

LECTURE VII.*



2 Tim. 3. 16.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

YOU have had an Object of religion ; the only competent and deserving Object (I hope) with some efficacy presented to you ; an absolute perfect Being, an eternal infinite Mind or Spirit, self-existing and unmade ; demonstrating himself to be so, by the things that are made. And now the business of that religion that is to be exercised towards such an Object (the glorious and blessed God) is continually to render to him a due homage, and to expect from him blessedness for our own souls. Religion stands in serious endeavours (as the learners among us are taught to speak and understand) “to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” Under this twofold notion, we are to go and act towards him as our chief end : as one to whom we owe all the duty we are capable of performing, and by performing whereof we glorify him ; and from whom only we must expect all the felicity we are capable of partaking of, and in the participation whereof we enjoy him ; so we are to consider and move towards God as our end, in such a motion of heart and spirit. This is present religion, that is, the religion of our present state. The religion of the way (as it is called) or the religion of *viatores* ; those that are travelling, and yet short of their final perfection. And therefore is the whole

* Preached January 9, 1691.

of that religion, to wit, the religion of the present state in contra-distinction to that of the eternal state, expressed by a term that denotes continual motion; that is, a coming to God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." We are to be continually in this motion all the while we are in this world; coming to God. In order whereto that great fundamental is to be forelaid—the belief that God is; as that which is prerequisite, upon which we have been insisting already. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But now, whosoever have it in design thus to come to God, and move towards him, they will find that they need a rule to guide those motions by which they may direct and steer their course: there is no coming to God but as he is pleased to render himself accessible, but as he will be approached; and therefore our religion which consists in this motion, in this coming to God, cannot be a self-devised thing, or an invention of our own; we cannot come to God as we please, but as he pleases, as he will have us come: we can never glorify him, but by doing his will, nor can we ever come to enjoy him but by compliance therewith. Therefore, this must of course be the next inquiry, with any considering person, any one that doth seriously design to do any thing in the business of religion: "What course shall I take to know God's will, concerning my approach, my coming, my tending towards him through the whole course of my life in this world?" It is a very rational inquiry, and that which the exigency of the case must urge every one to, that doth intend seriously and in good earnest to be religious. For admit, that there be internal principles, from the very reason and nature of things, truth and falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, yet besides that such as are needful are taken into the constitution, or among the determinations of the divine will, so there are other things super-added with respect to the varied state of our case: and it is the divine will that doth determine and constitute what we shall do in this course of our motion towards him, and consequently what shall be required of us to believe and know that we may so do, and so we do need a signification of his will concerning our faith, and concerning our practice. Though it is true, that the determinations of his will are not (as to the most principal things that do concern us) arbitrary, but they are determinations of his will, according to most excellent wisdom, most perfect judgment, and counsel, for he "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" and so doth will such things concerning us, and in reference to us, as the state of our case doth require and need, and without which

there could be no cominence restored, and brought about between him and us. And now, whatsoever will express and signify to us the divine will about such things as will be our fit and useful rule to guide our motion towards God as our end, we are to seek after. And concerning this, the inquiry must needs be made by every serious person; "What is there that I may look upon, as such a sufficient signification to me, of the divine will touching my great concernments with him?" Now we have a book among us, that calls itself, and is commonly styled **THE WORD OF GOD**. This very book, if it be not the word of God, truly, to call it so, and to attempt and endeavour to spread it as such, is one of the boldest cheats that ever was attempted to be put upon the sons of men. But if really and truly it be so, then it doth our business: you find it doth so, by looking into it, for this is the business it doth profess, and the intent which it doth own and avow, to acquaint us with the divine will and pleasure in order to our serving and glorifying him, and being finally happy and blessed with him. If it be his will indeed, it will most undoubtedly serve for this end and purpose; that being all the end that professedly it hath to serve. Nothing can so well serve this purpose as his word, if there be such a word: for who can so well tell us what God's will is, as he himself? Sure he best knows his own mind, and what judgment he hath made of things, and which (after him) he will have us to make, in order to our practice.

I might (indeed) have driven the inquiry a great deal further into the principles of religion, upon a merely rational ground, or according to the ducture of natural light; as it was necessary to be done, upon what hath been done already, in representing and evidencing to you an object of religion: which was necessary first to be proved, before we could with any colour of reason go about to assert the divine authority of this book. It would have been a very absurd thing to go about to prove from this book, the authority of it, that there was such a thing when he which should give that authority, and from whom that authority should be derived, should be unknown to us; or it should be a matter of doubt with any, whether there was such a one, yea or no. But that being once proved and out of question, now it comes in the proper and natural method, and next of course to be considered: Is there such a revelation from this God, as this book doth pretend to? hath it really that divine stamp upon it from him, which by those who do profess and own themselves christians, it is apprehended to have? And if that can be found, it supercedes any need of following the line of natural light (as such) further; because

there is nothing more now to be discovered that way, which is not more clearly and fully contained in this book. And therefore all other things that might be referred thither, I shall rather satisfy myself to deduce and insist upon as they come in our way from thence. In order whereto, our first business must be to assert the authority of them. And for that purpose it is, I have pitched upon this passage of Scripture, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." All Scripture is *θεοπνευστος*. It is only that one word that is said of it, *God-breathed*. All Scripture is (as it were) the breath of God. That indeed is the very literal sense of the word here used, *breathed from God*.

And so the words are a formed proposition to our hands, we need not vary them in any other phrase, but take them as they lie. Our business must be to assert, from them,—The Divine Authority of the Scriptures. In order whereto, I shall premise,

First : That I design not herein to meddle with divers lesser collateral questions, as touching the Hebrew points, and Hebrew translations, the various readings, etymological and other differences, which are things much fitter for the schools than for the pulpit. And therefore,

Secondly : My main design must be to evince to you, that this book doth contain in it a sufficient revelation of the divine mind and will, touching what we are to believe and do in order to our glorifying God as our supreme Lord, and our enjoying him, and being happy in him as our best and only satisfying good. And in order hereunto, the course that will be fittest to take, will in short be this—To state the subject to you that is spoken of under the name of Scriptures, with its universality, "*all Scripture*:" and then—To prove to you from that subject, the thing affirmed of it, that it is *God-breathed*, that it is inspired from God, or (which is all one) that it is of divine authority, and that God is the Author of it.

I. For the stating of the subject here spoken of, *Scripture*, with a universal term, "*all Scripture*;" that universal term cannot be absolutely universal, (as you may be sure) cannot signify all writing. Every writing cannot be pretended to be *God-breathed*, or of divine inspiration; therefore the limitation of this universal term is to be taken from the immediately foregoing words, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures." It is therefore holy Scripture that is here spoken of. All holy Scripture, the whole of that which is called holy Scripture; it is of divine inspiration. Well, what is that, that is here called

holy Scripture? Undoubtedly it must be that which in those days was immediately known by the name of the Scripture, and many times the Scriptures: nothing was more familiar with our Saviour, when he was conversant here on earth, than to speak of this book by the name of Scripture, and sometimes the Scriptures as being so in the most famous and eminent sense, according to the account that went of that part of them, among the Jews, of whom he was one, and among whom he conversed. Every one knew none could be ignorant what was meant by the Scriptures at that time, or in those days: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life:" (saith our Saviour, John 5. 39.) And this and that was done (as you often find in the evangelist historians) that the Scripture might be fulfilled. And the Scripture cannot be broken, saith our Lord, in one of his contests with the Jews. John 10. 35. Now it is very evident here,

1. Therefore, by the Scriptures, that is, holy Scriptures (as the apostle's words in this place do expound themselves) must be meant the books of the Old Testament. That (I say) in the first place must be meant by it, which then by universal consent among that people, went under the name or notion of the Scriptures. That is, those books of the Old Testament which go with us at this day under that notion, and come into that censure and account, without the apocryphal books which never came into that account among the Jews, and therefore are justly left out of that account with us. They never took them. The ancient christians did not take them into that account at all, nor the Jews before our Saviour's time, or at any time: they were not written in the Hebrew tongue (unless some little parts) as the books of the Old Testament were; and have many things very fabulous in them, that shew them to have proceeded from human authority; though divers of them (some of those books at least) proceeded from very pious writers. After that, the full compute of these books of the Old Testament was gathered up and digested by Ezra since the captivity. It was very plain the Jews never took any writing into the account of canonical Scriptures from the time they took in the prophecy of Malachi; never after that, did they add any thing to the sacred canon, and so much we find Josephus against Apion most expressly to tell us. And therefore the apocryphal writings could be none of the books that went under the name of the Scriptures here, when the apostle saith, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God:" nor indeed, did they come into that account in the Christian church in the purest times. The account that is given us of the Scriptures by Origen and Athanasius leaves

these books quite excluded : though we have an account too in ancient records of some use made of them as certain ecclesiastical books, but not as the holy Scriptures ; they were not accounted the holy books. That then is part of this subject here to be spoken of, when it is said, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," that is, the books of the Old Testament, which was the Scripture in the eminent sense at that time. But,

2. There comes within the compass of this subject too, the books of the New Testament. For we must consider about what time this was written by the apostle to Timothy ; this was the second epistle you see ; and that was most certainly written a considerable time after the greatest part of the New Testament was written. You may take notice in the next chapter, (2 Tim. 4. 6.) that he speaks of the time of his departure being near at hand. He had once appeared before Nero already, and we are told that this was written near about the time of his appearance before Nero the second time : so we have it in the conclusion of this epistle, that is, in the adjunct to it. And though those subjoined adjuncts to the epistles, are not always of unquestionable authority, yet the matter of this epistle leading so much thereto, it puts this thing out of doubt that this was written very near the close of the apostle's life, "I am ready to be offered," saith he, "and the time of my departure is at hand." Now it is evident that all the gospels were written a considerable time before this. The last of them, undoubtedly, was the gospel of John, and that he is supposed to have wrote about the eighth year of Nero, whereas the apostle suffered (as we are told by history) in the last year of Nero about seven years afterwards. So that in all likelihood this was the last, or the last save one, that he wrote of his epistles ; Paul here speaking of the time of his departure as near at hand : and we find that what was written by him, is elsewhere referred to, under the name of Scripture : as by the apostle Peter (2 Pet. 3. 15. 16.) where he speaks of his "beloved brother Paul" who had "many things in him hard to be understood, which," saith he, "ignorant and unstable minds wrest, as they do other scriptures to their own destruction," and we find the apostle James in his 4 chap. 5 ver. refers, under the name of Scripture, to another passage of his "the spirit in us" (as saith the Scripture) "lusteth to envy." You find nothing any where to answer this but that Gal. 5. 17. There, having spoken of envy, particularly before, he addeth, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." And whatsoever was to come within that character and sacred stamp must come within the compass of this subject too.

The book of the revelation plainly shews it was written by the apostle John when he was in Patmos : and after his return from thence, history informs us, that upon the request of the Asiatic churches, he did collect and gather together and put into order all the books of the New Testament, and so (as it were) did seal up the canon. And a considerable time after that, we are informed of his taking a journey to—— * on purpose to collect the Sacred Writings he found among the churches there, with whom, he conversed : and he there found the books punctually as we have them, and in the same order wherein they now stand in our Bibles. And in the fourth century, they were all recognised by the council of the Laodiceans ; therefore at this time, when this epistle to Timothy was written, there must be understood to be a reference had to all the books of the New Testament already written, and any to be written by inspiration of the same Spirit. And so this makes up together, the subject here spoken of, when it is said “all Scripture,” all holy Scripture “is given by inspiration of God.” All God-breathed, (as it were) breathed from heaven, the issue of divine breath, for those great and glorious purposes that it was to serve in this world. And now,

II. We come to prove the thing affirmed concerning this subject—that these Scriptures were inspired from heaven, by God himself, or are of divine authority ; which is the import of this assertion, as to the way of God's communicating his mind to those that delivered them. The expression is large and extensive enough to comprehend any, wherein there might be a certain signification of the divine will, whether he did communicate it by voice, (as he did divers things we find upon record in Scripture) or whether it was by dream, or by vision, to the penman, that is, asleep or waking : or whether it were (as the Jews distinguish) by immediate irradiation of the intellect, the understanding faculty : or whether it were by impression or signature upon the imagination or fancy, as a thing intervening between the divine mind and the intellect ; which way soever it was, the expression will reach it. It was of divine authority ; it proceeded from him, be it one or the other of these ways. And in order to the evincing of this by argumentation, I shall briefly say somewhat to justify the undertaking, of proving the divine authority of these Scriptures by that argumentative way :

* This is blank in the manuscript : and after examining every document to which he could gain access, the editor has not been able to ascertain the place alluded to, nor the authority on which the author states this circumstance. The fact, it must be admitted, is extremely doubtful.

and then shall proceed to the proof thereof, in that way which the case itself doth best admit of.

1. Something may be needful to be said to justify the undertaking to prove the divine authority of these writings, in a way of argumentation. In order to it, do but note these two things.

(1.) That undoubtedly there can be no effectual believing of the things contained in the Scriptures, unto salvation, without the special operation of the divine Spirit. It is only the Spirit that makes the sanctifying impression of these Scriptures upon the soul. The apostle expresses his great thankfulness to God, on the behalf of the Thessalonian churches (2 Thes. 2. 13) that "God had chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." There is no sanctifying belief of that truth but by the divine Spirit; that is out of all question: "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth:" John 17. 17. "Do thou sanctify them by it: the sanctifying them by this truth, or by the truth of this word of thine, must be thine own work." There is that vicious prejudice in the minds of men, against the design and tendency of all sacred truth, and that power of corrupt inclination, to comply and comport therewith, that it must be a great power that must overcome; and none is great enough that is inferior to the power of the Almighty Spirit. It is by a certain spirit of faith in the soul that men do believe to the saving of their souls. "We, having the same spirit of faith, believe and therefore speak." There is none can arrive to this belief, a divine belief of the Scriptures, without the operation of that Spirit. This very notion, in general, that the Scriptures are the word of God, is a dead and insipid and ineffectual thing: as all other notions of truth comprehended in that general are also. But,

(2.) I must add, that the operations of the divine Spirit are not necessary to bring men under an obligation, or to make it become their duty to believe the Scriptures to be God's word, or of divine authority: which therefore certainly doth infer, that there is a way of proving this by argument, that these Scriptures are of divine authority, so as to hold men under an obligation to believe them to be God's word; that it becomes their duty to believe them so, so that they are culpable if they do not, if that light that may shine into them that way about this matter be not received and comported with accordingly. And to evidence this briefly to you, do but consider these things:

[1.] If there be not enough to be said by way of argument to prove the divine authority of this sacred book, without the special immediate operation of the divine Spirit, then every one that hath not the operation of the divine Spirit, would be

innocently an unbeliever under the gospel. Then it would be an innocent thing to be an infidel under the gospel, notwithstanding the clearest light that can be supposed to shine amongst us, supposing only the absence of the special influence of the divine Spirit: and then the mere retraction or withholding of that influence, would be enough to justify the infidel and to make him therefore not guilty of a crime in his infidelity, barely because he hath not that Spirit; than which, nothing can be supposed more absurd or more prejudicial to the Christian cause and interest.

[2.] This is to be considered too, (to the same purpose) that if the special operations of the Spirit, were necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, then they must be necessary in reference to every particular thing which he shall be bound to believe. But you know, the whole is made up of all the parts: and when we speak especially of the necessary parts, it is plain, that if the operation of the Holy Ghost be necessary to make it a man's duty to believe these Scriptures, it must be necessary in order to his believing every more principal part, every sentence that doth more immediately and directly, concern the salvation of his soul; and then upon that supposition, every person that should be under an obligation to believe these Scriptures to be the word of God, must himself be an inspired person or a prophet. And then, this would be the consequence, that these Scriptures would be of no use at all, one way or another; not to them that have the Spirit of faith to enable them to believe them; because every thing that is contained in them, and necessary for the end for which they are written, must be supposed to be suggested and dictated to them by that Spirit, and therefore the believer would have no need of the Scripture; and to the unbeliever they would be no use at all, because while the Spirit doth not give his influence to make them believe, they (upon this supposition) never could believe. And therefore, consequently, the Scriptures would be of no use, do no good, either to believer or unbeliever. And therefore, as I have asserted in the first place, that there can be no effectual believing of these Scriptures unto salvation, without the sanctifying influence of the divine Spirit, so I further do assert, that such an influence of the divine Spirit, is not necessary to make it become a man's duty to believe these Scriptures; but it will be his duty to believe them upon such light about this matter, as may in an argumentative way be supplied and furnished unto any that will make it their business attentively to consider. And now,

2. In the second place, I shall proceed to tell you in what

way this proof must be attempted and undertaken, that is, inasmuch as the subject here, Scripture, all Scripture, is so complete as you have heard: that is, is made up of the books of the Old Testament and the New. The method that is reasonable to be taken, is to endeavour to evince these two things to you,—that there were Scriptures in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, and many of them a great while before, which were certainly of divine authority: and—that the books which we now have among us, in our time and in our hands, are the self-same books, in substance, (without any material corruption or alteration) that those were, which went for the holy Scriptures, of divine authority at that time. These are the two things that are to be evinced and made out to you, and with such evidence as may leave little ground or pretence of cavil to the understanding and honest christian: which I doubt not (through the blessing of God) may be done.

LEC. VIII.*

(1.) Now to prove that these books in the days of our Saviour and his apostles, even unto the last of them, went into the account of those Scriptures that were of divine authority: and within this compass, must come the books of the Old and New Testament. We shall give some considerations in reference to this; and shall afterwards in the close of all, (having spoken to the latter proposition too) give you some additional considerations concerning this book as now we find it.

[1.] For the divine authority of the books of the Old Testament, I shall not trouble you here with the various divisions that the Jews made of these books. And here, whereas, they reckon no more of them, than there were letters of their alphabet, two and twenty, which most apparently excludes the apocryphal books. It would be tedious and trifling to trouble you with the account how they did severally refer all those to the several letters; only it is plain that the minor prophets they made all but one book. But this division only will serve our turn (though they did not strictly hold to it, but varied from it commonly, making a third member which we find no mention made of in the evangelists, or the writings of the New Testament,) that is, the division of the books of the Old Testament into those of Moses and the prophets. The Jews indeed made the Hagiographia, or third class, that is, accounting none prophetic, but those which were sent by special mission from God. And so all those books (besides the five books of Moses, and those written by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets,) they called Hagiographia, that is, other holy writings, sacred writings; such as the historical

* Preached January 16, 1691

parts of Scripture, the books of Job, Proverbs, Canticles, Ecclesiastes and the like. But our Saviour comprehends all under the name of the law and the prophets, or sometimes, Moses and the prophets: (Mat. 22. 40.) "On these two hang all the law and the prophets:" and that other place (Luke 16. 29.) "they have Moses and the prophets." Now take here the books of Moses first, and there can be no doubt at all but he was an inspired person, and that his books were written by very peculiar inspiration. If you do but admit the truth of the historical relation, as to him, and that people he had the conduct of, I say, supposing that there can be no doubt of his having written those books by special inspiration of God, for (admitting the truth of the history) you find how familiarly conversant he was with God, from time to time; that he did nothing of any concernment in reference to that people, but always by divine monition. Nothing then is more un-supposable than that he should do so great a thing as this, digest such records, and stamp them with the name of sacred and divine, and call them the word of the Lord, and the law of the Lord; and all this, without special instinct from God. Do but think how manifest and observable and adorable a divine presence, shewed himself to that person. How peculiarly God took him nigh to himself, sustained him forty days and forty nights together, (whether once or twice I will not here dispute) in the sacred mount, by miracle; supporting him by his own glory, speaking to him from time to time, giving him free recourse to him, directing him to consult him, and take his responses from him, upon all occasions. And that the history that relates to him, as to the matter of fact, must be true beyond all exception is evident if you consider, such things as these:

First. The very honourable mention that is made of this Moses, and some of the most remarkable things relating to that people (the Jews) whom he had the conduct of, by some of the most ancient and celebrated pagan writers, magnifying him as a most wise and prudent legislator, and a very great man; and remarking very considerable things with reference to this people. I need not trouble you with them; it is known to scholars, what of this kind is written by Diodorus Siculus and others. And,

Secondly. That which is above all demonstration: it is notorious to all the world that the people of the Jews were under the government of a Theocracy for several centuries of years successively, which puts the matter out of all doubt, that the history of that fact must be unquestionable upon which they became so. They were continually directed by God himself;

their laws were made by God himself. He appointed the means of being consulted in every place, and it was through a long continued series of time : and so these records in all that time were known to be sacred things, having a divine stamp all along upon them. And again,

Thirdly. It is to be considered that the very matter of the history itself (considered in its circumstances) doth speak its own truth : considered, I say, in its circumstances, that is, the bringing of the people of Israel out of Egypt, and bringing them out by so strong a hand, inflicting so many miraculous plagues upon that Egyptian people and their prince, till they were forced to a manumission of them : the dividing of the red sea, the most stupendous way of giving the law upon mount Sinai, which (with the additional precepts that were given to Moses in the mount itself) make up (you know) the most considerable parts of the Pentateuch. The very matter of itself speaks, (if you consider it clothed with its circumstances) that there could be no fiction as to these things ; for there is nobody but must grant, upon an ordinary view and judgment of those characters that do appear of Moses, that he was a prudent man at least, a very prudent man. But certainly he must needs be a madman that would report a fiction of things said to be done by, and before six hundred thousand men. When men do feign and forge things, they do it with the greatest privacy imaginable. As the portentous stories about Mahomet, there are no witnesses quoted, but all goes upon the credit of his word. It is not said, there were such and such thousands that saw such and such things, for then, if it were false, it were the easiest thing in the world to be disproved. Now when the law is said to be given from such a mount, clothed with so terrible and august a glory at that time, and the voice heard uttering those ten words, as they are called, by six hundred thousand men, at once, besides women and children, (for these words are said to be heard spoken from the mount, by all the people ; whereupon they could not bear that God should speak to them any longer. "We die," say they to Moses, "if God speak to us any more, but do thou speak and we will hear,") no man that hath but the ordinary understanding of a man, can think, that one of common prudence would inform of things that he saith were done in view of so many thousands of witnesses, if they were not done ; if there were any design in saying so, that design were presently blasted, and lost out of hand ; especially if it be considered that among those ten words there are so express precepts against idolatry ; and that people had so marvellous propensions to idolatry, as their frequent relapses into it,

and their running into it, even in Moses' absence, when God ceased to speak with an audible voice, do testify. It had given them the most gladsome opportunity they could have wished for, could they have detected a fraud in the case. When it is said there were such and such, and so many thousand witnesses, they could have said, there was no such thing. Could not this have been transmitted to posterity for a notorious cheat? by a people so prone to idolatry as they were. And when they were urged by the prophets (in a time of great degeneracy) with the authority of the divine law, how easily could they have replied, "No, there was no such law, it was a fiction, and what is said to be given by God's voice; and our fathers are said to be quoted as witnesses to, they all renounced it, said there was no such thing?" And then,

Fourthly. That holy men succeeding this time, (and unto whose inspiration it hath been sufficiently attested, as we shall see afterwards,) did attest unto Moses, still calling that law written by him, the law of the Lord, and the word of the Lord, and the testimonies and statutes of the Lord. With what reverence and with what delight and complacency do you find them so mentioned in the book of Psalms, in multitudes of places, when there was little else of Scriptures yet extant, besides those books of Moses? Would such a man as David, with adoration have called these writings, the law of the Lord, and the word, and statutes and judgments and testimonies of the Lord, if they had not been most certainly so? And would he have expressed so high delight in them, and veneration for them as such, counting them more precious than thousands of gold and silver, and expressing the heart-breakings and longings of his soul after them from time to time upon all occasions? And then, for what was written by him (David) and other holy men, (besides the prophets) though it is not known who wrote every book, yet there is no doubt but all may (as our Saviour did design they should) be comprehended under the name of the prophets; Moses and the prophets. And for the prophets, that they were reckoned prophets speaks their inspiration; the distinguishing character of true prophets and false, being so well known among that people. And for the things themselves that they prophesied, the accomplished events did from time to time prove the inspiration of the prophets.

But then take the whole Old Testament together, and that hath received its confirmation abundantly from the New: so that if the New can be proved to be of divine authority, all our business is done, the matter is out of question. The whole Old Testament, it is most expressly owned and proved by the New. For,

What is the New Testament, but a commentary upon the Old? it is an application of the religion of the Old Testament. The Old was nothing but a veiled gospel. The New is nothing else but the same gospel unveiled. And again,

It is plain, that our Lord himself doth frequently and expressly confirm to us the whole Old Testament, taken together under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, Moses and the prophets, and the law and the prophets. As when he saith "I am not come to destroy the law: no, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil:" (Matth. 5. 17) and in the next verse "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one tittle of the law pass"—so that he hath confirmed the whole Old Testament to a tittle, to a very tittle, not one tittle but is sacred, it cannot be lost, cannot pass away, it is a more stable thing than heaven itself, and therefore now,

[2.] We pass to the books of the New Testament. And how will it appear that there were such books written by divine inspiration, so as we ought to reckon the authority of them is stamped thereon by God himself? Why,

First. Much of what we find in these writings was delivered by our Lord himself. The most material things contained in the gospels, that is, the doctrinal parts, were his own words still from time to time, upon all occasions.

Secondly. It is very plain that he did inspire his apostles, that were to be witnesses of him, and whose business it must be to be planters and propagators of the Christian faith afterwards in the world. He did purposely inspire and direct and authorise them to publish those very things that make up the substance of those books; and therefore, no doubt, did direct them to write those very books themselves; for who can suppose, he having a design that the Christian religion should obtain and take place in all succeeding times to the end of time, but that he should intend that it should be wrote, it should be put into writing, and therefore when he laid that charge upon his apostles, upon whom he breathed at parting, or a little before, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and to whom he gave this charge, "Go and teach all nations this doctrine;" certainly within the compass of that charge must be comprehended the charge of writing these things, as one means of publishing them to all nations, and so necessary a means, as that all besides (as to succeeding ages) must be ineffectual. And then,

Thirdly. For the authority of what was contained in these books, or the divinity thereof, he did endow those he made use of, as his apostles and first planters of the Christian faith after

him, (even their very inspiration itself, their very mission as well as the several parts of that message upon which they were sent) with a power of working stupendous miraculous works : that it might be seen by all men, that a divine power did attest to divine truth, as it was published by those men. And upon this you find that mighty stress laid, that these first propagators of the Christian faith, “preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” And the same Holy Ghost that did assist them in preaching, did prompt too, to write the whole New Testament. And that it was the Holy Ghost that did actuate them in all this, was shewn by that power of working miraculous works, which God gave at the same time ; because the Holy Ghost is entitled to those works by our Saviour himself, saying, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come unto you,” then is that religion true, and it is the kingdom of God that I am here setting up among you, and hereupon is that great weight laid upon this matter, (Heb. 2. 2. 3. 4.) “If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” This was the divine seal, the seal of heaven affixed to these writings and what was contained in them : that is, that when men should come abroad upon such an errand, into strange countries and other nations besides their own, and speak things that such and such people had never heard of before, hereupon, suppose it should be inquired of them, “What shall induce us to believe, that what you say is true and comes from God ?” Why immediately they do such and such works that could only be done by divine power, and so they testify to men, that this was a divine truth that they uttered to them. They preached such a gospel, and at the same time they healed the sick, by the speaking of a word, and sometimes raised the dead to life, as our Saviour himself did, who had so confirmed the truth before, by that and other most wonderful things that referred to his own person, by his death especially, and by his resurrection. Here was the greatest question among the Jews : he gave himself out to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God ; all the question was, “Is this the Christ, or is he a deceiver or impostor ?” He must be one of the two : either the Christ as he said he was, or one of the most notorious impostors that ever was upon the face of the earth : all the

dispute rested upon this one thing: "Whereas, he gave himself out to be the Son of God, is he the Son of God or no?" The means by which many were wrought upon before his death, to believe in him, were his most miraculous works; but I say they were but the means: and to bring any effectually to believe in Christ, there must be something more than external means. When he preached to the multitude, he confirmed his word, sometimes by feeding thousands by very disproportionable means; by healing the sick, by opening the ears of the deaf and the eyes of the blind, loosening the tongues of the dumb, and raising up the dead to life and the like: and when at length he came to die, you know with what circumstances his death was accompanied; all the powers of heaven and earth were shaken, the sun withdrew his head, the veil of the temple was rent, the dead arose; and a poor pagan centurion, (who was appointed to guard the execution) upon sight of these things gives up the cause; "Verily this was the Son of God, I see he was in the right, the Jews persecuted him wrongfully," (for here was the question between them, Was he the Son of God or no?) "They crucified him for a blasphemer, in saying he was the Son of God, which they denied him to be, but now I see he was the Son of God." And he was afterwards "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Spirit of holiness by which he was raised from the dead." Now his apostles' going forth, in the authority of this divine Person, to testify nothing but what they saw with their eyes, and what they heard with their ears, and being appointed by him to be witnesses of what they saw and heard, and to preach the doctrine which he had preached and delivered to them before; and they themselves working so miraculous works to prove the truth of what he did assert; this proves the matter out of all question, that what was written concerning all this, must be by divine inspiration. And further too,

Fourthly. It manifestly appears how the prophecies of the Old Testament (the greatest and most important of them) did receive their confirmation that they were divine, by the events that fell out in the time wherein the books of the New Testament were written, and which came to be reflected on afterwards, by the wisest and most considering, the ablest and most competent judges the world had in those days. Many of them were hereupon converted to the Christian faith: and some others that were not so, merely as wanting that opportunity to be informed of matters of fact which the others had had, who yet did acknowledge the convictiveness of the Mediator: as for instance, those prophecies concerning Christ, and that one express

one, among the rest, of Daniel, about the seventy weeks : that great pagan, (and one of the most considerable enemies for reason and learning that ever the Christian cause had in the world) Porphiry, having opportunity to view over this prophecy said, it must needs have been written after the event, it was so very punctual. So that he only wanted an opportunity to know, that this prophecy had been written above five hundred years before his time, and was four hundred and twenty years before its accomplishment, in the hands of the Jews, and kept so safe that it was impossible to be a fallacious thing. And therefore, that being his case, (he being a heathen and not a jew and not having opportunity to know) that must (by his own confession) be the only reason of his not being a believer, upon that one single prophecy, so punctually accomplished by the coming of our Lord ; and his being cut off at such a time as the prophecy did say concerning the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, and that he was to be cut off at such a time. Well, upon all this there is little doubt to be made as to the *first proposition*, that is,—that those books that went under the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, in our Saviour's and the apostles' time, to the last survivor of them, were certainly of divine authority.

(2.) But now to the second proposition—that this book that we have now in our hands, containing such and such writings in it, is the same, or those Scriptures are the very same that were so owned and acknowledged for the Scripture, in those days. It may be said, and no doubt will be, by any that shall consider, that if this be out of question, the whole business is out of question: for nobody can think, if all that hath been said be true, about these books of the Old and New Testament, (said to be extant together at least within the time of the evangelist John) as to matter of fact, as was reported, but these books must unquestionably be of divine authority. But how should we do to know that we have the matter of fact rightly deduced and drawn down to us, and so that we have reason to believe the books that we now have are the same ? If we could be sure they are the same, it would be unquestionable: now as to that, there is one thing that I must premise to you, and it carries its own evidence with it. That is, that that knowledge that men may have of any thing by ordinary means, we are never to expect should be given us by extraordinary. Pray do but take this, and weigh it well, as a thing needful here to be forelaid. Whatsoever may be sufficiently evidenced by ordinary means, it is very unreasonable to expect, that God should afford extraordinary means for the evidencing of that thing. If you do but observe the constancy of his methods of government, over this

world, how sparing he hath been of doing extraordinary things, that ought to come by just account into the class of miracles, of miraculous works, you would see, that the divine wisdom and power have been always very sparing of doing such things, unless where the exigency of the case did require it, and where the end was not otherwise attainable. But it is foolish, to think that the wisdom of God and the power of God should be exerted upon no necessity: what is it for? only to please curiosity? That which is done not to answer necessity, can only be supposed to be done to please and gratify curiosity. Now to think that the wisdom of God, should make infinite power, ever and anon, to stoop to do miraculous works, only to please and gratify a vain and curious humour, without any need, this were the most unworthy of God of any thing we could suppose: and therefore, this is never to be looked for. If then there be sufficient ordinary means to beget a certainty concerning this, it would be a very foolish thing to expect that miracles should be wrought to prove it to us at this day, that these books we now have are, for substance, the same that those were, which were owned for divine, in Christ's and the apostles' days. For if any one would assert, that it was needful a miracle should be wrought to this purpose, to assure us that these books were the same they were in former times; I would know who it is that should have opportunity of seeing this miracle? Must every one that should be obliged to believe these books to be the same, see such a miracle wrought himself? That were to make miracles more necessary than ever they were, for even in Christ's and his apostles' days, it was never thought necessary that every person should have the sight of a miracle himself, but it was enough that it was notoriously known that such and such miracles were done. But if it were not thought necessary in Christ's and his apostles' days, that miracles should be wrought in the sight of every person, that every one for his own satisfaction should have the sight of such a miracle himself, then the testimony of such persons must be relied upon in this case, as it would be supposed could have no inclination or design to deceive others, by misrepresenting things to them: and that is such a testimony as upon which all matters among men do depend. "It is said in your law, (saith our Saviour to the Jews) the testimony of two witnesses is true;" that is, is credible, is not to be doubted: the whole frame of government depends upon witnesses. There would be no law, no justice, no society kept on foot in the world, if the testimony of credible witnesses were not to be respected and attended to. Now if in this way, there must be reliance on credible witnesses

somewhere, that is, if some few should in our own time see a miracle done, and they make report of it, and their testimony is to be believed, why may we not believe as well the credible testimony of former times, as believe the credible testimony of persons in our own time? If the sober reason of men be yielded to in this case, no man can imagine what reason of difference is assignable, but that we may as well rely upon the testimony of our forefathers, concerning matters of fact, as upon the testimony of those that live in the same age with us; but have seen with their own eyes, what we have not seen with ours. And do not we know that most of the estates in which persons do claim property, do depend upon the testimony of witnesses that are dead a hundred years ago? Certainly, men would have very bad titles to their estates, if the testimony of witnesses, dead many scores of years or some hundreds of years ago, were not to be relied on even now. This is plain, that we have the same rational way and method of knowing these books to be the same they were, that is, by such testimony as is the very means of setting on foot all property, and all the administration of law and justice, in civilized nations, all the world over. And we have the same means to know this, as by which we come to know, that any other writings are theirs whose names they bear: such as the writings of Seneca, Aristotle and the like. We have the same means to know this by, as we have for other things that are of greatest importance to mankind in this world, and by which we come to know, other men's works that we have now in our hands, are the same which were written so many hundred years ago. And if so, then it were the most unreasonable thing, that miracles should now be reckoned necessary to be wrought to prove this thing to us, and if a miracle were now to be wrought, there must be a relying upon present witnesses, upon the testimony of this present age; and why might we not as well rely upon witnesses of the former age, as on witnesses of the present age? No reason can be assigned. Therefore, it would be absurd to expect God should extraordinarily prove this to us, when it could be sufficiently proved otherwise. That is the first thing to be forelaid.

And being forelaid, this one general consideration will prove, that these books are the same that they were in Christ's and his apostles' time, and cannot be otherwise; that is, that material alterations of them were altogether impossible. When I say material alterations, I only mean this, that there may have been some very minute undesigned alteration in transcribing of copies; a word may have been mistaken, or a letter may have been mistaken, somewhat here or there left out. But this can

be no material or hurtful alteration, because they had always other copies to correct such mistakes by, but there could be no material alteration with design, that is the thing I deny to be possible, and assert to be impossible. There could be no designed alteration either of the books of the Old Testament, or of the books of the New Testament, since the time of Christ and his apostles. And,

[1.] Not of the books of the Old Testament.

First. It is impossible they can have been altered, since it is plain they were preserved before, and for a considerable time afterwards, with the greatest care imaginable. And that it is one of the great wonders of providence that God, for the preservation of these books, should make use of that scrupulous, and I might say, almost superstitious care that was among those Jews, whose office it was to keep the books of the Old Testament. As,

It was known, they used to count all the letters of the Old Testament, that they might be sure never to miss a letter. Again,

In transcribing copies, (which was frequent) every copy was always examined by an appointed number of their wise men, as they termed them. Further,

If any copy should have been found, upon examination, to have four or five faults in it, in one copy of the whole Old Testament, that book was presently adjudged to be buried in the grave of one or other of their wise men. And lastly,

For those books that, upon examination, were found to be punctually true, it was very plain from the history of those times, that there was the greatest reverence paid to them imaginable. They never used to touch those perfect copies (taking them into their hands) without kissing them solemnly; nor to lay them down again without solemn kissing of them. They were never used to sit upon the place where one of those books were wont to be laid. If one of them by casualty fell to the ground, they appointed a solemn fast to be kept for it, as an ill-boding thing, that such a thing should happen. So that it is most plain that these keepers of the books of the Old Testament could never have it in design to corrupt any of them; but it was that which they did abhor above all things. And it was a principle (as Philo tells us, and Josephus much to the same purpose) instilled into the youth of that nation, and even those of the best quality, that they should run the utmost hazard and incur a thousand deaths, rather than they should suffer, to the utmost of their power, any alteration or diminution of any of those books: or that any of them should be lost any

other way. And then, besides all this scrupulous care of the keepers of the books of the Old Testament, (with which a design of corrupting would no way consist) we may add,

Secondly, That the thing itself was afterwards impossible, simply impossible. If they would before, when it was in their own hands, they could; but afterwards, if they would, they could not; because that in Christ's, and his apostles' days, a great number of them were (you know) converted to the Christian faith, who knew all the books of the Old Testament as well as themselves. Therefore, it was impossible now, for the infidel Jews, those that were not converted, to make any alteration, but it must be presently spied and exclaimed against: therefore it was a vain thing for any to attempt it, after so many were converted to the Christian religion. And thereupon we may further add,

Thirdly. That the testimonies that were contained in these books against themselves, and with which contained in them, they are transmitted to us, do shew that they never went about to corrupt them. The many testimonies against idolatry, contained in these books, whereby their forefathers from age to age, for many ages, were witnessed against, would have induced them to expunge all things that were therein contained against idolatry, (so tender were they of their reputation) if there had not been a great awe upon their minds, never to attempt the corrupting or the alteration of any thing in those books. The wickedness of their forefathers was, in these books, so highly remonstrated against, in respect of the testimonies they so often give against their idolatry, and yet these books we find in their own hands, with these testimonies in them, against the Jews and their forefathers, for many foregoing ages through sundry times and divers intervals; though we do not find after the second temple, that people relapsed into that crime. And then, there is the fullest testimony against their infidelity in these books that can be. Who would not wonder that these books should come out of the hands of the Jews, with these testimonies, in the great controversy between the christians and them? that is, of Christ being the Messiah, in which you have so punctual assertions against them, that nothing can be more. Those many testimonies that do concern the Messiah, particularly that famous prophecy, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shilo should come: and those numerous presages in many of the latter prophets, (Isaiah especially and sundry others,) make it one of the greatest wonders of providence, that such a book should come, with these things in it, out of these men's hands, against whom they are a continual remonstrance. But however, this proves that they did never design any alteration: either they saw it impossible for one while, and before

that, they had no inclination or inducement that would be prevailing with them to go about it, that is, that there should be an alteration with design. And then,

[2.] For the books of the New Testament ; that they cannot have been corrupted is most evident too. It is impossible they can, for you must consider in what time they were written: they must be written in Christ's time and the apostles'; now within the compass of that time, things were brought to that state, that such a corruption was impossible upon two accounts, upon account of the distance of places into which the gospel was spread, and upon account of the divisions that were so early fallen out among christians.

First. Upon account of the distance of places whereinto, in the first century of years, the gospel was spread. That is, into a vast part of Asia, and some considerable parts of Africa and Europe; some think into Britain itself, into our land. There are not very improbable grounds of conjecture, that it was so, even within the compass of Paul's own age. That made it impossible there could be any designed corruption or alteration in the writings of the New Testament; so considerable a number of men at such a distance from one another, could not agree to make such an alteration; and if they could not agree in it, one part must remonstrate against the other. And,

Secondly. The divisions that so early appeared in the Christian church made it likewise impossible. That passage of the apostle (it may be) is not greatly enough pondered according to the weightiness of the expression, that there must be heresies, there should be heresies, there must be heresies. This great use that hath been of the divisions in Christian churches is not (it may be) considered as it should be by many. But nothing can carry a clearer evidence and demonstration with it, than that, because of those divisions, any depravation of the said records, (that is, any material, general, successful, continued depravation,) is altogether impossible: because the one party would be continually declaiming and crying out against the other: and then how soon would it be espied? So for that particular instance, 1 John 5. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." It is true it hath been found to be wanting in some few copies; and what an outcry was against it in the Christian church? So that if that alteration was made by the design of the arians, (and if it were by any design at all, it must be by their design) the very supposal of it brings the greatest blot upon them and their cause, that could be imagined; it being very plain that it was to be found in equally ancient

copies. But it seems more likely, it was never left out by design at all. But because the matter at the beginning of the 8th verse, was just the same with that of the beginning of the 7th verse, a more negligent transcriber, having his eye on the beginning of the 8th verse, might write on and slip over merely casually the whole 7th verse. This being more likely that a verse, beginning as the following verse does, and ending like it, should be left out, than that a verse more than ought, should be put in. And thus, the design of making such an alteration would be defeated upon the attempt; so that upon that consideration it is altogether impossible, that there should be any alteration at all. And therefore that this be stuck to, that there is no designed alteration in these books, and so can have been no material alteration in them.

It is true that in translations, persons have laboured to serve their own purposes, by translating this way and that, as they thought fit. But for alteration of copies, that is what never entered into the mind of any body to attempt; which is a thing so easily spied out, that nothing is more so; and so must needs blast and disserve the cause and interest of that party it was designed to serve, and therefore could never be. And the impossibility of any such alteration, it is easy for any man that useth his understanding, to apprehend from a familiar instance. As thus, do but take any one people that are under the same government, and that have their laws by which they are governed, digested into some system or other; as for instance, our statute book; why suppose any ill-minded men in the nation should have a design to corrupt and alter the statute book; every one would see it to be impossible. Which way should they go to work to impose a false statute book upon a nation, wherein every man's right and property is concerned? And if any such should have such a design, they would soon give it up, as finding it impossible, and a thing not to be done, and therefore a vain thing to attempt. But the difficulty is a thousand times greater, of making any designed alteration of these sacred books and records, that are spread so unspeakably further than a nation, and wherein the concerns of all that have them in their hands are recorded, not temporal only, but eternal. Here is their all for eternity, and another world: so that it must be altogether impossible that there could have been such a thing effected; and therefore it is the most unlikely thing, that such a matter should ever be attempted. And then, I say, if there be that plain evidence, that for that reason, these books must be the same, that they cannot have been altered with design, and consequently not materially, then it were the most unrea-

sonable thing in all the world, to expect, that God should confirm it to us otherwise than he hath done, or that the nature of the thing doth admit of: because otherwise, there must have been miracles wrought for every one to see, and take notice of: nay, that would altogether lose the usefulness and significance of miracles themselves, because it would make miracles so common in such a case. If every man must have a miracle to prove to him, this is God's book, it would take off that particular thing for which they are only significant with men, that is, because they are rare and extraordinary things: and then they would cease to be so. It might as well be expected that every man should have a Bible reached him down by an invisible hand from heaven, as that there should be a miracle wrought to prove to him, that this was the same book that was so and so confirmed and sealed in our Saviour's, and his apostles' time. And therefore I reckon, that upon the grounds that have been laid, it is very plain, both that these books, that were extant, under the name of the Scripture, in our Saviour's and his apostles' time, were of divine authority: and that the books that we now have in our hands, are the same with those books, and therefore are of divine authority.

LEC. IX.*

Now what we shall further say, as to the two things laid down before, will be to answer an *objection* which possibly may arise in the minds of some: to wit,

That this way of being ascertained of the divinity first, and then secondly, concerning the identity and sameness still of these books, doth seem to resolve our faith, at length, into a human testimony and so, at length, to make only a human faith. That is, that all rests upon this—that we have been truly told, and by such as lived before us in the world, that there were such books in their time, and we are led by testimony in following ages, to collect, that these are the same books. Is not this (may some say) to resolve our faith into a human testimony, and so to make it only a human faith? In answer to this I have several things to say.

1. That it is very plain, that a human testimony must be depended upon *aliquatenus, some way or other*, in reference to all the concernments of religion. That is a point out of doubt, some dependance there must be upon human testimony.

* Preached January 23, 1691.

Suppose a preacher came among a company of illiterate men, men that could never so much as read ; or if any of them were so, (which is a thing not unusual in Christian congregations) and he takes a text and produces (it may be) many more parallel ones out of the Bible for the doctrine which he preacheth ; how can these men know that this is a Bible he preacheth out of, but by a human testimony? And even for those that can read, they must depend upon a human testimony, that what they read is a true translation : supposing them not to be learned themselves in, or not having opportunity to consult the originals, they must depend upon the testimony of the learned, who have viewed those books in the originals, such as lexicographers, and the like, for the true signification and translation of the words they read. This therefore is plain and out of question, that some use there must be of a human testimony in reference to the concernments of religion. And I add,

2. It is no more strange that God should state our case, so as to oblige us to some dependance upon human testimony, than that he should state it so as we must have a necessary dependance upon our own sense. We are told that “faith comes by hearing;” we can have no ordinary way to come to the knowledge of the things contained in these books, but by the use of our eyes, and the use of our ears. And I could fain know why there should be a greater sacredness in these organs of our own, than in those of other men. Why should mine eye or ear be thought a more sacred thing than the voice or tongue of another man? And again,

3. It is one thing to use a human testimony, in a case wherein God hath ordained and appointed to do it, and another thing to do it besides, or against his ordination and appointment. Here we are to distinguish between matters of fact, and matters of right. We are to make use of the testimony of men, even by God’s own appointment, in reference to matters of fact; to inform us only of mere matter of fact. This is an institution of God. “It is written in your law (saith our Saviour) that the testimony of two or three witnesses is true.” “I come unto you in the mouth of two or more witnesses,” saith the apostle, “and in the mouth of two or three witnesses, shall every word be established.” This is a divine ordination : it is not an arbitrary thing taken up by men at random, and of their own choice and pleasure ; but it is God’s stated medium and way, wherein he hath appointed, that persons are to be informed concerning matters of fact, which they are concerned to know, and of which they have not the immediate knowledge themselves. “It is written in your law (saith Christ to the Jews)

that the testimony of two men is true." What law was that? It was the divine law. God hath enacted, that the testimony of a competent number of witnesses should be relied upon, to assure us of the truth of those matters of fact, that they do testify, and you do well know, that upon this ground (so material a thing this is) depends all the administration of justice throughout the world. Otherwise, no judge would determine in reference to any case, which came not under the sight of his own eye, or whereof he was not an ear-witness. And so this would subvert the very foundations of all human society. There could be no such thing as human society in the world, upon these terms, and therefore we must look upon this as a holy, wise constitution of the great Ruler of this world, who hath ordained and appointed, that in reference to such matters of fact, as we are concerned to have the knowledge of, and have not the immediate knowledge of ourselves, we are to depend upon the testimony of others. And this is not an arbitrary thing that we take up of ourselves, but a thing that the wisdom of heaven hath constituted and set for the preserving of common order here, among men in this world. And

4. The difference is unspeakably great, between relying upon men's testimony, as to mere matters of fact; and relying upon it, as to matters of right. We may have a difference upon the authority of one or two credible witnesses, reporting to us such matters of fact, when as to which is right and wrong, we will have no dependance upon them at all. As now suppose any of you receive a letter from some person of very great authority and quality, and for whom you have great deference and duty, this letter comes to you by the hands of a footman; do you pay a deference to the man, in believing what is contained in the letter? No, all the belief of what is contained in the letter, is resolved into the authority of him that wrote it, and from whom it comes. Only you may look upon this as a fit medium to convey it to you; and you rely (if there be occasion to do so much) no more upon the footman, as to matter of fact, but that he received this letter from his lord or master to deliver to you; but his testimony hath no influence upon the contents of the letter, one way or other.

And this therefore, leads you sufficiently to understand how to answer yourselves, if any should further inquire—Pray how doth this differ from the notion that runs among them of the Romish church, that is, that we are beholden to their tradition for the Scriptures we have, and for our Christianity, and for all that we have any knowledge of in the things of God and religion?—Why it differs the most that can be. For,

(1.) The papists do not only claim to be witnesses in the case, but they claim to be the only witnesses: which they most pretencelessly and injuriously assume to themselves: for we do not rely upon them as the sole witnesses, nor as witnesses at all, but only as they join and fall in with the concurrent testimony of the rest of the Christian churches, that have the same books among them that we have. We are no more beholden to them, than we are to other christians. Nor,

(2.) Do we rely barely upon the testimony of Christian churches, as to the matters of fact contained in these books, but we rely upon the concurrent testimony of the rest of the world, Jews and pagans themselves, as to the truth of matters of fact, which we need to be informed about, in the matters of our religion. The papists do engross to themselves to be the only witnesses, most falsely, and without the least colour of pretence. But we reckon the testimony of an enemy, an avowed, professed enemy is of the greatest strength in such a case imaginable. That is the testimony we have from the Jews, and the testimony we have from the pagans, of matters of fact, when the matter of fact is against, plainly against them. This we think we have a great deal of reason to lay much stress and weight upon. Now it is very plain as to mere matters of fact, pagans themselves have owned the truth of those matters of fact, upon which the christian doth depend: to wit, the wonderful works wrought by our Saviour and his apostles to prove the doctrines that they preached, and that are contained in these books. Pagans do not deny these matters of fact, we have them in divers of their own writings. For as to those miracles wrought by Christ, in his own time, to prove the truth of Christianity, (which was done on purpose that they might know that Jesus was the Son of God: that men might believe this and that by believing it, might have life through his name,) Celsus, that great enemy of the Christian religion, never goes about to deny the matter of fact: he knew that would be vain. All the world knew the truth of the matter of fact; only he takes a great deal of pains to shew how it was possible that such things might be done by other invisible powers. Just the same conceit that the Jews had among themselves, when they tell our Saviour, that he cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. That is, they did suppose the devil to have fallen out with himself, and that all his business was industriously to destroy his own kingdom. Indeed, the greatest and most momentous matters of fact, by which Christianity was confirmed at first, are freely granted by the most considerable pagans. We find in their writings, an acknowledgement of those things

that filled the world with so much wonder, and they labour partly to turn off all by referring the great wonders to other causes and agents; and partly by pretending, that as strange things have been wrought by their own hands: as the setting up of Apollonius Tyanæus, that great magician; whereas, the disparity is so great that nothing is more so, nor can be to any, who consider, that those tricks wrought by him, were easily detected of fraud and imposture, and were pretended to be wrought to no considerable purpose. But the others were frequent and often repeated, and in common sight, and without any design of hiding; so as that when men that have been concerned have canvassed and searched as much as possible, to know whether they were true or no, the light hath shone into their faces, and they have been forced to yield and own that a great and notable work hath been done, "and we cannot deny it." And with great dread and consternation they beheld the world running after Christ and his apostles, these works carrying so great a light in them, that were wrought for that design. And,

(3.) There is this difference besides, in what the papists do arrogate to themselves about this matter of testifying, from what we admit and assert; that is, that they assume to themselves the making of doctrines that shall be of equal authority with these books. And one of their greatest men among them, is known to have used that blasphemous saying, that this book hath no more of authority than Æsop's fables, other than what it hath derived from their church. And if it were not for the authority it fetcheth from their church it were no more to be regarded than Æsop's fables: which is so great an insolence that indeed one would wonder, (but that divine patience will magnify itself till the time of taking vengeance upon that apostate church come,) that a thunderbolt from heaven should not have vindicated such a blasphemy, with all things else that are of the same piece among them, and carry the same import and signification: for we know they take upon them to say and unsay, to do and undo, to maim and mangle this book, and set up contrary institutions to it; as is particularly known in that great ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And then,

(4.) As to the business of being mere witnesses of matter of fact, there they have proved themselves false and unfaithful; that is, in foisting in the apocryphal books into the canon of the Scripture, against the authority both of the Jewish church and the ancient church, as the world may judge at this day that read them.

So that there is no parity at all in these two cases, the relying by God's institution and appointment upon a human testimony, but as a medium to convey and transmit to us our knowledge of bare matter of fact, and their assuming to themselves to be the only one to be relied upon, not only as to matter of fact, but as to the authority by which right and wrong, and the truth and falsehood of doctrine are to be finally decided and judged of. And thus far then we think, that the way of proving the sameness of these books with those that bore the character of sacred books, or books of divine authority, is altogether unexceptionable, and so strong, as that there can lie nothing against it to the common reason and understanding of men, when we have such a way of being assured of this matter, as must be convictive to any that do allow themselves the liberty and use of their understandings. And it would be a very foolish expectation, to think that God should gratify the fanciful curiosities of men, by working wonders among them continually and repeatedly to no purpose.

Upon all this I shall superadd some considerations that may give strength to all that hath been said before. As,

1. By common consent of all mankind, some divine revelation or other is necessary to the ends of religion, besides mere natural light. We do not find or read of any sort of people under heaven that have pretended to any thing of religion, but have likewise also pretended to somewhat or other of divine revelation, besides what was natural and common to men as men, as necessary for the conduct of the affairs of religion, or for which such a thing as religion was to be kept on foot in the world. Look back amongst any sort of people as to the most ancient accounts we have in the world of any thing of religion and we shall find it so: as for instance, if we go to the Egyptians of old, the Phœnicians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, the Romans, the ancient Gauls and Britons; nay, if we carry it as far as China: for such accounts as we have of their religion and what it hath been for some hundreds of years past, nay, and some thousands of years backwards. All these people have pretended to somewhat of divine revelation, over and besides natural light, none of them but have had those among them whom they always took to be inspired persons. I am not considering now, whether their pretensions be right or wrong, true or false, but all have agreed in this sentiment, that there did need some other revelation besides the light of nature, in order to the ends and purposes of religion. They always had some sacred persons among them. Their priests, their magi, gymnosophists, their brah-

mins, their bards, their druids, whom they always took for inspired persons; and received dictates and directions from them still in reference to matters of religion: yea, and in reference to other matters too, as so many inspired persons: thus still by their own confession, owning mere natural light insufficient for the purposes of religion. Famous it is, (besides all that hath been intimated before,) concerning those several sorts of sacred persons, that the several nations had amongst them, that when Numa began to settle religion at Rome, in the first forming of that people he pretended to have all his directions from his goddess Egeria whom he conversed and met with in the woods, and consulted of those affairs from time to time. And the people of the Chinese are reckoned to have all their methods of religion and all their notions of it from that Confucius for whom they have the greatest veneration, that ever any people could be supposed to have of one as an inspired person, so as that deference was never paid by the Turks to their Mahomet, which is paid by these Chinese, to their Confucius whom they had their religion from, at least one thousand years before ever the other was known in the world.

Now this, to me, is a very great thing, that by the common consent of mankind in all the known and noted nations of which we have any record or notices among us; they should pretend constantly to somewhat or other of divine revelation, in reference to the affairs of religion; thereby giving us, as the common sentiment of mankind, that mere natural light was not enough, but some divine revelation was further to be superadded, for the conduct and management of the affairs of religion in the world. And to that is to be added,

2. That as this would be *argumentum ad hominem*, (it being the common sentiment of mankind,) so it is very apparent from the nature of the thing, that really and truly it is a matter of plain necessity in itself, that there be some superadded revelation to the mere light of nature. For notwithstanding the pretence of it, (that pretence of it to be sure, can never do the business or answer the end for which the thing itself is necessary) yet it is plain, that the very thing, that is, a real and divine revelation is necessary over and besides mere natural light, as that lies now so much corrupted, depraved and obscured, among the sons of men, if you do but consider into how miserable delusions, men have generally fallen, where such a real divine revelation was wanting, in reference to the greatest and most important things of religion. As what can we suppose greater or of more importance to religion than these two, the object of it, and the end of it? The Object of it is the God

we are to worship, and the end of it is the felicity that we are to design and aim at in all the exercises of that worship, and in the whole course of our religion. Where there is not a real divine revelation, what monstrous conceits have been taken up concerning the object of religion! The polytheism of the gentile and pagan world, is a plain and pregnant proof what a necessity there was, that over and besides the mere light of nature, God should reveal himself as the peculiar and sole Object of religion, according to what he is in himself. For though it be true indeed, that many of the wisest philosophers among the pagans, have had right sentiments of the one Deity, the supreme *Numen, God*; yet for the generality of the people how much otherwise hath it been? And with whom those wiser men have been forced to comply and fall in, temporising with them whose own wicked and gross conceptions have led them to worship for deities, the sun, moon and stars; or heroes, the souls of men departed from among them, and sometimes to come so low as to worship dogs and cats, weasels, apes, serpents, onions, leeks and garlic, fountains and rivers and the like, for gods. So apparent need was there for a divine revelation to inform men about the object of their worship, above that light that is common to men as men. And then as concerning the end of religion, felicity, the great diversity of opinions among the pagans, (and even the wiser of them) no less than two hundred, eighty and eight, about the *summum bonum, chief good*, shews how great need there is of a particular divine direction, as to what that is which we are to design for ourselves as our final and eternal felicity. To these I add,

3. That supposing the necessity of a divine revelation about matters that relate to religion and our future blessedness, it must some time or other have become necessary that it should be a written revelation, put into writing upon record. Some time I say, I do not say always necessary. It is plain it must be less necessary in former ages of the world, when by reason of the vast longevity and length of life, about three or four persons might see through two thousand years and upwards, and so give an account but by three or four hands, of the most material and important things, that were of common concernment for men, as such, to know about the beginning of the world and the like. And no doubt there was great care taken to preserve the memory of what was necessary to be known, by monuments and the like, as Seth's pillars were, of which Josephus gives a particular account in his time. But I suppose there were only oral traditions, for that time, passing from hand to hand; and that of things of so apparent, common impor-

tance and necessity, that none can imagine but if the persons were persons of tolerable prudence, (and we have no reason but to apprehend they were persons of great prudence, some at least that were more especially concerned, as Adam himself, Enoch, Noah and Shem,) there could not but have been very distinct accounts transmitted from such hands, of what was necessary to be known concerning the original of the world, and what the pleasure of him that made it was, concerning the affairs of his worship in those days. And we may easily apprehend ourselves if, in any family among us, any thing of great concernment to the nation, (much more to all mankind,) should have come to the notice of an ancestor of ours; as, suppose any of you could say, "My grandfather or my great grandfather had certain notices, some way or other, conveyed to him of such and such matters of fact, of the greatest importance imaginable to the whole nation," Do you think that that would be forgotten in three or four ages in that family? And as little supposable is it, that in three or four ages of so long a duration, all that concerned the original of the world, and revealed will of its Creator, how men ought to live, and order their course in the world, would be forgotten.

But afterwards, when the lives of men grew shorter, it is most apparent, there was a necessity that such things as were most requisite to be known, and were of most common use, should be digested into records in writing. And so we find first, the books of Moses written; and afterwards, there was an addition of more and more made, as God thought fit, in following ages, till the fulness of time, when we have the clearest light of an entire gospel revelation handed to us from our Lord himself, who came from the bosom of his Father to reveal and make him known, and his whole mind and will to men. And indeed, for them that would substitute tradition, and particularly that of oral tradition in the room of this sacred written rule, they do it with the greatest absurdity that can be imagined: and indeed with the greatest immodesty, in them that now a-days pretend to it. It is true, we read the apostle did take order with Timothy that some particular things which he had seen and taken notice of, and heard from him, he should commit to faithful men that might be able to teach and instruct others. There were many useful things that were not presently put into writing. But as for these men, under the notion of faithful witnesses, they have the least reason of any men in the world to lay claim to that office and dignity, of being the conveyancers to us of the things that concern us, in reference to our salvation and our eternal well-being: for when they take upon them to be authors, they

cannot be looked upon to have done the part of faithful witnesses. How strangely have they innovated upon that religion which they boast to have been the conveyers of to us! How much another thing have they made it, to what it was, in doctrinals and worship, and even in reference to the affairs of common conversation itself? So that we may see, even by the insolvency of this pretence of theirs, enough to assure us of the necessity of such a written rule to resort unto. And indeed, in what case had the Christian religion been at this day and the professors of it in the world, if we had not had this written rule in our hands, to correct and discover plainly wherein they have prevaricated and corrupted the Christian religion? So that we may seek Christianity in the Christian world, as was said of old concerning the City of Samium, it was so altered that Samium was to be sought in Samium itself; so we would still be to seek Christianity among christians, if we had not these records to set us right, and let us know what Christian religion was at first.

And upon the whole matter, as to those that would so officiously substitute their traditions in the room of the clear light of this written word, it is much a like case as if any of you should fall in with one travelling on the way, and he offers himself to be your companion and guide, and tells you that you have eyes that you make use of in choosing your way, but these eyes are only troublesome to you, they represent to you diversities of objects that draw this way and that, so that you cannot mind your path. "And pray (saith he) let me put out those eyes of yours and submit yourself to my conduct;" and all that he may guide you into a pit. Or a like case it would be, as if you should have writings in your hands, any of you, that were ancient, and did concern the title to an estate of yours from ages past, and one should say to you "These writings have a great deal of obscurity in them, pray let me have these writings and dispose of them as I see good, and you need not doubt but that there will be witnesses enough to prove your title if there be occasion; and you do not need to question but I will take care to defend you and make out your title;" and to think to rob you of them by such a fraudulent artifice. Just thus would they deal with us about the sacred records, in which our all for eternal life do lie. But very plain it is upon all these grounds, that it was necessary there should be somewhat of divine revelation superadded to mere natural light; and was also necessary, some time, that it should be a written one.

4. Supposing this, that it is necessary there should be a

written revelation of the mind of God, about matters that do concern our present religion and future felicity, then we have none at all extant in the world that can come in any plausible competition with this book, unless you will bring the Mahometan Alcoran into competition with it. Nothing else doth pretend to be a rule of faith and light to men. And for that Alcoran, (besides what it hath borrowed, or stolen, rather from the Bible) it is a book full of so gross absurdities, that they who have but common sense, would soon discern the difference between them; and how little of pretence there could be to bring that into competition with this, much less to carry it against this upon such a comparison. There are things in it so manifestly contrary to the common light and reason of men, as there would be ground enough for a most contemptuous rejection of it upon that score:—such as its asserting the corporeity of the divine nature; and that the felicity of the future state in the other world doth consist only in bodily pleasures and the like; things manifestly refutable by common natural light. And besides the contradiction that there is to the common reason of men in so great things as these, it is made up of contradictions and repugnancies to itself. For it doth say even that concerning him, upon whom, you know our great hopes depend, which it doth, in the most substantial things, afterwards gainsay and contradict, for it owns him to be a great and a holy prophet, sent by God into this world. But if their religion should be true, he must be the falsest prophet (one of them) that ever was upon the face of the earth, or that ever pretended to prophesy; for did not he avow and give himself out to be the Son of God? If he were a true prophet he did truly say this, that he was the Son of God, and that he and his Father were one: and if he were a true prophet he did truly say this also, that the religion he taught and the professors of it, should continue, and he with them, to the end of the world; and then the Mahometan religion was never to subvert and root out the Christian.

It is plain therefore, that nothing under the name of a divine revelation can with any, the least plausibleness be brought into competition with this book. And therefore, if a divine revelation were necessary, and a written revelation were necessary, this must be it and there can be no other. It is true indeed, some enthusiastical persons have pretended to inspiration as to this or that particular thing: but none have undertaken to pretend, that they are so inspired of God as to give a full, particular, perfect system and model, of all that is to be believed and done, in reference to worship and religion. So that this book hath really no plausible pretender or competitor against it.

5. Whereas, it doth pretend and avow itself to be divine, and of divine original; it hath those inimitable characters of divinity upon it, which most plainly justify that pretence: I shall, before I instance, only forelay this—That we must consider, when we would make a judgment upon this thing, whether this thing be a godlike thing, yea or no, and carries visible characters of divinity stamped upon it, we are, in making our judgment about this matter, to consider, not barely what is spoken or contained in this book, but also to whom such things are spoken, whose use this book was designed to serve, and what use it was intended for. We are not to consider, in this case, how God should speak if he were to publish an edict, or make an oration from the throne of glory to the innumerable company of angels, those glorious creatures that surround him above. That is none of the case that we are to consider. But we are to consider how we would expect him to speak, or how he would direct things to be written, that were intended for all sorts of men, here in this world, from the highest to the lowest, of all capacities and of all conditions, that have any exercise of reason and understanding. We are not to expect that one sort of Bible should have been written for learned men, and another for unlearned; or that one sort of Bible was written for citizens and another for country people; but we are to suppose that there was to be a book written that should suit the capacities of all sorts of persons from the highest to the lowest. And what could have been more Godlike, more suitable to his wisdom and goodness, and more agreeable to the capacity and necessity of men in general, than what we have here in this book? And consider the use that it was to serve, what it was indeed to be written for. It was for the saving of miserable creatures that were in a lost perishing state. It was never intended that such a book should be written, only to please men's fancies or gratify their humours, or tickle their ears. It was intended for saving lost miserable souls, from perishing for ever; and those of all sorts, of all capacities, from the highest to the lowest: and so nothing could have been imagined more worthy of God, than the composure of this Book, for such persons and for such uses. And now to particularize a little, as to such divine characters which are conspicuous in it, and which I call inimitable, that could have proceeded from none but a divine Author.

—As,

(1.) The majesty of the style: How great, how august and Godlike it is! in the whole of it: take it entirely in the whole frame, and nothing could appear, in respect to the style, more majestic or more worthy of God. Though the case must be

considered with a diversity, that is, that he did make use of human penmen, and it is never to be supposed, that he should direct every word and every phrase, by an extraordinary immediate inspiration: for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers, as to all the substance, of what was to be written and recorded by them; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, received by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one come to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel, the water in its form will resemble the figure of the vessel: if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost, being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such a one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such a one as Micah, receives another figure there; when yet all these communications are from one and the same Fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose. And indeed upon the whole, it doth appear, that the greatness of the way of speaking it, doth so suit the majesty of God as nothing could do more, when men have come forth and spoken and written in the name of the Lord; and have from time to time pronounced, "Thus saith the Lord;" and when they have been directed to personate God, "I am the Lord; do so and so, I am the Lord," this is so becoming the greatness, the grandeur of the Author of this book, that it is not a supposable thing that there should be any, that would assume the confidence, in reference to things of this nature, to take upon them at such a rate; that is, comparing the confidence of such a pretence with the matter that is spoken of; and nothing is more evident than that this is agreeable to God only, or to one immediately directed by God only, and none else. And upon what was noted to you concerning the difference of styles, for such parts of this book wherein God is represented to be the immediate Speaker, himself making this use of man, it is evident in such cases, when he hath appeared more immediately as the Author of what was said, nothing beneath God can be supposed to have spoken like him. As now to instance, there is that song called the song of Moses in the 32. of Deuteronomy; God doth give immediate directions to publish the

words of such a song to this people, and to keep it as a record among them. It seems most likely that every word there, was dictated immediately by God himself. And who did ever read any thing so great and so august as the words of that song are? And so when we find God immediately speaking to Job, in some of the latter chapters of that book, Who can imitate the majesty of what is said? which is there spoken unto him, when God speaketh to him himself out of the whirlwind. And,

(2.) Consider the sublimity of the matter: How mighty, great things are contained in this book! As in that Hosea 8. 12. "I have written unto them the great things of my law." To take such a summary as that, 1 Tim. 3. 16. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." How mighty things are these, of how sublime a nature! And these make the principal contents of this book. And then,

(3.) Do but consider again, the comprehensiveness of this Sacred Volume, of how vast extent it is. And what mind, but the mind of God could have comprehended and collected together so great a variety of things as we find in this book? So as that nothing can be pretended to be wanting; not one thing can be so much as alleged is wanting that is requisite to be put into such a book, to serve the end it pretends to serve, and that it avows itself to be designed for. Things that suit all states of men from the highest to the lowest, all ages and each sex. Things we have that make up the system of what we are to believe, and things that compose and make up the system of what we are to do, and what makes up the system for us of what we are to desire. Do but look to the *credenda*, and the *agenda* and the *petenda* or *speranda*: where we may have the collected *digesta* of the one kind and the other, and who can pretend any thing to be wanting here? The comprehensiveness of this book speaks the divinity of it, having that in it which suits every case and every purpose for which such a book can be desirable, or can be pretended to be so. And then,

(4.) Consider too, its correspondency to the spirit of man, which it was designed to rectify and set right, and be a measure unto, if you look upon the spirit of man under a threefold capacity. That is, look upon it as merely rational, or look upon it as corrupt and depraved, or look upon it as regenerate and renewed; and the contents of this book do most admirably suit

it every way, Look upon it as merely rational, and nothing so adequate to the mind and reason of a man ; so as that, though things in it there are indeed, that the reason of man could not have found out ; there is nothing in it which the reason of man would not approve, being represented and laid before it. If we consider the condition of man as corrupt, what delineations have we of the corrupt frame and temper of the spirit of man in this state ? And nothing, to me, is a greater argument of the truth of our religion in general, than to find such exact descriptions of the state of man, suiting the temper in which he is now to be found upon the original depravation in all his conditions in this world. So that just such a thing as a carnal man was, and was represented to have been five thousand years ago, just such a one he is now ; all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of man are evil, and continually so. And when God looks down from heaven upon man, to understand who it is that seeks after God, there is none that is found doing good, no not one ; none seeking after God ; for that good must be chiefly meant : as if all the world did agree in that one common sense, to say unto God “ Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways : let not God molest or disturb us in our course.” Just so is the degenerate spirit and temper of man represented, and how true a representation is it ! And then look upon the spirit of man as renewed, and how lively a description is there of the regenerate man, the renewed man ! just so desiring after God, the living God, as this book doth express ; there placing its sole felicity and highest delight, there reposing its treasure, there placing the study of the heart, to be sincere and upright in his sight : who but God could have made such a representation of man ? And that I take to be a further consideration which shews the divinity of this book, even those most inimitable characters of its divine Author that are most conspicuous to every discerning eye. But I add,

(5.) The wonderful efficacy this word hath had upon the souls of men, from age to age. It hath shewn itself to be “ the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” What multitudes has it subdued ! This sword of the Spirit, and arrows taken from hence, how “ sharp have they been in the hearts of the King’s enemies,” by which multitudes have been thrown down and made subject ! what conquests hath it made ! Though indeed there have been sad dark intervals : but no more but what have been foretold long ago, wherein the progress of the Christian interest and religion should be slow and little : no other was to be expected, according to what was long ago foretold of. But

if you consider the vast increases that were within the first and second centuries, so that some of the ancients have taken notice, and one particularly, by way of apology, to the emperor that then was, "we grow so numerous" (saith he) "that were it not for the peaceableness of our spirits and principles, you could not subsist in opposition to us. It were easy for us to overturn the empire : and were it possible for us to retire and draw from the world, the world would wonder at its own emptiness." And Pliny writing to Trojan, another of their emperors, tells him, that rigorous and severe practices against the christians were now altogether impracticable and might be dangerous : for he tells him, every where the way to the temples was overgrown with grass, and there were none to buy up their sacrifices, and there was no way in the world to keep peace in the empire, but to be very benign to the christians. And he did procure by that epistle, a great suspension of the rage, and cessation of the persecution that was at that time. And then, all this was done, not by the power of arms, (as the mahometan religion hath spread itself in the world,) but only by the power of this very word, the doctrine of Christ ; whereby it appears to be "the wisdom of God and the power of God." I have discoursed to you at large before, of the strong and irrefragable evidence that is given to the truth of this book by the prophecies, and by the miracles we find recorded in it ; the punctual predictions of the former, and the obsignations given to divine truth, given by divine power in the latter. But this seal, set upon the souls of men by the sanctifying Spirit, (whereof this word hath been continually the instrument) carries to seeing and discerning persons, the greatest evidence imaginable in it. It was the saying of Plato, that "the world is God's epistle to men ; the characters of his invisible power and goodness being so visible upon it." And how raised would his thoughts have been, and how much transported would he have been beyond the transport in which he was on this occasion, if he had but known and viewed this divine and sacred book ! But then, to find it again, copied out and transcribed in men's hearts ! "You are," saith the apostle, "the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. 2 Cor. 3. 3. What a demonstration is here of the divine Author that hath made work, even by his word, upon the hearts and souls of men ? So as that the same apostle speaks in that, 2 Cor. 13. 3. "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but mighty in you ?" "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," "Do you seek a proof of Christ

speaking by me?" See him in this book, and look into yourselves, such of you as have been converted and turned by my ministry; see if you be not Christ's epistle? See if he hath not written out the greatest and most necessary things about him and his religion, out of this book into your own hearts. And I add,

(6.) That the high complacency that the best men take in this book, must needs prove it to be divine to their own sense. It is true, that there wants not rational evidence to demonstrate the divine authority or divinity of this book, to any that shall at leisure impartially consider the thing. But it is a far more lively proof that any one hath of this in himself and in his own soul, when he is made to taste, in the word, how gracious the Lord is, when he hath the pleasant relish of it in his own spirit: when he can say by his own experience, "Oh, how sweet are thy words to my mouth, yea sweeter than honey to my taste!" when it is to him a recreation to retire and set himself to think and consider and study upon these great and deep things of God; when once he comes to experience this, that the law of God is his delight, and that therein he can exercise himself night and day. So it was, when much less was written of this book than what we now have. If David had seen all the writings of the New Testament, and of the prophets that succeeded himself, and had had the complete, entire volume in his hands that we have, with what transports would he have spoken of the ravishing pleasures of this book! how delectable a study must it have been to his soul! I hope (though it is much to be lamented indeed that there are no more) there are many at this day that find it thus: "We approve it ourselves, in our own hearts; this must be, this cannot but be the divine word, it is so delectable, so refreshing to our souls." And,

(7.) Lastly. Take this by way of addition, the plain and manifest design it hath to make men holy and good; and consequently to make them blessed and happy at length, proves it to be divine. It hath manifestly this design; and can have no other. This is a thing that speaks itself to every conscience of man that doth consider, that is, that this book in the general composure of it hath a design to make men good and holy; and consequently to make them blessed and happy; and can have no other design. Every one must suppose that such a book as this, came not by chance into the world; if not by chance, then it came by design; and if it came by design, then something or other must be designed in it. It doth serve this end manifestly, aims at this, to make men holy and pure, and fit them for heaven and a blessed eternity; and it hath no other

design, it aims at nothing else. This then must be of God; this must either have been a divine revelation from God himself, (as it avows itself to be,) or it must be one of the most horrid forgeries that ever was contrived under heaven, ever since the creation of the world. But I would appeal to any man's conscience, whether it is likely any one would be guilty of so audacious a wickedness, to entitle the holy God to be the Author of an imposture, for no other end than to make men holy and good? would men be so wicked as this, for no other end but to make the world good? Their own fact would fly in their faces. Here is a design to make the world holy and happy; and if the world were thus, as this book would make it, if it were suitable to it and the contents of it, if there were that love to God and Christ and our neighbours, that holiness, that righteousness upon earth that are expressed in, and designed to be promoted by this book, what a blessed world were this! The very image and idea of heaven itself. But to think that men should be guilty of the greatest wickedness that ever was done under the sun, with so good a design, is the most inconsistent and unimaginable thing that can be.

These considerations, superadded to what was largely spoken to before, I reckon will prove the matter out of doubt, (with all that impartially consider and weigh things,) that these Scriptures are of divine authority.

LEC. X.*

That which we have further yet to do upon this subject, is only to say somewhat by way of answer to an objection or two; and then to conclude and shut up all in some use.

Objection 1. Some such thought may possibly arise in the minds of some, that if these books be indeed of divine revelation in order to the salvation of souls, as you have heard they are, it may seem strange that they have been confined to so little a part of the world, to so small a portion of mankind. As for the books of the Old Testament, while they only were in being, that they should be shut up in so narrow limits as Palestine, a very little, inconsiderable spot, compared with the rest of the world. In Judah, it was said God was known, as being unknown to the rest of the world. Psalm 76. 1. And he gave his word to Jacob, and his statutes and judgments, to Israel; and did not so to any nation. Psalm 147. 19. 20. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God, as the apostle

speaks. Rom. 3. 2. And afterwards, when Christianity came, in the fulness of time, to obtain in the world, how little a way, in comparison, did the Christian records reach, or have reached hitherto? According to common computation, the world being divided into thirty parts, nineteen do yet remain totally paganish in the grossest sense, and the other eleven, between mahometans and christians, and not above a sixth part of the world that are so much as christians in name, and of them how great a part have the Bible reserved and locked up from them, they not being permitted the use and knowledge of it? All this may seem very strange, if we consider these Scriptures as a divine revelation purposely vouchsafed in order to the salvation of the souls of men.

Why in reference to this I shall offer you some considerations that I hope may not be unuseful. As,

1. Suppose that there had been no saving design at all, set on foot in reference to the apostate sons of men, but that they had been left under the same remediless condition with the apostate angels, what wrong had there been done? who could have had whereof to accuse the righteous Lord and sovereign Ruler of all this world? Why might not he have left all to sink without remedy or hope, into so deserved, yea, and a self procured ruin? It is therefore apparently, not a matter of right, but of free favour, if God afford any apt and suitable means in order to the saving of any. And what is not matter of right may surely be withheld without wrong. But,

2. When upon the fall of Adam it pleased God so graciously to reveal to him his saving design and the means of it by that eminent seed of the woman, whereof (though those words do carry but an obscure intimation, yet) undoubtedly, he did not leave Adam ignorant of the meaning and intendment of them. And it is as little to be doubted, but that Adam did transmit the knowledge of what he knew himself, in so important a matter, to his more immediate posterity. If then they had not been wanting to themselves and their posterity, it must necessarily have been, that there would have been some sufficient knowledge of a Saviour diffused all the world over, wheresoever his posterity had spread itself. But if men have herein been wanting to themselves, is the holy merciful God to be charged with this? If some very bountiful person should confer some great estate, and settle it upon some particular family, and they embezzle and lose it, is this to be charged upon the bountiful benefactor? And again,

3. Men did not only by their voluntary neglect, lose the notices that were first thus given to Adam, concerning a Saviour,

but they lost the very notions of God himself. So that by their own negligence and malignity, they gradually and universally sunk, even into the grossest idolatry, and so by this means, not only lost the opportunity that they had of knowing somewhat how man might have been saved out of his lost and lapsed estate, but they provoked divine displeasure against them in the highest degree. And so their negligence herein, is not only the natural means of their being without such knowledge as they otherwise would have had, but the provoking cause of God's deserting the world in so great a measure, and so generally as he hath deserted it. And thus doth the apostle plainly state the case, that because they have not been true to that light that was natural and common to them, did not follow the conduct, even of the notices of God that they had, therefore they have been abandoned and given up: "The wrath of God hath been revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." What truth was that? or what men were these? It was natural truth, the natural knowledge of God, that men had as men; and this was the pagan world that was here chiefly spoken of. And for that very reason, because that which was to be known of God in them was so manifest to them, even the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, his eternal power and Godhead, sufficiently to leave them without excuse: yet (as it after follows) they liking not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up; as we see Rom. 1. 18, 28. Here is nothing but *Nemesis, just punishment*, and so no cause at all to complain of any injury done to men. But,

4. When yet it pleased God, in order to the revival of the lost state of religion in the world, to form a peculiar people to himself, and there to set up an eminent light, (as it were,) upon a candlestick, to vouchsafe an express revelation of himself to that people, and to commit to them his oracles, they were so committed to them, not to be confined and hid, but preserved and kept: and that thence, light might be transmitted all round about, which accordingly must of course (if men had not been wanting to themselves) have spread further and further. It was not from any divine appointment; but from the ill spirit that ruled amongst that ill people, and from the prejudice and negligence of their neighbours, that the light they had, did not spread and extend further and further and still further and further, to circulate from nation to nation. It proceeded (I say) from the ill spirit that was among the Jews who did envy to the rest of the world the knowledge of God, which now, for the present, was peculiar to them: and to the negli-

gence and prejudice of the rest, that they looked after no such things. Of that ill spirit that ruled among the Jews, that is a sad instance, (which I have upon some other occasion told you of) that when there was one translation of the Old Testament by the seventy elders, enjoined to be made by Ptolemy and they could not tell how to hinder it, they appointed a solemn fast universally wherever they had any thing at all to do, to lament that the knowledge of God should be so diffused amongst others; and go beyond their own bounds. Wherein, as they were guilty, no doubt, so the rest of the world were accessory too, by their negligence and disaffection to the true knowledge of God, to their own continuing ignorance. And further,

5. That when the Christian records, the books of the New Testament came to be added to those of the Old, how should it come to pass but only through the general ill temper of men, that Christian knowledge might not be as far extended as commerce was between nation and nation, kingdom and kingdom? Why might not that commodity have been carried as far as gold and silver and precious stones? the price whereof is far above all these, "more precious than rubies," or thousands of gold and silver. And (as I told you formerly) it was never to be expected, God should do that by extraordinary means, that might have been done by ordinary. And this being the case, it is little to be expected that God (when men might so easily have transmitted such notices from nation to nation, and those that were of a greater distance, and might have heard, more obscurely, of such and such things might have inquired and sent and laboured to inform themselves) should give remedy to such an evil as this, by an extraordinary course; that when in an ordinary way such knowledge might have been conveyed from country to country, he should have sent an angel from kingdom to kingdom, and from nation to nation to carry them Bibles. It might have been as well expected that, in Christian countries, where the Bible is come, but a great many persons being illiterate, and can make no use of it, an angel should be sent from house to house to teach their children to read. Again,

6. Where there hath been both a loss of that Christian knowledge that once did obtain, and those very records do (it may be) cease from some parts of the world where they have been, this is still to be imputed to the same cause, the carelessness and negligence of men about their own concerns, even about their greatest concerns, as we are told. It is true, that of latter days, in some parts of the world, where there have been thirty christians for one pagan, there are now nearly thirty mahometans for one christian. Whence is this,

but from the wilful degeneracy and revolt of those, amongst whom the Christian name was sometime professed? It would not have been imposed upon any, whether they would or no, to forego their religion, and to let these sacred records cease from among them, and substitute a fœtid, fulsome, ridiculous Alcoran in the room of them. We are not to charge upon God these gross negligences and wickednesses of men. And again,

7. Where these holy books are shut up from people, (as they are generally in the romish church,) to what is that to be imputed, but to their own carelessness and indifferency and coldness in the concerns of their own souls and of the future state? This is a punishment, a just punishment upon stupid besotted princes and people, that they would be so imposed upon; so absurdly and without pretence; that their priests must lock up all from them, that so they might have the leading of them, the blind leading the blind into the ditch. We are to consider a penal hand in this, as is expressed, 2 Thes. 2. 11. that where the truth is not received in the love of it, there God, in judgment, should "send strong delusions that they should believe a lie that they all might be damned." This is righteous and holy displeasure, and the act and effort of punitive justice for very gross and most provoking wickedness, that a greater value hath not been had and expressed of things so sacred, so precious and of such concernment to men's souls; that the greater part of the Christian world should suffer itself to be so grossly imposed upon, and cheated out of the very things wherein their very salvation is concerned. Their wickedness in this, did punish itself. And God hath most righteously permitted it to be so. And then,

8. That according to human measures, and even amongst ourselves, the government is not concerned when laws are made, to provide that every particular person should have the particular knowledge of them. Such laws as are of common concernment men are obliged, under penaltics, to observe: they are to look after them themselves. The government is not to take care that every particular person, or family, or parish, or town, or country hath this or that particular act of parliament sent to them, or a statute book lodged in every such place. That is not their care, but it is expected, people should so far concern themselves and mind their interests as to acquaint themselves with things, upon which the safety of their lives as well as the common peace doth depend. And yet further,

9. Where ignorance of those great things that are contained in the Holy Scriptures is altogether invincible; and where it was impossible, in a natural way, that such knowledge should

come, undoubtedly God will deal with men accordingly. He will only proceed with them according to that light they had; he will never punish them for not having that light which they never had, nor could have. "As many as sin without the law shall perish without the law: and as many as have sinned with the law shall perish by the law:" as Romans 2. 12.

And,

10. In the last place, if any such were any where to be found, that did to their utmost improve the light and means of knowledge which they had, (supposing them never to have had what we have from these holy writings,) we do not know what God would have done for their further help in that case. But I doubt instances will not be found of such as have improved the light they had to the uttermost. How far are we from improving as we should and might, that greater light which we have? But God hath his ways open to him. We do not know how he did convey light of old to those that had it before the Scriptures were written: how Job came by his knowledge, and how his friends came by theirs, we do not know. But this is undoubtedly the ordinary, stated means of knowledge where it is vouchsafed; where God doth afford it. If God doth not afford it, he proceeds then by other measures of his own which we know nothing of. But certainly he will always walk punctually according to that rule, that "whosoever hath, to them shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly;" that is, whosoever hath so as to improve what he hath, that useth and enjoys what he hath, and God is pleased to trust him with, God will never be wanting to such. He will always be before-hand with them, as he is never behind-hand with any, according to that known and generally approved saying of that ancient: *Homini facienti quod in se est, Deus non deest: God is never wanting to them that do improve what they possess.* Though he owes them nothing, and whatsoever he doth for them is of grace, he is never wanting to those that with serious diligence trade with, and improve their present talents. And I think more needs not to be said to that objection.

Objection 2. And it is of less concernment, what might be further objected in the second place. That is, it may seem somewhat more desirable (at least) that these Scriptures had contained things that are of necessity to salvation in a more distinct method, that we might have had (as it were) all the several heads belonging to religion, reduced as in a common place book, to such and such distinct topics, that every one might know whither to go presently for all things that do belong to such and such a head. But,

1. I answer; It is enough to those that consider things modestly, and with that subjection and resignation of spirit that we ought to have, to take notice only that God hath thought another course fitter. And that is surely best which he thinks best. So submissive and resigned ought our minds and understandings to be to the divine mind. But,

2. Supposing the most accurate method that could be imagined were used in all things, as was suggested, yet however, there would have been a continual use and need of a stated office, to be continued through all the successions of time, purposely for the explaining and for the enforcing of things upon the dull and sluggish minds of men. The state of this apostate world doth most manifestly require it, yea and even with the best, those that are upon recovery, who are in some measure restored out of the common apostasy, they do still need to be continually administered unto. And that being supposed, it is the business of them who are invested with such an office, to be continually searching for others, and labouring diligently to explain things to them, and to lay things together, and to apply them to particular uses and purposes as the variety of cases should need and require. And to add no more,

3. Whereas the bounty and goodness of God hath provided for the inhabitants of this earth, that the bowels of it should be replenished with things of very great usefulness and very great value, as gold, silver, precious stones and the like that are dug out of the earth, it might as reasonably be said, Why did not God so order the matter, that upon turning up of the earth, one might have found vessels of gold, flagons and dishes of silver ready made and formed? and why have we not our rubies and diamonds ready cut and polished, as they are taken out of the earth? These Scriptures do contain all needful truths in the ore, from whence they are to be beaten out. And what! is nothing to be left to the industry and diligence of those that are to be employed here a lifetime, in reference to the concerns of their salvation and the affairs of another world? must every one expect that food of this kind should drop into his mouth when, even in reference to the support of this perishing life, it seemed a just and equal law to the universal Lawgiver, that he that would not labour should not eat?

And therefore, now to make some brief *Use* of what hath been said upon this subject. It may be improved several ways.

1. It may very reasonably put us upon *reflection*, what our temper and what our practice hath been and is, in reference to these sacred writings. And,

(1.) Let us reflect, and bethink ourselves: Are they used, are they perused as so sacred, so important and necessary things do require to be? Pray let us reflect, Are they much in our hands in our closets? do we lay it as a charge upon ourselves to search the Scriptures? You see it is given as a charge by our Lord himself, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." John 5. 39. Is the reading of them in our families a common practice? You do best know. There is such a thing as family instruction charged upon family masters. They are to be accountable for those under their charge in this very thing. And certainly they that do but use a very ordinary understanding, would soon and easily apprehend, that I who am to maintain the lives of so many persons in my family under my care, by providing food for them for their natural lives, that I who am not to suffer a child or a servant to starve under my roof, must not surely let their souls starve: I must not let the necessary means of spiritual and eternal life be withheld from them. Let it be considered, Is such a course kept up? If there must be family instruction, this word must be the ground of it, it must be all fetched from hence. And how sad, how unaccountable a case is it, when it shall be more ordinary and familiar to have a news-book (not to say a play-book) in men's hands, and under their eye than this holy book. But we are to inquire too,

(2.) Not only concerning the reading and perusing of these writings, but concerning the gust, the savour and relish wherewith we do it. With what complacency do we look into and resolve in our hearts those great and deep things of God that are contained and unfolded to us in this book? I would fain know, who of us can assign a reason why David should have a pleasanter relish of the word of God than we? Is it not of as great importance to us, as it could have been to any saint heretofore, to take these sacred truths and doctrines that are contained in this book for our meat and drink? "I found thy words and did eat them," saith the prophet, "and they were to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." We have it given us as the common character of a good man, a fearer of the Lord of old, that the law of God was his delight, and therein he did meditate day and night. Psal. 1. 2. Let us but consider, if there be a failure and decay generally among us as to one thing, that is, the want of a savouring and relishing the word of God, the things contained in the sacred writings, whether there be not a matter of threatening abode and import to us in it, for then all our religion is proportionably languishing, and the languishment of it is a continual tendency to its being lost, and continual sickness and

languishing is a tendency to death ; and in such reflections as these, we should compare present time with former time, so far as it any way comes within the compass of our knowledge, either of what we could either of us have observed ourselves, or what is recorded to us by others. Sure the time was, that the word of God hath been a thing of much higher esteem (I doubt) than at present. I am very apt to think and do pretty certainly know, that the reading of the Bible in London was a much more common usage than now it is in families and closets. And truly, if there be symptoms of decay upon us in respect of so very important a thing as this is, it looks very threateningly: we may be sure if our esteem grow less of this book, God's esteem doth not grow less of it: he doth not measure by us: and if he have the same estimate and value for it that ever he had, we may fear that he will sometime or other (and we know not how soon) very terribly vindicate the neglect, contempt and disregard of these sacred records. If he do come to plead his own cause, in this regard, with an untoward generation, I fear it will be a very terrible day: I know not who will live when God doth this. But,

2. This should *exhort* us to several things. As,

(1.) That we do with serious gratitude acknowledge and adore the goodness of God, in entrusting us with such a treasure as these Oracles of his are. I am afraid this is a thing wherein there is a very general neglect and defect. We do not often enough put it into our express thanksgivings, that God hath vouchsafed the great blessing of a Bible among us. I doubt we do not explicitly enough take notice of this, as a matter of gratitude to God, nor so often as we should that he hath put this book into our hands. And,

(2.) It should exhort us to more frequent and diligent reading of the Scriptures. For what have we them for? And indeed we do but mock God when we give thanks for them, if we use them not. It should be more a business with us; time should be chosen and reserved for it on purpose. We should contrive how to spare time from our common affairs for the perusal of this book. I am afraid that partly between the over-much business of the shop and the exchange, and partly through the no-business of the coffee house and tavern, little or no time is allowed for this important work, the reading and perusing diligently these holy writings.

(3.) And we should be exhorted next, to endeavour to get them written over again in our hearts: that this word may be to us an ingrafted word: that we may have this word of Christ dwelling richly in us: that we may be the epistles of Christ, written

not with ink on paper, but with the Spirit of the living God on the fleshly tables of our hearts: otherwise this word cannot but be a witness against us. If there be not a correspondent word within, if there be not an internal correspondent word, the external word must be a standing witness against the frame of our spirits and against our habitual inclination. We then have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, when it transforms and changes us, and when we are like it, when there is something within us answerable to it, as face answers to face in the water. And,

(4.) It ought, in order to this, further to exhort us to endeavour distinctly to understand it; especially in those great things that do concern the vitals and essentials of religion. And this knowledge will be easy to them that concern themselves to understand. Wisdom is easy to him that hath understanding, that is, that sets his mind to understand, that doth aim at understanding. It must be a design driven and pursued accordingly, that we may get our minds enriched with that knowledge that is wrapt up in these holy writings. And we have greater advantages in order to it, yea much greater than our forefathers have had, though they have expressed that love to this book, which I am afraid is too little common in our time. How dear was a leaf of the Bible to some of the poor suffering martyrs! But, I say, we have much greater advantage to help us to a distinct understanding of it. How many very useful commentaries upon the Bible, are there published among us in the English tongue, which were not in the former time? As particularly the Dutch annotations, and Diodati's annotations, and those that are called the Assembly's annotations and Mr. Poole's, in two volumes, and that lesser and very useful one of Mr. Clarke, single. So that they must owe it to their own great neglect and unconcernedness, who are not furnished with help at hand whereby they may in some measure understand the Bible distinctly as they read it, and know how to refer things to their use from day to day as they go on in that course. And then,

(5.) Lastly, apply it to the several uses it was written for and was designed to serve. You see here in the context, what uses it was intended to serve, and it is said to be profitable for: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" use it to these several purposes, as the case doth from time to time require. And we may add hereunto, what we find in another place, (Rom. 15. 4.) that the things that were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and

comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Oh! how many a sweet cordial is there in this book! Certainly they cannot be in an uncomfortable state, without a fault, that have such matter of consolation just at hand, and take no notice of it. They that go from day to day in darkness, and complain of their own doubts and fears; and will not be at the pains to consider what there is in this book suitable to the state of their case, and which by faithful application would undoubtedly in time satisfy all unreasonable doubts, and dismiss all causeless fears and make them vanish, must needs be wanting to their own comfort and peace. It is in that respect a light, not only upon account of its instructiveness, but upon account of the pleasantness and consolations thereof. The Scriptures were written that we through patience and comfort of them might have hope. We that are following the conduct of God, and the ducture of that light which shines in this sacred word of his, towards an eternal state of glory, with what erect and raised hearts, with hearts how lifted up in the ways of God should we hold on our course, as the redeemed ones of him, having that life and immortality in view which are brought to light before our eyes in this gospel.

And a little to enforce all this, it may not be altogether useless, nay, I think it may be worth our while to tell you a short passage which was not long ago told me by a person, (whose name is well known in London and I hope savory in it yet, doctor Thomas Goodwin,) at such time as he was president of Magdalen college in Oxford: there I had the passage from him. He told me that being himself in the time of his youth, a student at Cambridge, and having heard much of Mr. Rogers of Dedham in Essex, purposely he took a journey from Cambridge to Dedham, to hear him preach on his lecture day, a lecture then so strangely thronged and frequented that to those that came not very early, there was no possibility of getting room in that very spacious large church. Mr. Rogers was (as he told me) at that time he heard him, on the subject of discourse which hath been for some time the subject of mine, the Scriptures. And in that sermon he falls into an expostulation with the people about their neglect of the Bible: (I am afraid it is more neglected in our days:) he personates God to the people, telling them. "Well I have trusted you so long with my Bible: you have slighted it, it lies in such and such houses all covered with dust and cobwebs: you care not to look into it. Do you use my Bible so? well you shall have my Bible no longer." And he takes up the Bible from his cushion, and seemed as if he were going away with it and carrying it from them; but

immediately turns again and personates the people to God, falls down on his knees, cries and pleads most earnestly, "Lord whatsoever thou dost to us, take not thy Bible from us: kill our children, burn our houses, destroy our goods; only spare us thy Bible, only take not away thy Bible." And then he personates God again to the people; "Say you so? well I will try you a while longer; and here is my Bible for you, I will see how you will use it, whether you will love it more, whether you will value it more, whether you will observe it more, whether you will practice it more, and live more according to it." But by these actions (as the doctor told me) he put all the congregation into so strange a posture that he never saw any congregation in his life; the place was a mere Bochim, the people generally (as it were) deluged with their own tears, and he told me that he himself, when he got out and was to take horse again to be gone, he was fain to hang a quarter of an hour upon the neck of his horse weeping, before he had power to mount; so strange an impression was there upon him and generally upon the people, upon having been thus expostulated with for the neglect of the Bible.

And sure, if our neglect of it in our days have not been less, it is a very sad ease, if our affliction and resentment of such an evil as this should be apparently and discernably less.

And nothing will signify our regardlessness of this holy book more, than if we do not strictly regulate ourselves by it as to our thoughts, and as to all our deportment. For pray, under what notion do we own this book, but as a rule to guide us to our end? how to glorify God and how to enjoy him for ever? It will be a plain testimony against us that this book hath not the esteem which is due to it, when it hath not the use made of it that it was purposely designed for. And oh! let that be but considered, its use is to be a rule for us. Bethink we ourselves thereupon, whether we do really regulate our thoughts, our hearts, our affections and our passions by it. "I dare not allow such and such thoughts, I dare not allow such and such motions of spirit within myself, for the Bible is against them." Let us but consider, whether we use to lay this rule to our minds and spirits and to our walkings and actions, so as to conform all to it. If not, it is impossible we can value it according to its true worth, for it is valuable but under the notion as it is a rule, and it can never regulate our external conversation as it should, if it do not regulate our spirit first. We must consider that is the great difference between the government of God and any human government whatsoever. His government is primarily mental, it is a government first exercised about minds;

and this word is the instrument of his government as to them. This word of his "is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." And if we do not labour to get our spirits, our inward man, habitually subjected to the governing power of this word, it doth nothing upon us to any purpose; it is lost upon us, as to all the great purposes for which it should serve us. But is not this too apparently our common case, that if there be a strong inclination to this or that thing or way; or if there be a passion up that we have a mind to indulge, this shall signify more with us, to carry us this way or that, than a thousand texts of Scripture? You may as well, many times, oppose your breath to the Thames to turn the course of it, as to oppose the word of God to these inclinations. But is this to make use of the Scripture as our rule, when the plain design of it lies against such and such habitual inclination or against indulgence to such and such a passion, and we never apply it to such a purpose? If we did but get the authority of the great God (whose word this is) to be (as it were) enthroned within us, so as that our souls might stand in continual awe of him, the remembrance of a text of Scripture would presently allay passion, govern appetite, and check inclination, and so would come, with ease and pleasure, to be to us a governing rule of all the affairs and actions of our lives.

And so I have done, as to this great subject of the Scriptures, which was proper next, after we had asserted to you the existence of a Deity, that is, of an intelligent Ruler and Maker of this world, to whom such a word as this might certainly be ascribed as his word; that then we might come from this word of his to have more distinct apprehensions concerning him. It was necessary first, to know that there was one intelligent, perfect, all-comprehending, eternal Mind, the Original and Author of all things, without which it would have been a vain thing to speak of the word of God. We must know first, whence such a word was to proceed, and that being once understood and known, then we may look back again upon him, and such things through the light of the word come more clearly to be revealed to us concerning him, than we can otherwise, by mere light of nature search or find out. And so to such things we shall go on, in our intended course, as the Lord shall enable and direct.