, I never ate any thing common or unclean,” when God bade him go to the Gentiles. (Acts x. 14.)

3. *Beware of taking truth upon the authority of men.*—For that is fallible. Modesty requires you should have a fair respect to preachers and the church of God where you live ; but as to the vitals of your religion, do not take them upon authority : though a man would not willingly deceive you, yet he may be deceived himself in things controverted. In plain things of scripture,—that we must be humble, holy, believe, repent,—all the world should not persuade you out of your religion ; and as for your duty, you understand it. Never an one but knows what he is to love when God bids us love him. If we would but familiarize our religion, we could not but understand it. But in matters wherein there is a dispute and controversy in the world, be quiet and sober ; and not confident that such and such things must needs be so, because such say so. Many pretend a kind of sanctity, and pretend for God ; and a ship may carry very broad sails, yet not very well loaden. But thus it is : one man draws a multitude ; and then a multitude prevails upon particular persons : and shall I go against a multitude ? I say, therefore, Take not things upon authority ; see and examine [for] thyself. If it be plain in scripture, mind it, and own it, and charge thyself with it ; if it be obscure, think, it no farther concerns thee than God hath made it manifest.

4. *Beware of idleness.*—“ Search the scriptures.” (John v. 39.) “ Consider what I say ; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” (2 Tim. ii. 7.) They that are busied for veins of silver,—they hold the rod evenly poised in their hand, till at length it moves in that vein where it lies in the earth ; so hold your souls even in a diligent inquiry into the scriptures.

5. *Beware of pride.*—The humble man God will teach. Proud men scorn others, they will not be taught; and pride,—that will make a man to neglect prayer.

6. *Charge yourselves with that which is the end of the scripture, to live well.*—Who would go about to read a piece of law, that he may learn mathematics? or read the statutes, to learn logic? You may as well do so, as read the scripture to talk only. But the intent of the scripture is, to show how you ought to live godly, to be just, righteous, sober, to act by rule. Nothing hinders knowledge so much as a bad life; for sin brought-in ignorance, and holiness will bring-in the best light. There is a great deal of difference betwixt wit and wisdom. Many have parts enough to be witty; but none but sober and conscientious persons will have true wisdom. “A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not.” (Prov. xiv. 6.) Scorners usually are witty men, men of brave parts: a man that hath a mind only to practise wit, is never satisfied in the things of God. “If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John vii. 17.)

There are a thousand things disputed in the world, errors upon errors; but, I thank God, it is plainly revealed, [that] God hath mercy for a sinner in Christ; I understand well what it is “to live soberly, righteously, godly:” I know what it is to honour my parents, and do in my relations what becomes me; and I know these are the conditions of eternal happiness; I can but use all human endeavours; I can but beg of God, and charge myself to love what I know; so that I am able to say at the day of judgment, “What appeared to be the mind of God, I observed it; what did not appear, I used all means to understand it; I would not hastily determine myself till I saw thy mind, because I knew there were impostors.” And if this be done, if men will wrangle and make controversies where God hath made none, let them; for there will be no end of vanity and folly.

Thirdly. *Seek daily that your belief may be strengthened, that this book is of divine authority.*—For what will enable you to resist temptation, if you do not believe the scripture? “I write unto you young men,” saith the apostle, “because ye are strong.” “Why?” “The word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.” (1 John ii. 14.) You will never be strong and overcome the evil one but by virtue of the word of God. If sin tempts you, if you look into the scripture, there is peace, good conscience, the joy of God, and eternal life. And shall I for a trifle lose these? No. While we have scripture, we have an antidote against all the devil’s poison. Again: what will bear you up under your afflictions, if you lose the belief of the scriptures? You will need it when you come to be sick and die. When you bury your friends and relations, what will satisfy a man’s mind? There is an after-glory; when friends come after me, or go before me, we shall all meet in joy; did I but believe this glory, as I believe, when the sun sets it will rise again; were I but persuaded [that] what God hath said is true, as now I am

persuaded [that] I speak, how should I long for this glory! how would every child wail for this inheritance! how full of prayers! how cheerful in our spirits! how should we welcome death! how should we long till these tabernacles of dust were crumbled to nothing! when affliction comes, how should I rejoice in that I believe that "all shall work for good" because I love God! with what a quiet spirit should I pass through the great wilderness of this world! The devil knows, [that] if he can but beat you from this fort, he will quickly beat you out of all other forts. Let the word of God come to you with "much assurance," (1 Thess. i. 4, 5,) with "the full assurance of understanding." (Col. ii. 2.) You must not understand there [that] he speaks in reference to their persons, to assure them they were the children of God; but that their faith had a good foundation in itself, that this was from God, the truth of a good assurance in judgment.

Take this further advice: *If you would keep up your faith, be true to your faith; be sure you live well.*—You will always find men make shipwreck of a good conscience and of faith together. (1 Tim. vi. 10, 21; 2 Tim. iii. 8; 1 Tim. i. 19.) Remember the apostle's advice: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 2.) Never fear it, while thy mind is but willing to be ruled by God, while thy soul is teachable and tractable, this will give thee evidence [that] this book is from God; except melancholy overcome thee, which leads men to be sceptics; except in that case which is the proper effect of a man's body, and must be cured by physic. But let a man have a mind to live well, and to be ruled by the word, the Bible is the best thing in the world to such an one.

I might have spoken to a case of conscience concerning the assent of Christians to the word of God, that it is not equal in all, nor equally in the same person always; and that a man may really believe that in the general of his life, which at some particular times he may doubt of; and a man may not be fully satisfied in the truth of the scriptures, yet that man may really live under the power of it.

To conclude all with this: Since we have this reason to believe the scripture is God's word, then never wonder that you find ministers, parents, masters, to press real piety upon you: and see what great reason you have to entertain it. Alas! it may be, you wonder we preach and press religion. We are verily persuaded, [that] if you do not love this religion, you will be intolerably miserable; and we have so much compassion for you, that since we know this to be God's word,—better to be burned in the hottest fire, than to lie in those torments. We know, since God hath said it, [that] there is no comfort too great to them that comply with it, no judgment too terrible to those that will oppose it; therefore you cannot wonder if we do from day to day press it upon you.

Consider, if it be God's word, then the threatenings are true, and the promises are true; and you shall either have the promises or the threatenings within a while. God knows which of us shall be next;

for it is but a little while before death and judgment come ; then either, "Come, ye blessed," or, "Go, ye cursed." As a man hath wrought, so he shall have ; for He will render to every one according to what he hath done in the flesh. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade" you. (2 Cor. v. 11.) We know this is of divine stamp and authority. I conclude all with, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts xx. 32.)

SERMON V.

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MAN'S CREATION IN A HOLY BUT MUTABLE STATE.

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions.—Ecclesiastes vii. 29.

IN these words you have the result of a serious inquiry into the state of mankind. In the verse immediately foregoing, the preacher speaks his own experience touching each sex distributively ; how rare it was to meet with a wise and good man, how much rarer with a prudent and virtuous woman ; (so he must be understood, though these qualities are not expressed ;) then in the text gives this verdict touching both collectively, tending to acquit their Maker of their universal depravation, and convict them : "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ; but they have sought out many inventions."

The words contain two propositions :

The First touching *man's perfection by his creation* :—"God hath made man upright."

The Second touching *his defection by sin* :—"But they have sought out many inventions."

Together with a *solemn preface introducing both*, and recommending them as well-weighed truths : "Lo, this only have I found." As if he had said, "I do not now speak at random, and by guess. No ; but I solemnly pronounce it, as that which I have found out by serious study and diligent exploration, 'that God made man upright,' " &c.

The terms are not obscure, and are fitly rendered. I find no considerable variety of readings, and cannot needlessly spend time about words. Only, in short,

By "man" you must understand man collectively, so as to comprehend the whole species.

Making him upright you must understand so as to refer *making* not