

EIGHT DISCOURSES

ON THE

HARMONY

OF THE

THREE FIRST EVANGELISTS,

In their Accounts of the Behaviour of the Malefactors
crucified with our BLESSED LORD :

WITH

An IMPROVEMENT of several Arguments grounded upon
their Narrative of Our Saviour's Crucifixion :

AND ON THE

ALLIANCE of HERESY with DEISM,

AND OF

DEISM and APOSTACY with the BLASPHEMY
that shall not be forgiven :

WITH

REFLECTIONS on the true Sense and Meaning, and
pretended Right of PRIVATE JUDGEMENT in Re-
ligion, and the Views of antient and modern OPPOSERS
of the Church of GOD.

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O X F O R D :

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ADVERTISEMENT.

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ST. PAUL's WISH to be accursed from CHRIST, for the Sake of his Brethren, illustrated and vindicated from Misconstructions : In Three Discourses. To which is added an APPENDIX, containing a COLLECTION of the most material Observations upon the TEXT, by antient and modern Writers ; and of some other Passages applicable to the Illustration of it.

A N D

MOSES's PETITION to be blotted out of the Book of God, explained and vindicated from Misconstruction ; and the Excellence of his Character displayed. In Three Discourses.



LUKE xxiii. 39, 40.

And one of the Malefactors which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself and Us.

But the Other answering, rebuked Him.

THERE is a seeming Diversity in the Accounts given by the three first Evangelists of the Behaviour of one of the Malefactors who suffered with our blessed Lord; the two first of them, relating that, *They that were crucified with Him reviled Him*, (as it is expressed in our Version) whereas St. *Luke* in the Text, reports that *One* of them *rebuked* the other for *his* irreverent and impious Carriage. To account for, and to reconcile this seeming Difference, it hath been supposed by some learned Expositors, that the Terms of St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* are *Hebraisms*, and Instances are referred to of expressing in that Language a single thing in the plural Number.

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ber. Others solve the Difficulty by inferring, that both the Malefactors reviled our Lord at the first, but that one of them afterwards relented, being so affected with the Signs and Miracles accompanying his Crucifixion, *the Earthquake, the rending of the Rocks, and the Eclypse of the Sun overspreading the whole Earth with Darkness*, as to confess that *He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah or Saviour of the World*. This was the Opinion of many of the Fathers. It is not my Design to enter into a particular Discussion of the Merits of these Solutions, in order to derogate from any Weight or Value which either of them may be shewn to carry. But I shall beg leave to advance a Supposition which may not improperly be called a Medium between these two Accounts; however paradoxical it may seem, previously to the Explication of my Meaning, to speak of a Medium between two Expositions, one of which *denies*, and the other *affirms* an Insult to have been offered to our blessed Lord by both the Sufferers jointly. For by a Distinction, not more nice than it appears to be material and just, concerning the different Spirit and Disposition of these two Sufferers, and the Import of the Terms in which the Evangelists have severally recorded their Behaviour, I presume the Harmony of their

Accounts

Accounts may be more satisfactorily made out, than on any other footing. Permit me to recommend the Supposition now to be advanced for solving the Difficulty, by observing, that it derives the highest degree of Probability, yea its whole Force, from Premises contained in the Narratives of the three Evangelists; in point of which Advantage, other Schemes of Reconciliation seem to be defective.

Now the Medium by which the seeming Repugnancies in the Gospel History of this Matter may be fairly taken away, shall be presented in this Proposition; That *the Misbehaviour of one of the Sufferers, was not, as seems to have been commonly imagined, an Act of Despight and Contumely, but proceeded from mere Infirmary, and yet, as such, might with very good Propriety, be comprized by St. Matthew and St. Mark under the general Term* *ωυαδιζον*. Let us see what Ground for this Opinion may be collected from the Histories of the Evangelists.

I begin with St. *Luke's* Account of the Behaviour of the penitent Sufferer: For this, together with our Lord's gracious Answer to that short Petition whereby He recommended Himself to his Favour, may, I suppose, be admitted to be the right Clue, for determining the true Spirit or Character of this Man, at

the Time of his Suffering. And here, not to enlarge upon the Opportunities and Advantages for Repentance, and a Renewal of Heart, which the Laws of Humanity afford to condemned Offenders, the several Particulars distinctly recorded by this Evangelist, that *One* of the Malefactors railed on our Lord; and was *rebuked* by this other for the Insult, which *He* considered, and, as we shall see presently, had Reason to consider, as a Demonstration of his not fearing God, even at the Time when the Sentence of his Condemnation was carrying into Execution; *the penitent Confession* which this Man made of his own Guilt, *which is expressive of Humility*; and *his Assertion of our Lord's Innocency*, that *He had done nothing amiss*, that is, *nothing worthy of Reproach*; and further, *the Profession of his own Faith* in his Power and Character as the Prince of a spiritual invisible Kingdom; together with *that gracious Answer* to his Supplication, *To-day shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise*: These several Particulars, I say, put it beyond all Doubt, that this Delinquent was a sincere Penitent, and, as such, incapable of reviling or railing at our blessed Lord, in the same Breath that He, in the Terms now repeated, addressed Himself to Him and his fellow Sufferer. Presuming therefore on this as a Point that may be

be admitted upon St. *Luke's* Testimony of these Facts so distinctly noted, I proceed to support this Opinion, and the plain Account in his Gospel, by some Observations on *the Stile* of the Evangelists, and *the Matter* of their Narratives concerning our Lord's Crucifixion and the Behaviour of these two Delinquents; and by some other Remarks which tend to give Weight and Force to the Plan of Reconciliation here offered.

From these Heads I intend to argue, and hope to make good the general Proposition laid down, that the Misbehaviour of one of these Sufferers was not, as seems to have been commonly imagined, an Act of malicious Wickedness, but proceeded from mere Infirmary, and, as such, is *intentionally*, and with very good Propriety, comprized by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* under the Term *ανεπιζητον*; which, in other Words, is to prove the Consistency of the three Evangelists in this Instance.

I am first to take Notice of the *Stile* or *Expressions* of the several Writers, in setting down the Particulars relating to our Lord's Crucifixion. St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, in *their* Accounts of the Behaviour of the *Multitude* to our blessed Lord upon the Cross, tell us that they reviled Him, *εβλασφημουν αυτον*. (*Matth.* xxvii. 39. *Mark* xv. 29.) wagging
their

their Heads ; and that the *Chief Priests*, with the *Scribes and Elders*, mocked Him, *εμπαιζόντες*, (*Matth.* xxvii. 41. *Mark* xvii. 31.) and further, that they derided his Pretences of saving others, and denied his Power to save Himself; *He saved Others, Himself He cannot save*; (*Matth.* xxvii. 42. *Mark* xv. 31. also *Luke* xxiii. 37.) which appears to be given by the two first Evangelists, as *the thing precisely intended* by the Term *εβλασφημῶν*. For after reporting that they, who, *wagging their Heads passed by, railed on Him*, (*εβλασφημῶν*, *Matth.* xxvii. 39. *Mark* xv. 29.) saying, *Thou that destroyest the Temple, &c.* Each of them introduce this Taunt with the word *ομοίως**, *Likewise*, or *in like manner*, the Chief Priests, with the Scribes and Elders, *mocking, said, He saved Others, Himself he cannot save.* St. *Luke* expresses the Derision of the *Multitude* and the *Rulers*, by the word *ἐξεμυκτηρίζον*,

* Where it is reasonable to refer the word *ομοίως* as well to what each of the Parties *said*, as to what they *did*; i. e. to the whole of their Behaviour, which consisted in wagging their Heads, and saying, *He could not save Himself*; which was indeed the thing meant or expressed by those Gestures, and appears to be precisely the Point or Matter signified by all the three Evangelists, when they make use of the Term *βλασφημῶν*; a Word, the strict literal Import of which is, to hurt or injure the Fame or Credit; which, in the Case of our blessed Lord, was most eminently affected by this Imputation, but completely vindicated, when God loosed the Pains of Death, and shewed that it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

and

and that of the Soldier by *επεπαιζον αυτω*. St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, both of them, describe the Behaviour of the two crucified Malefactors, not by any of these Terms, but by the word *ωνειδιζον*. St. *Luke* more distinctly relates, that *one of them* railed on Him, which *He* expresses, not by the same Word that the other Evangelists apply to the Companions of our Lord upon the Cross, but by a word of stronger Import, *εβλασφημει*, the same by which the former Evangelists have signified the Contumely of the Multitude who wagged their Heads at Him, and affirmed that He could not save himself. Now if it should appear, that the word *ωνειδιζω* is a Term of very general Signification, and may be taken in a more promiscuous and undeterminate Sense than the rest of the Terms here used, that such a Latitude ought to be allowed in expounding it, as to comprehend in its Import all kinds of Reproach from the highest to the lowest degrees of Obloquy or Blame, implying as well such as proceed from involuntary Error, as those which are wilful and contemptuous; and, that it is applicable to such outward Acts or Expressions as arise from very different Principles and Tempers, then the seeming Inconsistency in the Accounts of the Evangelists may be fairly cleared away; and at the same Time that they are placed above
all

all Suspicion of having written in Concert, their Histories may be shewn to be perfectly harmonious, by only supplying such Circumstances and Distinctions in the Case of the two Sufferers, as are rendered highly probable, yea, are suggested, and, as it were, obtruded upon us, by the more particular Recital of St. *Luke*. For this large Sense of the Word *οὐδὲ*, and this Interpretation of it in the Texts under Consideration in the Gospels of St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, I shall offer several Arguments.

And the first shall be taken from a Liberty of Expression common to all Languages, whereby several Words are used in a large and undeterminate Sense, and sometimes in a Sense even contrary to their Etymology. I need not premise, that it is not my Meaning to suppose an Antiphrasis intended by the Evangelists in this Word, but only to ground and deduce an Argument from this Privilege of Language, and from two Passages in a Greek Classick, where the radical Word *οὐδὲ* has been thought to be so applied. As it would be improper to introduce in this Discourse a Collection of Instances, I shall, in lieu of producing such Authorities, give the Observation of *Aulus Gellius*, from the 9th Chapter of his 12th Book. *Est plurifariam videre atque animadvertere in veteribus Scriptis,*

Scriptis, pleraque Vocabula quæ nunc in Sermonibus Volgi unam certamque rem demonstrant, ita fuisse media et communia ut significare et capere possint duas inter se res contrarias. Thus the Scholiast on the *Phænissæ* of Euripides, expounds the Word *ονειδος* by *κλεος**; and in the *Medea*† we meet with an Application of the same Word, which tends to justify the Scholiast's Remark on that Sense and Use of it. The Argument I mean to ground upon these Observations is that, since the *Radix ονειδος* appears to be one of those Words which are of such indefinite Importance as

* In the *Phænissæ* of Euripides, (v. 1722.) Oedipus speaking of his having found out the *Sphinx's* Riddle, *Antigone* replies to Him,

Σφίγγος αναφερεις ονειδος;
Απαγε τα παρ' ουτυχηματ' αυδωι.

translated in an old Edition,

Quid Sphingis refers Gloriam?
Define pristinam Felicitatem narrare.

But I doubt whether *Ονειδος* in this Passage may not relate to the *Disgrace* which the *Sphinx* brought upon the *Thebans* by posing them with her Riddle? Yet that it is the same as *κλεος* (as it is interpreted not only by the Greek Scholiast, but also by the Greek Paraphrast and by Grotius,) is the more probable, however strange, from the Words *καλλιστον ονειδος*, v. 828 of the same Tragedy. And *Valckenauer* on that Place, quotes the *Etymologicon Magnum* and *Eustathius*, as confirming this Interpretation.

† Καλον γ' ονειδος τω νεωσι Νυμφιω,
Πτωχης αλασθαι παιδας η τ' εσωσα σε.

Translated,

Præclara vero Gloria erit Tibi novo Sponso,
Mendicos errare Filios tuos, Meque qui (l. quæ) te servavi.

to be capable of even contrary Senses, a Latitude should also be allowed in expounding the Meaning of *overdido*, and that it's just Importance in the Gospels of St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* ought to be determined not merely by the most common Acceptation of the Term, but that other Considerations, which shall be taken Notice of in their due Place, ought to be regarded as of Weight to ascertain it's Signification here; to limit and relax, or to extend and enlarge it's Idea, agreeably to the Circumstances of the Matter or Occasion, or the Character of the Person to which the Term is applied. For it will be readily admitted that the same *outward* Act proceeding from different Motives does by no means imply the same Fault, but may be of quite different Consideration according to the inward Sentiments and Dispositions prompting to it. Now as the Ground of the ironical Use of the Word *overdos* in the two Passages referred to in the *Phœnissæ* and *Medea* of *Euripides*, was some matter of supposed or real Disgrace, why may not the reputed Disgrace which was brought upon Jesus when He endured and despised the Shame of the Cross and the Contradiction of Sinners, be adjudged a sufficient Reason for the Use or Application of the Word *overdos* by the two Evangelists to denote, in a general

neral way, and without Distinction of their respective Spirit and Tempers, some *outward* Act of Those who were agreed in accounting the passive Behaviour of our Lord in submitting to such a Load of Ignominy and Suffering, *a Matter of Blame*, inasmuch as this Conduct appeared to Them irreconcilable, by any Principles of Human Prudence, to the Character He had claimed? This is the first Argument which I presume to offer for relaxing* or generalizing, if I may so speak, the Import of the Word *ονειδιζω* with regard to

* Which may be strengthened by the following Passage, in the Life of *Homer*, (among *Gale's Opuscula Mythologica*, &c. p. 372.) where it is said of *Ulysses*, *αμα παντας πειθει λόγοις εμφορσι, μετρίως μεν ονειδισας, διοτι εκει τελευσιν α υπεσχομεν, κα' αμα συγγνωμης αξιωσας οτι πολυν χρονον απρατοι μενοινες, των φιλοπατων εσερηναι· παρακλησεν δε και ελπιδι, τα εκ των μαθειων συμπειδων μενειν.* For from the Expression *μετρίως ονειδισας* in this Passage, and that immediately following the Words *πειθει λόγοις εμφορσι* and *αμα συγγνωμης* in the same Sentence, it may reasonable be argued, that the Verb *ονειδιζω* doth not constantly denote an insulting Malignity of Spirit, since this being always and in itself an Excess, could not with any Consistency be joined in Company with these other Expressions, nor be qualified or rendered moderate by combining the Term expressing it with the Word *μετρίως*; moderate Excess being a Contradiction in Terms. I conclude then that it may be taken in a milder Sense, and sometimes means nothing further than laying to a Persons Charge, or taxing Him with a Conduct, which, appearing to be not altogether suitable to his Character and Pretensions, may be considered as reflecting some kind of Disparagement or Dishonour upon Him, until He shall clear it up.

the Behaviour of the penitent Malefactor, of whom it doth not appear that He did with a malicious insulting Spirit revile our Blessed Saviour : Especially since,

Secondly, One of the Evangelists who has comprized his Behaviour under this general Term, has on another Occasion made use of the same Word in speaking of the Rebuke given to the Disciples by our Lord Himself, when after His Resurrection He appeared unto the Eleven, and *upbraided them with their Unbelief and Hardness of Heart*, *ὠνειδίζε τὴν ἀπιστίαν αὐτῶν καὶ σκληροκαρδίαν*. The same Word is also used by St. *Matthew* (Chap. xii. 20.) of our Lord's *upbraiding the Cities wherein most of His mighty Works were done*; not to mention the forensick Use or Application of this Word in the best Authors*, as meaning an Imputation from which a Person *hath* not cleared Himself; not such an one from which He *cannot* clear himself, or attempt so to do, or which will not admit of any Vindication. I take it to be evident then that the Word *ὠνειδίζω* does not constantly imply some degree of a malicious insulting Spirit in the Person said to upbraid; for it is certain that it doth not carry this Sense in the Texts here cited,

* See *Rapbelius* on *Matth*, v. 11.

as being spoken of Him in whom was no Sin, neither was Guile found in His Mouth. Hence I argue that the Sense of this Word in other Passages also may be indefinite, and that the Intention of the Persons who are said *overdidzeu* ought to be determined, not merely by the most popular and intense Acceptation of the Term, but by the Matter and Tenor of the Narrative in which it is found, or by the Character and the apparent View or Design of the Persons by whom, or of whom it is predicated. And therefore, however the Ideas excited in Us by the foregoing Terms, and the Impressions made upon the Mind by the Relation of such a Scene of Insult and Outrage, together with the most vulgar Acceptation of this Term *overdidzeu* may have given some Tincture to our Apprehension of the Importance of the Word in this place; yet, upon Reflection, I think there will appear sufficient Reason to believe that it is here applied generally by the two Evangelists to both the Sufferers on the Cross jointly, and without Distinction of their several Tempers and Manner of outward Behaviour, which is to be learnt, by comparing the Words of St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* with the more particular Recital of St. *Luke*, and that it means nothing more, than that they joined in blaming, or in urging *the Matter*

Matter of the Blame, or Reproach cast upon our blessed Lord* : Which was

That, being now reduced to the last Extremities, He did not vindicate and make good his Pretensions to be *the Christ and Son of God*, by coming down from the Cross and saving himself. For this was the Proof which the Multitude assembled about the Cross demanded of his being the Messiah or King of the *Jews*, and the Miracle which many of Those who were well affected toward Him seem to have expected, and for not exhibiting of which his Adversaries derided Him. This was the *overdos*, the grand Matter of Reproach and Outcry, in which, and in which only, as it seems evident from all the three Gospels, our Blessed Lord's Companions on the Cross joined the Multitude; but one of them with a very different Temper and Spirit, as must necessarily be concluded from St. *Luke's* more particular Account of the Manner, in which He addressed Himself to his Fellow Sufferer, and to our Lord. From this Account, it may with the greatest Probability be collected that this Man came to the Cross with Moral Repentance at least, or a Disposition

* So 1 Tim. iv. 10. *ονειδιζομεθα*, We suffer Reproach, or are reproached, meaning, have Reflections cast upon Us. And Hebrews xiii. 13. *τοι ονειδισμον αυτη φεροντες*.

not the most averſe to the being wrought upon by the Influences of God's Spirit, if not with the Spiritual Regeneration of a ſincere Diſciple of Chriſt, and Faith in Him *as the Son of God, a Prince and a Saviour for to give Repentance to Iſrael, and Forgiveness of Sins*; but perhaps yet with ſome degree of that common Prejudice and Prepoſſeſſion, of which even the conſtant Diſciples and Followers of our Lord could hardly divest themſelves, namely, That He would, by a miraculous Exertion of his Divine Power manifeſt forth his Glory, and deliver Himſelf from the Hands of his Enemies. But when He ſaw Him now reduced to the laſt Extremities, become, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *the Scorn of Men, and the Outcaſt of the People*, and This without the leaſt Proſpect of Deliverance, it is probable either that He expoſtulated with our Lord upon his being, as it appeared in the Judgment of *human Prudence*, wanting in the Juſtice due to his Character, in not reſcuing Himſelf from the Malice and Inſults of his Enemies; (and merely on this Account He might be ſaid *overdizen*, or to *join in the Matter of Reproach*, which was that He *did not ſave Himſelf*;) or elſe it may be imagined that this ſurprizing and unaccountable Scene of his Suffering, to all outward Appearance as
if

if He had been forsaken by God, and given up to the Will of his Enemies, might (together with the Tumult of the People affecting his animal Spirits) so *disturb*, or *almost overpower* his Understanding and Faculties, and cast Him into such a Disorder, that *in the Confusion of his Mind* an *infirm Thought* might arise, which did not *overthrow*, but perhaps for a Moment *abate* or *slagger* his Faith, or even *suspend* it.

Now it doth not appear from the History of any of the Evangelists that the Sufferers with our Lord on the Cross *objected*, or, as the Word is rendered in the Translation of one of the Gospels, *cast in his Teeth* any thing else besides this Submission to the Insults and Death of the Cross. To *δεικναι*, *This same Thing*, or *this very Thing*, St. Matthew saith, *the Thieves which were crucified with Him, cast in his Teeth*; and St. Mark, in like manner, uses the same Word *ονειδίζον* concerning the Malefactors immediately after repeating the Insults of the People calling upon Him, *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that We may see and believe*; then immediately follow the Words, *And they that were crucified with Him, reviled Him, ονειδίζον αυτον*, that is, *cast in his Teeth*, as it hath just been observed the same Word is translated in St. Matthew's Gospel,

Gospel, or warmly remonstrated to Him upon his Pretensions that He was *The Christ, the King of Israel*. And therefore since St. *Luke* relates more distinctly that *one* of the Malefactors railed on Him, on this very Account only, so far as appears, *because He did not prove Himself the Christ by saving both Himself and Them*, (describing the Behaviour of this Man by *εβλασφημει*, and adding that the other rebuked Him for this Insult or Instance of Blasphemy, and likewise received from our Lord a most blessed and comfortable Assurance that He should almost instantly be with Him in Paradise;) is it not highly reasonable, yea, are We not necessarily led to conclude from hence that the Misbehaviour of this Sufferer ought to be considered in a quite different Light from That of the Other, and was nothing more than *Infirmity*, a *Deliquium Fidei*, or a short *Dejection*, or perhaps *Confusion* only of Mind occasioned probably by the Extremity of our Lord's Afflictions and his seeming Desertion, and discovered perhaps by some earnest Expostulations with Him upon his not vindicating, under such Insults and Extremities, the Character which He had claimed? and that the two former Evangelists, or, to speak more truly and properly, the Holy Ghost by

D Them

Them has comprized the Behaviour of both these Sufferers under the Word *εὐδοκῶ*? which appears to be expressive not only or constantly of a malicious Upbraiding or Reviling, but is a Term of such general lax indefinite Importance as also to denote any kind or degree of Blame or Obloquy; and so is fitly applicable not only to a Denial of our Lord's Character, but also to the Case of Doubt or Suspence, or of any Tendency towards such a State of Mind; inasmuch as this also, howsoever occasioned, or how transient soever, will come very properly under the Denomination of an *αἰσῶς*, in regard of *it's calling into question* our Lord's Pretensions that He *was* the Son of God, the promised Saviour of the World.

This Account may be further corroborated, and, if I mistake not, beyond all Exception confirmed, by giving Attention to a Particular in St. *Luke's* Narrative over and above what is found in the Story of the other Evangelists; and which, though it hath been commonly overlooked, appears to be a very material and leading Circumstance in this brief but very precise and accurate Detail. For whereas the other Evangelists tell us that the Multitude about the Cross called upon our Lord to make good the Character He claimed

claimed by delivering Himself; St. *Luke* informs us that the impenitent Malefactor, He who railed on, or blasphemed Him, or, as it should seem, said wickedly that He was such a one as Themselves, and justly under the same Condemnation, demanded of Him that He should not only rescue *Himself*, but *Them* his Fellow Sufferers also: *If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself AND US.* Now the Rebuke hereupon given Him by his Partner, and indeed the whole of his Reply does, I conceive, solidly establish the Distinction I have had recourse to, and the Scheme of Reconciliation which has been proposed; laying open to us the State of Mind and Views of each of these Delinquents, and shewing us clearly that the one of them called upon our Lord for a Temporal Deliverance, implying that, if this Deliverance was not effected, He was a Criminal as well as Themselves; while the other prayed for a Spiritual Redemption, or Deliverance from the Bondage of Corruption and Sin into the glorious State of the Children of God. For, when the Penitent Sufferer answered, Dost Thou not fear God, seeing Thou art in the same Condemnation, He must be understood to address his Companion as a worldly-minded hardened Wretch

who shewed no Fear of God even when He was going to stand before his Judgement Seat ; and this Rebuke together with his Petition for Himself, Lord, Remember Me, when Thou comest into thy Kingdom, must be considered as an Admonition to Him that, instead of desiring to be delivered from that Temporal Punishment which they both of them ought rather to submit to as the *due* Reward of their evil Deeds, it behoved Him to pray for the Forgiveness of his Sins, and the Intercession of this crucified Saviour, when He should enter into Heaven, there to appear in the Presence of God for miserable Sinners; and to cease reviling or blaspheming our Lord, for that assuredly He was unjustly sentenced, and had done *nothing amiss, & dev*
erem, which is a mild Expression, signifying nothing unfit or unbecoming his Character and Pretensions, as on no other Occasion, so neither by submitting to this ignominious Suffering and Death, from which nothing more could be concluded but only that his Kingdom was not of this World; under which Persuasion He Himself, in a serious and earnest manner, prayed to Him, Lord, Remember Me, when Thou comest into thy Kingdom. Thus the several Particulars in the Reply of the Penitent being found very
pertinent

pertinent and corresponding to the Substance of the opprobrious Speech, *If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself AND US*, The Harmony of the Evangelists in this Matter is no longer liable to Impeachment or Doubt, but becomes very plain and evident; the Differences between their several Relations being *merely verbal*, and such as ought to be expected between a Writer who purposes to recount Matters distinctly and precisely, and Those who intend to set forth *Facts* in general, without descending to the like Exactness and Particularity.

So that whether We imagine St. *Luke* to have been more particularly informed of the Behaviour of this Penitent; or whether it be thought more probable that the Circumstances which made so great a Difference in the Case of these two Sufferers were known to St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* also; since the Account might be given by our Lord Himself to the Apostles, of whom He was seen after his Passion for the space of forty Days, in which Time He conversed with them of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; on either of these Suppositions We may reasonably ground an Inference quite the reverse to That which some may have been prone to make from an hasty and superficial Comparison

rison of these Passages; and from the general and indefinite Significancy of the Word *οριζων*, as expressive of Dissatisfaction with a Person's Conduct, whether from proper and sufficient, or from any undue or mistaken Motives and Considerations, may justly argue the Propriety, Consistency and Completeness of the Evangelical History; that a Diversity in their Accounts has no Existence but in the Oversight and Misapprehension of the Reader; and, that the several Evangelists appear to have been so under the Superintendency of God's Providence and the Direction of his Spirit, as, without any *laboured Accuracy* and *studied Harmony*, to perfect each others Relation, and make us acquainted with the Truth only, and the whole Truth of the Matter.

From these Observations and the several other Reflections above-mentioned a very considerable Presumption arises that the Word *οριζων*, is applied in this Passage of sacred Writ, as it is also sometimes in profane Authors, in a Sense somewhat more lax and mild than it imports in vulgar Language and common Use. And so We have good Grounds to conclude that the Thieves did not join in the Taunts and Derisions of the People, *their* Fault not extending to any Thing

Thing else besides this single Article of charging our Lord with not making good his Pretensions to be the Christ, by some such wonderful Deliverance of Himself as *human Prudence* in this Case suggested. The Behaviour however of one of these Sufferers is by St. *Luke* signified by a Term expressive of Malice and Insult, ἐβλασφημεῖ αὐτόν. Of That of the other He gives such an Account as leaves room for admitting, upon any other Testimony, a Misbehaviour of Infirmary in *Him* also, while it excludes all Supposition of a Spirit and Temper of the same Kind with That which He rebuked in his Fellow Sufferer. And therefore, since it may be conceived more than possible that the Understanding of the best of Men might for a short Time be greatly disturbed, and the Thoughts confounded by such an astonishing Scene as That of our Lord's Sufferings; (not to repeat here what may be hereafter enlarged upon, the Slowness of his constant Followers and Disciples to understand the *Predictions* of his Ignominy and Sufferings, and that even *They* appear by the Accomplishment thereof to have been cast under such Astonishment and Dejection of Spirit as for some Time to have been hardly capable of believing the News of his Resurrection;)

rection;) It seems highly probable, I say, yea more than probable, from the several Considerations here offered, that the Case of this Penitent ought to be resolved into an Error of mere Infirmary, and of such Weakness as is inseparable from our human Nature and Constitution: And, since to all the other Arguments that have been applied in support of this Plan of Reconciliation, This may likewise be added, that it is plain, from the Preface to St. *Luke's* Gospel, that He was so far from intending to disparage or invalidate, or to *correct* the Accounts of the other Evangelists, that, on the contrary, his professed Design was to *confirm* and to give a further and *additional Assurance* to *Theophilus* of the Truth and Certainty of those Things wherein He *had been instructed*, by a more particular Recital, and the Concurrence of his own Testimony, who had *perfect* or *accurate* Understanding of all Things from the first, (*παρηκολυθηκοτι ανωθεν πασιν ακριβως*;) I presume We have the joint Suffrage of all the three Evangelists to this consistent Account, and that there is great Reason to believe that the Misbehaviour of the Penitent is to be considered as *an Act of Infirmary*; and trust that the second Part of my Proposition hath not appeared to be altogether unsup-

unsupported ; namely, That this Misbehaviour, as coming under that Quality and Denomination, is comprehended by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, and That *intentionally*, and with good Propriety, under the Term *απειθείς* ; Which, if I mistake not, has been found to be a Word of greater Latitude, and more lax and indefinite Signification than Those by which the Behaviour of the People and the Rulers is expressed.

E

LUKE

LUKE xxiii. 39, 40.

And one of the Malefactors which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself and Us.

But the Other answering, rebuked Him.

HAVING now gone through the Arguments which seemed of Weight sufficient to maintain the general Proposition which is the Medium for shewing the Harmony of the three Evangelists in this Instance, I intend, after taking Notice of the peculiar Advantages arising from the Sufferings and Death of Christ to complete and recommend the Evidences and establish the Credit of his Religion, to offer some Reflections upon the real Ground of the Offence of the Cross in the two different Cases contained in the Text, as they have been now explained and set forth ; that is,

First, As chargeable upon a worldly Spirit
or

or Temper, an *evil* Heart of Unbelief, as in the insulting Malefactor and the Multitude assembled about the Cross; and

Secondly, As it *may* proceed from Infirmary, and is distinguishable from a determined wilful Opposition to the Mystery of Redemption by the Passion of Christ, as in the other Instance in the Text.

And *First*, I say, the Sufferings and Death of Christ, (though to the short-sighted Conceits of Human Prudence they appeared to have a quite contrary Tendency) were of singular Importance to complete the Evidences and establish the Credit of his Religion,

However in the Account of worldly Wisdom it might seem absurd or impossible that One who was *the Outcast of the People, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief* should become *the Author of Eternal Salvation*; yet this State of Humiliation and Suffering was so far from any real Disparagement to the Credit and Character of Jesus, that, even *because He was crucified through Weakness; We have the more abundant Conviction that He now liveth by the Power of God.* For, not to argue from the unspeakable Recompence of Reward accruing to *the Author and Finisher of our Faith*, when, after being *made a little lower than the Angels, He was*

for the Suffering of Death, crowned with Glory and Honour at the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, having the World to come put in Subjection under Him, and being made so much better than the Angels, as He had by Inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than They; nor yet to dwell upon the excellent Graces and Benefits derived upon his Church throughout all Ages for the Confirmation of their Faith, for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Edification of his Household, all which were the Purchase of his Blood; not to enlarge, I say, upon this great Reward and these inestimable Benefits, His glorious Resurrection from the Grave and visible Ascension, whereby He spoiled the Principalities and Powers of the World and the Kingdom of Darkness, and made a Shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his Cross; These were incontrollable Arguments of the high Dignity and heavenly Mission of the great Apostle and High Priest of our Profession, inasmuch as they were Manifestations of a Power and Majesty inherent in Him that was truly Divine, and Acts clearly distinguishable from all Human Achievements. For the Credit and infinite Importance of our Lord's Resurrection, (which was the Prelude to his being received up into Glory, and, together with his

Ascension,

Ascension, the Consummation also and the most illustrious part of the Evidences whereby *He was declared to be the Son of God with Power*;) the Credit and Importance, I say, of his Resurrection depended altogether upon the Reality of his Death; and this Fact was certainly not the less marvellous and astonishing for that Extremity of Humiliation and Suffering in which He had appeared. And upon this Account one of the Evangelists hath recorded the Certainty of his Death with a particular Emphasis: *He that saw the Blood and Water come forth from his Side, when it was pierced with a Spear, bare record, saith St. John of Himself, and his Record is true, and He knoweth that He saith true, that ye might believe.* And it is also remarkable that it was at the very Instant when Judas went out from his Presence to betray Him, and to bring on the important Scene of his Passion, that our blessed Lord Himself thought fit to declare the great Glory that would accrue from his Sufferings; *Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.* Let us reflect now that, whensoever any stupenduous Work is accomplished, not only without all human Aid, but under Circumstances seemingly desperate,

perate, in contradiction to all the Power Authority and Influence of the World, and by Means in all human Views tending rather to frustrate and defeat than to further and bring about an important Effect; We have in such Case unquestionable Grounds to ascribe the Accomplishment to a supernatural Interposition; and Men must be under a State of greater Bondage to carnal Notions and Prejudices than That of the Magicians of *Egypt* to the Will and Power of *Pharaoh*, if in such Instances they perceive not *the Finger of God*, either in his own immediate Agency or Application of the Means ordained to attain the End, or in the controuling and over-ruling the Proceedings and Actions of Men to answer and effectuate his own unsearchable Designs. To apply this Reasoning to the Importance of our Lord's State of Humiliation; It will be found that the Meanness of his outward Condition and the Extremity of his Sufferings, as they were in themselves Presumptions that his Kingdom was not of this World, so do they also give an additional Weight and Lustre to all the Evidences on the Force of which He was believed on as *a Spiritual Prince and Saviour*; as Himself hath taught us, when He declared, *And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all Men unto Me*; (John xii. 32.)

xii. 32.) *signifying*, as St. *John* explains his Words, *What Death He should die*; and I presume to add, signifying by what Means or Process the Father who had glorified his Name in his beloved Son, would glorify it again (v. 28.) Now the grand and of all others the most distinguishing Demonstration that *Jesus* was *the Son of God*, was to be, not that rescuing Himself from the Sufferings and Death of the Cross which *human Prudence* prescribed and demanded, (though of our Lord's Power to deliver Himself from these He gave a convincing Proof when the Virtue of his Presence and Word, *I am He*, made the Band of Men and Officers whom *Judas* had received from the Chief Priests and Pharisees for apprehending Him, *instantly to go backward, and fall to the Ground*, John xviii. 3—6.) but the raising the Temple of his Body, when it had been destroyed. *Destroy this Temple; and in three Days I will raise it up* was the Answer returned to Those who demanded a Sign of the Authority which He exercised; and elsewhere to the Scribes and *Pharisees* He also declared with an explicit Interpretation of his Meaning, that no Sign should be given them but the Sign of the Prophet *Jonas*. To the Completion of this Prediction all human Power was confessedly inadequate,
and

and therefore the actual Accomplishment of it was a more irrefragable Vindication of his Divine Character and Pretensions than delivering Himself from the Insults of the Multitude and the Death of the Cross; which his malicious Adversaries, ever studious to evade the Force of all Evidences whereby his Divine Character was attested, might with more colour of Argument have pretended was possible to be effected by some fortunate Circumstance, or by some secret Art or Confederacy, or by some extraordinary Force of Means not more than human. Moreover this Deliverance which the People called for, was indeed so far from being a proper Attestation of his Divine Character and Pretensions, that, besides the superseding that more convincing Evidence of *his Eternal Power and Godhead*, or of *his having Life in Himself*, as He speaks in St. John's Gospel, (Chap. v. 26. and Chap. i. 4.) it would have been utterly incompatible with, and must have entirely defeated all his Claims, and the very End of his Incarnation, and the great Purpose for which He came into the World; For how then could the Scriptures of the Prophets concerning Him have been fulfilled, or his own Declarations have been verified, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, and that *He had Power to lay down his Life,*
and

and also Power to take it again, and that no Man taketh it from Him, but He would lay it down of Himself. Instead therefore of escaping from them, our Lord surrendered Himself into the Hands of Those who came to take Him, with a placid Acknowledgment that This was their Hour, and the Power of Darkness; and knowing also that it was the Hour when the Son of Man should be glorified, (John xii. 23.) and God be glorified in Him. Now every mere Man, we know, dieth and wasteth away. Yea, He giveth up the Ghost, and is no more, or, according to Job's Expression, And where is He? Had Jesus then been as one of Us, He, like all other Men, would have lain down in the Grave, to rise not again till the Heavens were no more. But when, according to his own Prediction, out of such Weakness He was made strong, so that even the Bands of Death were broken asunder by Him: When He, who had been despised and rejected of Men, thus in Completion of his own Prediction led Captivity captive, and ascended up on high, and established his Religion, not only without, but, I say, against all the Power, Authority, and Influence of the World, and That by Instruments in themselves very weak and incompetent, then it was evident that his own Arm brought unto Him Salvation, and his

F Righteousness

Righteousness sustained Him. This Triumph over the Grave and over all the Opposition of the World cannot be accounted for by any visible Causes or merely human Efforts, but was clearly an Act of Omnipotence; was *the Lord's Doing*, and in the Eyes of all Men a marvellous and affecting Display (See Luke xxiii. 48.) both of the mighty *Power* of God in raising this afflicted Man, this *Outcast of the People*, from the Dead, and *making this Stone which the Builders refused, the Head of the Corner*, and setting Him at his own Right Hand in heavenly Places; and also of the Divine *Wisdom* in ordaining the *Messiah's* Exaltation and Advancement to his spiritual Kingdom by Means so singular, and so repugnant to the Order and Projects of worldly Policy, *not by Oppression and Terror, but by his own Blood.*

So that when We consider our blessed Lord's Life in the Days of his Flesh and the stupendous Work of God from the Beginning to the End and Consummation of the Divine Purpose, it will be found that the humble and afflicted Condition of the Messiah was of such peculiar Advantage to his Credit and Character in the World as could not in any other Method have been attained; and We shall on the Account of his Sufferings have Cause with St. *Peter*
and

and St. John to lift our Voices and magnify God who by the Mouth of his Servant David had said, in reference to the promised Messiah, *Why did the Heathen rage and the People imagine vain things. The Kings of the Earth stood up, and the Rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a Truth against thy holy Child Jesus whom Thou hast Anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the People of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy Hand and thy Counsel determined before to be done.*

And now must it not be confessed that the glorious Issue and Benefits of the Passion of Christ were an Over-balance to the Scandal of the Cross? and may We not expostulate with the Adversaries of our Faith, and the Opposers of our Lord's Divine Character, in the Terms of the Man who had received his Sight to the perverse Pharisees? *Why, herein is a marvellous Thing that Ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath raised Himself from the Dead at the very Time before appointed by Himself. Since the World began was it not known that any Man thus restored Himself to Life in accomplishment of his own Prediction. If He were not of God, He could not have performed this great Work.* And since this notable Miracle hath been added to all the

other Signs and Wonders by which his Divine Mission was attested ; and moreover since *the Power and Efficacy of his Intercession at the Right Hand of God in Virtue of the Merits of his Passion* must be allowed to be an Article far less incredible and less irreconcilable with the Conceptions of our Reason, than it was (antecedently to this wonderful Consummation of his Sufferings, and this glorious Attestation of his Character and Doctrine) that his humble and afflicted State should be the Path to such Exaltation ; are not They who yet neglect or disbelieve *that great Salvation which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord, and hath been in this manner confirmed to Us*, more without all Excuse for their Unbelief than Those who believed not the Report of his Prophets and rejected Him *when He was of no Reputation*, but made his Appearance *only in the Form of a Servant*, and had no outward Comeliness to attract their Admiration and Worship ? and is not their Unwillingness now to acknowledge Him to be *Lord to the Glory of God the Father*, justly to be ascribed to a yet greater Measure of the worldly Spirit possessing them with false Ideas of Greatness and Honour, of Shame and Glory, and to such a Malignity and Stubbornness of carnal Wisdom and Prejudices as will not yield to the Force

Force of any Demonstrations, and whose real Answer is, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris?*

But I decline to expatiate further in this place, because, from taking Notice in the next Discourse how general the Offence of the Cross was antecedently to the full Manifestation of the hidden Purposes of God in this Dispensation, and observing how different *the Methods of Divine Wisdom* are from *the Schemes of human Policy*, I shall be led to resume and enlarge these Reflections, and to add some others which arise from the Text and the manner in which it has been considered and explained.

It shall suffice therefore to observe at present that since the *Φρονιμα ουρανη* or Wisdom of the natural Man is found to set itself against as well the marvellous external Evidences as the mysterious internal Oeconomy of God's Dispensations, and to cavil at both for the same Cause, namely, as proceeding from that Root of Wisdom which lies concealed from it's Capacity; Whosoever has yielded to the Force of the external Evidences of the Gospel is *not far from the Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, from *receiving the Truth in the Love of it*, or *believing with the Heart the Righteousness and Wisdom and Goodness* of the internal Oeconomy of the Divine Purpose by Christ Jesus. For since all Opposition to the
Dispensations

Dispensations of the Deity proceeds from a certain Fixedness of the Will and Imaginations of the natural Man, whereby He is all in all to Himself, and incapable of being affected by any thing that is not level to his own narrow limited Conceptions, and unwilling or unable to depart from his own Prejudices and Prepossessions; As on the one hand an Averse-ness to be wrought upon by any miraculous supernatural Attestations as Such, is a sure Evidence of the *Prevalence* of this carnal Wisdom, so, on the other, a real and hearty Assent to the Weight of outward supernatural Demonstrations is a just Presumption that a Man is not led by *the Spirit of the World and corrupt Nature*, but has received *the Spirit which is of God*; and this Assent to such supernatural Credentials is his *Fitness* (if I may so speak) or *Preparation* to receive and embrace those mysterious revealed Truths which accompany Salvation: Or, to state the Argument in other Words, Since the perceiving and acknowledging miraculous supernatural Evidence in any Matter is seeing and acknowledging the Hand of God to be in it, the Consequence of This must be a reverent Submission to his Testimony or Authority in all Things revealed by his Spirit. Of which We have an Instance in *Nicodemus*, who being convinced by our Lord's Miracles that

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He was a Teacher sent from God, did thenceforth become an attentive and submissive Hearer of Doctrines more remote from the Apprehensions and Principles of Reason than were the external Evidences of his Authority. And this much seems to be intimated by our blessed Lord's Answer to the Disciples whom *John* sent to enquire whether He was the expected *Messiah*. For after ordering them to go and shew *John* those Things which they heard and saw, namely, that *the Blind received their Sight, and the Lame walked, the Lepers were cleansed, and the Deaf heard, and the Dead were raised up, and the Poor had the Gospel preached unto them*; it is immediately subjoined, (implying, as it should seem, the final Salvation of Those, who should be duly affected by these Evidences) *And Blessed is He who-soever shall not be offended in Me.*

I add also, not without Authority from Holy Writ, with a particular respect *to the Poor of this World, and the unlearned Members of the Church*, that neither is *their* general implicit, but yet sincere and hearty Belief the same with such a blind and irrational Assent to the Truth and Importance of Christianity as is destitute of all Merit and Commendation. For since the essential Principles of natural and revealed Religion, under which the several subordinate particular Articles of
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our Profession are comprized, and in which they do, as it were, meet as in one common Center ; Since These, I say, are delivered in a manner plain and level to every unprejudiced Mind ; and our blessed Lord in the Text just repeated declares that the Poor have the Gospel preached to them, or *are wrought upon by the Preaching of the Gospel* (for the Word is *ευαγγελιζονται*) ; agreeably to which his Apostle St. James admonishes us that *God hath chosen the Poor of this World, rich in Faith, Heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him* ; and moreover St. Paul, not to mention many other Texts, affirms that *no Man can say that Jesus is the Lord*, that is, can acknowledge his Power and Salvation, *but by the Holy Ghost* ; We have just Grounds to conclude that Whosoever shall *from his Heart* call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus, to Him it is given by the Spirit to believe ; and that a general sincere and steadfast Assent to the Dispensation of the Gospel shall be imputed to Him for Righteousness, notwithstanding his Perception of the Wisdom and Excellence of the several Parts of the System of Revelation be less clear and perfect than That of such Professors as have enjoyed greater Advantages for their Edification in the Truth as it is in *Jesus*. For Persons of this inferior Condition,

Condition, though unable distinctly to arrange, and skilfully to apply the various Arguments for the Truth of their Religion, or to explain their own Perceptions, are nevertheless sufficiently sensible of that *aggregate combined Lustre* with which *They* are encompassed who contemplate *The Signs and Wonders and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost with which God hath born Witness to the Revelation of his Son.* And as the whole of the Evidence for Christianity is greater than is necessary for the Conviction of *honest and candid Minds, i. e. such as are void of Subtilty and vain Sophistry;* those who labour under fewer Hindrances and are less averse to Conviction, may be effectually wrought upon by lower degrees and less distinct Views of this Evidence. The sure Tests of Mens *Knowledge and Understanding in the Mystery of Christ, and of their Title to Salvation* are *Sanctification of the Heart and Belief of the Truths revealed in the Gospel.* By these Effects it is evident that *They* have *drank into the same Spirit;* by These *They* are *sealed unto the Day of Redemption,* though their Knowledge and spiritual Understanding be more or less explicit, *according as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith.* As there are Diversities of Gifts, so is there likewise a Diversity in the Administrations and

G Operations

Operations themselves ; but it is the same God which worketh all in all, dividing to every Man severally as He will. Let Those therefore who have not only received Christ Jesus the Lord, but are built up and stablished in the Faith and are compleat in Him, glorify God on this behalf. . But let them not, and least of all may Those who under the Administrations of the Gospel are dull of Hearing, and who, having need to be themselves taught the first Principles of the Oracles of God, are yet the Servants of Corruption, entangled in the Toils and perverse Disputings of that carnal Wisdom which leads to Destruction and Perdition, and altogether unskilful, ἀπειροὶ λόγων δικαιοσύνης, that is, without any inward lively and effectual Sense of the Word of Righteousness ; Let not These or any other, I say, despise the Brethren of low degree, who have escaped from Them that live in Error, on whom the Sun of Righteousness hath risen, and to whom it is given to receive the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and freely to consent to the wholesome Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine which is according to Godliness. The Holy Apostle admonishes us that if We pretend to live in the Spirit, We must also walk in the Spirit, being not desirous of Vain Glory, provoking one another, envying one another, but following after the Things which

which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another.

In Conformity to this Exhortation let us all earnestly beseech the Father of Mercies, to preserve us from *that Spirit of Slumber, that Narrowness of Mind, that Infatuation of carnal Wisdom* which is averse to discern and confess any extraordinary Interpositions of the Deity, any supernatural miraculous Manifestations of his Glory; and that He would by the gracious Influences of his Spirit dispose us so to weigh both *the stupendous Evidences and important Revelations of his glorious Gospel*, all that Jesus taught and did and suffered here upon Earth, and *the Things which He hath brought to pass in the World since his Exaltation to be Head over all Things to the Church*, that We may believe that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and believing may have Life through his Name. In a word, Since We being many are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another; Since We are called in one Hope of our Calling, and have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, let us with one accord implore Him to impart unto each of us *the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*, that being through this Spirit builded together for an Habitation of God, and having our Hearts knit together in Love, We may attain unto

the Riches of a full Assurance of Understanding in the Acknowledgement of the Mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ. Then, as a Body fitly joined together, and compacted by That which every Joint supplieth, We shall make a continual Increase in Edification and Charity, till We all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. And while We thus grow up into Him in all Things which is our Head, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shall delight to behold our Order and the Steadfastness of our Faith; and We ourselves holding fast our Profession without wavering, shall pass the Time of our Sojourning here in humble Confidence, that at our Lord's second Coming we shall be found not of them which draw back unto Perdition, but of the Number of Those who have believed to the Saving of the Soul.

LUKE xxiii. 39, 40.

And one of the Malefactors which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself and Us.

But the Other answering, rebuked Him.

I Intend now to offer some Reflections upon the real Ground of the Offence of the Cross in the two different Cases contained in the Text, as they have been now explained and set forth; that is,

First, As chargeable upon a worldly Spirit or Temper, an *evil* Heart of Unbelief, as in the insulting Malefactor and the Multitude assembled about the Cross; and

Secondly, As it may proceed from Infirmary, and is distinguishable from a determined wilful Opposition to the Mystery of Redemption by the Passion of Christ, as in the other Instance in the Text.

Now from the Offence taken by some of every sort of Persons at the Cross of Christ
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We may learn, First, How different the Methods of Divine Wisdom are from the Schemes of human Policy. That the carnal *Jews*, who had understood the Prophecies no better than to expect in the Messiah a secular Prince, who should sit upon the Throne of his Father *David*, and deliver them from all their Temporal Enemies, that *These* should be offended at the Meanness of our Lord's Appearance, and that the Manner of his Departure should by *them* be taken for Dishonour and Misery ; This was the natural Effect of such Prepossessions, and the only Consequence that could follow from a sensual Spirit and worldly Affections. But the Offence of the Cross is supposed to have been almost Universal ; and the different Spirit which on this Occasion appeared in the two crucified Malefactors might not improperly be considered as descriptive of the Affections and Sentiments with which this mysterious Dispensation was regarded by the whole promiscuous Multitude of Mankind. The malicious Wickedness and proud Contempt which one part of sinful Men have, as well in succeeding Times as at that Period, manifested towards the revealed Way and Means of Grace and Salvation, answers to, yea perhaps may be imagined to be prefigured by the Behaviour of the hardened Malefactor,

Malefactor, who reviled that stupenduous Undertaking by which Himself was to be saved from Death Eternal; since, to apply the Words of Solomon, *As in Water Face answereth to Face*, so doth the Heart of these Men to the Temper of Him who railed on our blessed Redeemer upon the Cross; while, on the other hand, the reverent Behaviour, and humble but well grounded Hope of the contrite Sinners, *their* Resignation and Reliance on the Virtue and Efficacy of this gracious Atonement, hath a Resemblance of Sentiment with the Rebuke and the Confession of the penitent Sufferer, when answering his Companion, *Dost Thou not fear God, seeing Thou art in the same Condemnation? and We indeed justly, for We receive the due Reward of our Deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss*; as well as a Correspondence with that devout Address and Acknowledgment of his more than human Character, and of his spiritual Dominion, *Lord, Remember Me, when Thou comest into thy Kingdom*; by which He taught, as it were, the Multitude about the Cross of what kind his Kingdom was. The Extremity and Ignominy of our Lord's Sufferings, which rendered the Doctrine of Salvation by his Power and Merits to the Bulk of the Jews a stumbling Block, and to many of the Greeks Foolishness, was

no Disparagement to Him in the Judgment of Those who were of an humble and contrite Spirit, and whose Affections were weaned from the Things of this World. These having received *not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, to the End they might know the Things that are freely given to them of God*, gladly, yea on this very Consideration *the more readily* received Him for their Saviour, because his Kingdom was evidently not of this World. On the other hand, the true Cause of Disaffection to Christ and his Gospel is in all Times That which St. Paul has declared, *The Prevalence of the fleshly Mind and Will*; and therefore He saith, *Not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble were called*; and elsewhere affirms that, *if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them*. And the Reason is evident; For the *Wisdom of the Flesh, or Spirit of the World* hath a Center and Circumference of its own, beyond which it cannot, as such, enlarge itself to discern the Ways and Dispensations of God, *the great Things which He doth, and his Wonders without Number*. It is the justest Reasoning of St. Paul,

What

What Man knoweth the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man which is in Him; or, as the Words would be rendered more literally and more agreeably to the Scope and Sentiment of the Apostle, Who of Men hath known the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of the Man which is in Him; even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God, and They to whom this Spirit shall reveal his wise Counsels. Thus doth this Apostle in various Passages plainly declare fleshly Wisdom, or the Pride and Stubbornness of Reason, to be the main Obstacle to the free Course of the Gospel, and to lie at the bottom of the Offence at the Oeconomy and Doctrine of Redemption by the Cross of Christ. Nevertheless what is the just intrinsic Weight of all those Signs and Wonders by which our Lord's Divine Character was manifested, is sufficiently apparent from the Effect and Influence of them upon Persons of attentive and unprejudiced Minds. For Instance, The Centurion, and They that were with Him watching Jesus, when they saw the Earthquake and those Things that were done, feared greatly, or rather were stricken with prodigious Terror; (for the Word is not εφοβησαν, but εφοβηθησαν σφοδρα,) saying, Truly This was the Son of God. And besides the devout Women that followed our Lord from

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Galilee, and all his Acquaintance and *Joseph of Arimathea* and *Nicodemus*, St. Luke relates that all the Crowd of People that came together to this Sight, beholding the Things that were done, were (for the Time at least all of them) so affected as to *return home smiting their Breasts*. So Universal it seems was their Conviction, and the Compunction which the People now suffered for their unworthy Treatment of our Lord. The penitent Malefactor in my Text has also been supposed to have been either at first *converted*, (as was the Opinion of most of the Fathers) or else *recovered* (as after what hath been said may here be presumed) *from his Consternation*, to a just Sense and Persuasion of the Dignity of our Lord's Person, by the awful Miracles accompanying his Crucifixion : We read also in the 5th Chapter of the *Acts*, that upon St. *Peter* and the other Apostles preaching that God had exalted that *Jesus* whom they slew and hanged on a Tree, to his own Right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to *Israel* and Forgiveness of Sins ; while the High Priest and They that were with Him and the Counsel and the Senate of the Children of *Israel*, notwithstanding their Astonishment at the Things reported to Them, and their Doubt concerning the final Issue, were only so cut

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to the Heart and filled with Indignation, as it appears, instead of Remorse for their Sin in crucifying Him, as to take Counsel to slay them, having found their Attempt, mentioned in the former Chapter, to stifle the notable Miracle which they could not deny to have been wrought by them in the Name of *Jesus*, and their Threatenings and Charges to *Peter* and *John* that they should speak henceforth to no Man at all, nor teach in the Name of *Jesus*, ineffectual; at this Juncture, I say, *Gamaliel* a Doctor of the Law who was a Man of Reputation, reflecting upon the Series of all these wonderful Things, could not forbear to admonish them that there was Reason to apprehend that some more than ordinary Power might accompany and protect these Men, and distinguish their Mission from the Pretences of Those who had heretofore attempted to impose upon the Nation; and that therefore the most prudent Course would be to wait the final Issue with Patience and Moderation of Temper, and to refrain from exercising any Severity upon them, and let them alone; since if *this Council, or this Work* were a merely human Attempt, *it would, like those afore-mentioned, come to nought; But if it be of God, saith He, Ye cannot, with all your Skill and Efforts, overthrow it,*

lest haply Ye be found even to fight against God. The Disciples also, We are informed by *St. John*, when they remembered, after the Resurrection of *Jesus*, that He had declared that *He would in three Days restore that Temple which the malicious Jews would destroy*, understood then his Meaning in that Prediction, and believed the Scripture and the Word which *Jesus* had said. The like Account is also given by this Evangelist of many others who were able coolly to reflect upon his mighty Works, unblemished Character, and salutary Doctrines. So that from the different Effect which the Evidences of our Lord's Divine Mission and Character had upon Men, according to the Difference in their Tempers and Dispositions, We may perceive their just and real Weight and Force, and the Conviction which they were fitted to produce universally; for the one sort were won over to the Faith of Christ, and *Multitudes daily added to the Church*, whilst others were *only provoked and exasperated* by the Strength of those Evidences and Facts which, though they endeavoured by all Means to suppress, yet they could not deny, nor say any Thing against, as themselves confessed. (See *Acts* ii. 6—13. iv. 14—21. 33. *Matth.* xxviii. 12—15. *John* xi. 47. 48. *John* xii. 32—42. and other places.)

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True indeed it is that the Disciples themselves had been so far possessed with human Prejudices, as to be confounded by the Account which their Master gave them of the Things that were to be accomplished in *the Son of Man*. And though our Lord, in order to imprint effectually upon their Minds at once the Certainty of his Sufferings and the Consistency of these Sufferings with the Character He assumed, took occasion to declare these Things to them in the plainest Terms (See *Matth.* xvi. 13—22. *Luke* ix. 18—45. *John* vi. 27—66. *John* xvi. 14—32.) about the Time of his glorious Transfiguration, and when they were amazed at the mighty Power of God manifested in the Miracles He wrought, and were *wondering every one at all the Things which He did*, and at other Times also when they were in danger of making wrong Conclusions, unless thus guarded against them (not to repeat the Passage I have before taken notice of, where our Lord exults in his Glorification at the very Instant that *Judas* went out to betray Him); though, I say, our Lord thus plainly informed them, with an emphatical Charge that these Sayings should sink down into their Ears, yet We read that *they understood not this Saying,*

ing, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not, and they feared to ask Him of that Saying (Luke 9th Chap. and again 18th Chap.): They could not yet reconcile this suffering State with that glorious Character in which they had expected the Messiah to be manifested. And the Return made by St. Peter in particular to our Lord's Declaration of these Things, was such as brought upon Him a sharp Rebuke, strongly expressive of the Alliance of fleshly Notions to the Suggestions of the Evil One, and of the Contrariety of Both to the Divine Wisdom and Counsels, *Get Thee behind Me, Satan, for Thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.* Moreover so strong and hard to be subdued were *his* Prejudices against the Sufferings of the Messiah, that when Judas with his Company came from the Chief Priests and Elders, and laid hands on Jesus and took Him, (soon after He had declared to them, that *the Prophecy of his being numbered with the Transgressors must now be accomplished, and the Things concerning Him have an End, Luke xxii. 37, 47.*) This zealous Disciple drew a Sword, and struck a Servant of the High Priest's, and smote off his Ear: And notwithstanding our Lord had given them to understand

stand that *He could by praying to his Father presently obtain, instead of his twelve Disciples, more than twelve Legions of Angels to defend and rescue Him, but that then the Scripture would not be fulfilled; yet all his Disciples were so confounded by his suffering Himself to fall into their Hands, that they forsook Him and fled.* And so great had been their Dejection upon his Death, that they were *not able*, we are told, to believe the Report of his Resurrection, nor his own Appearance to them, *for Joy and Astonishment; (See Luke xxiv. 11—41.)* that is, the Tide of their Joy was then so high and tumultuous that they could not immediately exercise distinct Acts of Faith in those glorious Offices and Characters of the Messiah in which they had been instructed by Him, and whereof they had now full Assurance by his Resurrection from the Grave. [Which Things were probably permitted by Providence to prevent any Doubt of the Reality of Christ's Death; which might have seemed questionable if his Disciples had not been known to be thus cast down and dispirited; and also to give the greater Weight to their future Testimony of his Resurrection.] Hence We see how incompatible was the Character
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of a suffering Messiah with the Notions, not only of *carnal and sensual Men*, as they may be distinguished from *Those who are led by the Spirit*, but its Contrariety also to all *human* Conceptions and Prejudices; *human* I say; which indeed in every Man may be so far considered as *carnal*, inasmuch as they are Conclusions of a Nature not only finite in its Powers, but also *corrupted and depraved as well in the Faculty of Reason, as in the Affections and Passions*; and therefore apt to *mind earthly Things*, and to be biased by the Principles of *fleshy Wisdom* in forming an Estimate of Good and Evil, and of the Dealings of God with his Creatures; or, agreeably to the Scripture Language and Distinction, to *judge according to outward Appearance, rather than to judge righteous Judgment*. But though the *Stain* of Original Corruption is common to All, yet there is a very great *Difference* in the Vigour and Rectitude of the intellectual Faculties and the moral Dispositions of Men, according to the Measure in which the evil Tendency of Nature has been either increased and strengthened by actual Offences and the Tyranny of sinful Habits; or the Bias and Dominion of the fleshly Principle kept under and restrained by the secret Influence

ence of Divine Grace, by the Forbearance of Transgression, and a Subjection to the Dictates of Natural Conscience, and an humble Consciousness of Infirmary through the Law in the Members warring against the Law of the Mind. Some are led into the most vile and abject Captivity to the Law of Sin which is in their Members, and seem to be actuated altogether by the fleshly Principle, insomuch that their Minds are shut against all other Wisdom but That which is earthly and sensual, accounting all Things vain but only those which are according to the Suggestions of human Wisdom. These are by St. Paul called *The Wise*, and *the Disputers of this World*, to whom the Preaching of the Cross of Christ and Salvation by this OEconomy is *mere Foolishness*: Men so filled with *human Prejudices* (those *τυφλωσεις νοημάτων* as an admirable Writer speaks concerning such Prepossessions) as to be as it were incapable of reflecting that *God's Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts as our Thoughts*; that *no Man knoweth either Love or Hatred by That which is before Him, because as there be wicked Men to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous, so there are also just Men unto whom it happeneth according to the Work of*

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the Wicked; and the outward Condition is no distinguishing Character or certain Criterion of a Man's State towards God. Of this Sort were the greater part of the Multitude about the Cross, who, notwithstanding the many Notices they had received from the Books of their own Prophets, and particularly in that remarkable 53d Chapter of *Isaiab*, descriptive of the Messiah's Character, of the End and Design of his coming into the World, and the Nature of his Kingdom, yet, because He was *a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*, accounted Him among the Transgressors who were stricken and smitten of God, and afflicted for their own Sin; and insisted that the only Demonstration of his Innocence and of the Truth of his Pretensions, would be to deliver Himself from the Death of the Cross; hereby shewing, according to our Saviour's Rebuke to St. Peter, that they savoured not the Things that were of God, but those that were of Men. The true Ground then or Origin of the Offence at the Cross will be found, not in the Matter or Scheme of the Divine Dispensations, (the Fitness and Efficacy of which, however undiscoverable, is an infallible Deduction from the Infinity of the Wisdom and Power by which they are ordered) but in Men's own Breasts; in the Disorder and Corruption

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tion reigning as well in the Reason as in the Affections and Desires. And therefore St. Paul, that great Champion for the Doctrine of the Cross, affirms, as hath been before observed, that, if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, whose Minds the God of this World hath blinded; and declares that *the Doctrine which He preached is not after Man, neither did He receive it of Man, nor was taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ*; and, in Opposition to the Principles of this corrupt human Wisdom, inculcates, in a Variety of Passages too numerous to be collected together, that *the Thoughts of the Wise*, that is, of Those who are full of the Wisdom and Philosophy of this World, and *their Judgment concerning the Dispensation of God*, are vain; for that the Wisdom and Intelligence which designed the Scheme of our Redemption, and which actually effects it by the Sacrifice of the Son of God, partakers not of, neither is *homogeneous* (as I conceive the Apostle to mean) with the Wisdom of this World, but is of quite another Kind and Order, or specifically different; being that *hidden Wisdom or Mystery* which none of the *Princes*, that is, none of the most penetrating Genius's of *this World* knew, or had any Idea of; and that He who seemeth to be *Wise in this World*, that

is, who appears to be possessed of the finest Abilities and the largest Share of the Wisdom of this World, *must become a Fool*; must discard and empty Himself of all the Preconceptions of mere human Wisdom, in order to *BE WISE*, or to *admit and submit* to this Wisdom of God in a Mystery, by which He hath confounded the Thoughts of the Wise, and brought to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent; i. e. the most specious Principles and Conclusions of human Reason and Intelligence.

And hence We may account for the Opposition which is made to the Gospel Revelation by some Men of Parts, (as well as by the Weak and Ignorant) and shew the Cause why not many Wise Men after the Flesh are called; and at the same Time make it appear that the Opposition of such Persons, far from bringing any Discredit upon our Religion, is the natural Consequence of Men's perverse and stubborn leaning to the Prejudices and Prepossessions of their own *carnal* Understanding and a merely human Sense of Divine Things, and disdaining to be informed, influenced or directed by those Considerations and that Authority of supernatural external Proof and Divine Attestation, which are the only Evidences that can be given of the Certainty of Matters and Doctrines which
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are incomprehensible by *Us*, and do not admit of internal Evidences or Arguments drawn from the Nature of the Things declared. For, if the Wisdom and Intelligence which designed the Scheme of our Redemption be a *mysterious Wisdom*, a Wisdom of quite another Kind and Order, or specifically different, (if I may be allowed to repeat these Terms) from That which guides the Thoughts and Designs of Men; then it is evident that the best Gifts of Nature and Acquisitions of Art and Study, and all the Knowledge attainable by the Exercise of mere natural Reason, will be not only insufficient to direct and guide us into the Way of Salvation, but moreover will often rather obstruct than advance the Progress of Men in true Religion; yea, and may sometimes even incapacitate them for Spiritual Knowledge and Understanding; inasmuch as, according to the Measure of natural Parts and the Prevalence of the fleshly Mind, such Persons, under the Guidance of human worldly Opinions and Prejudices, will be found of all others the most averse to what *St. Paul*, in condescension to the mistaken Notions of these Men, calls *the Foolishness of Preaching*, or those mysterious Principles and Doctrines of Divine Revelation, which are not after the Rudiments and enticing Words of human Wisdom. *For the natural Man receiveth*

receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God; For they are Foolishness unto Him, neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned; that is, by the Illumination and Influence of the Spirit which is given us of God, and is a Faculty different from worldly Wisdom and Parts. For as no Man knoweth the Things of a Man save the Spirit of the Man which is in Him, even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God, and He to whom this Spirit is imparted. Thus the very Light that is in such Persons is Darkness; and if so, then how great must be that Darkness? and consequently their Opposition to the true Light which is offered to every Man that cometh into the World. So great Cause had the Apostle to caution his Disciples to beware that no Man should spoil them through Philosophy and vain Deceit, lest, turning again to the Elements of the World, their Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity of the Gospel Faith, and relapse into such Bondage to the specious Subtilties of Philosophy falsely so called, as to be shut against the Influences of that Spirit which discovereth the deep Things of God. He then that would attain to spiritual Knowledge and Understanding, must first cast out the Spirit of the World; must subdue and bring into Captivity his carnal Notions and Prejudices. When this is effected

effected, there will be *none* Occasion of Stumbling in Him when it is affirmed, with Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power, that Christ crucified is made unto Us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. For the Darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth in Him. Now He that erred in Spirit shall come to Understanding, and He that murmured shall learn Doctrine. The Deaf shall now hear the Words of the Book, and the Eyes of the Blind shall see out of Obscurity, and out of Darkness; The Meek also shall increase their Joy, and the Poor among Men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

Which leads me to consider the Offence of the Cross as proceeding from *Infirmity* and distinguishable from a *determined wilful Opposition* to the Mystery of Redemption; which is supposed to have been the Case of the penitent Confessor in the Passage to which the Text belongs.

It hath been observed that all merely human Notions concerning Religion, inasmuch as they are Conclusions of a Nature finite in it's Powers, and more or less depraved in the Faculty of Reason and in the Affections, are so far *carnal*. Nevertheless the Zeal or Disaffection which Men are observed to bear to the Gospel of Christ, will sufficiently discriminate the modest and humble Sinner from
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the carnally minded and the Scoffers who walk after their own Lusts. And accordingly We may observe that such Persons are applied to by our Lord himself in a very different Manner from That in which He addresses his Disciples and others who could as yet believe *through Infirmary.* The One may be considered as in the State of the returning Prodigal ; the other, being altogether under the Dominion of a Worldly Spirit, supine and careless, possessed with false Ideas of Greatness and Goodness, Honour and Dishonour, Shame and Glory, placing their Happiness in external temporal Things, the Poms and Vanities of the World, and desiring and pursuing these alone, are no better than Apostates from God, *who love Darknes rather than Light,* that they may continue to walk in *the Vanity of their Minds, according to the Course of this World, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh and of the earthly Mind.* Thus the hardened Malefactor and the Multitude about the Cross, *who had their Understanding darkened, and were alienated from the Life of God through the Ignorance that was in them because of the Blindness of their Hearts,* demanded of Jesus such an immediate Display of Majesty as might evince his Superiority to the temporal Powers combined against him, and be an Assurance to them of that
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glorious Pre-eminence and Universal worldly Dominion which they expected the Messiah to assume and maintain ; *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that We may see and believe.* They would be satisfied with no other Sign than This ; for This only corresponded to their worldly Views and Temper, and because that Kingdom of the *Messiah* which they vainly imagined to themselves did not appear, They, with an utter Disregard to his prophetic and priestly Character, declared that they *would not have this Man to reign over them.*

How different was the Behaviour of the penitent Confessor in my Text ? who had now *put off concerning the former Conversation the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and was renewed in the Spirit of his Mind.* This New Man, though at first amazed and confounded, as hath been supposed, by such a Scene as This of our Lord's Passion, yet, not lying under *the dead Weight of fleshly Wisdom*, did not interpret the Afflictions which our Lord suffered as implying Sin and Guilt, nor allow Himself to infer any Thing from These to the Disadvantage of his Character and Virtue. He reflected that *all that cometh in this World is Vanity*, and knew that the best Men and Those who are most dear to God have often

the least portion of worldly good Things, and are exercised with the greatest Measure of Afflictions; that *the Righteous as Gold are tried in the Furnace, and being proved and found worthy of Himself, are received as a Burnt-Offering, and greatly rewarded by God.* In the Sight of the profane and unwise Multitude the crucified Jesus *seemed to die, and his Departure was taken for Misery.* He had *no Form nor Comeliness, no Share of worldly Splendor or Greatness for which they should esteem Him; and because He was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, They, rashly judging according to outward Appearance, concluded that He was to be numbered with the Transgressors.* This Man, on the contrary, not regarding outward Splendor as the Criterion of Virtue and the Favour of God, and being convinced that He was a good Man and *had done nothing amiss,* (perhaps more particularly respecting in this Assertion of his Innocence the Charge brought against Him by the Rulers, of setting Himself up for a temporal King in Opposition to the Sovereignty of *Cæsar*, which was made the Pretence for crucifying Him;) This Man, I say, accounted his mean Estate and his Sufferings only as an Evidence that *his Kingdom was not of this World;* and therefore He was not, by all the Insult and Ignominy that

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was cast upon Him, discouraged from addressing Him, in Opposition to the Licentiousness of prejudiced and corrupted Minds, under the high Character He claimed *of a Spiritual Prince and Saviour; Lord! Remember Me when Thou comest into thy Kingdom!* He, it is more than probable, had once, like the profane Multitude, *known Christ only after the Flesh*; but being now become *a New Creature*, He henceforth *knew Him so no more*. Having weaned his *Affections from the World*, and placed them on *Things above*, He attended with no less Steadfastness to the *Excellence of his Character and those miraculous divine Attestations* which were given to the Pretensions of this extraordinary Person, than the profane Multitude did to the *Circumstances of outward Dishonour and Affliction* with which He was visited. The worldly Temper of the latter opposed itself to the Force of all these divine Attestations; so that his mighty Works, instead of conquering *their Prejudices*, and leading them to Him who had the Words of *Eternal Life*, served only to provoke and inflame their *Rage and Blasphemy*, when they found that the *Kingdom* He claimed was *not of this World*. The lowly spiritual Mind of the Other had so overcome the old Leaven of the *Natural Man*, that He was *dead to the*

Impressions of earthly Things, so that out of Weakness and Consternation He became strong in the Lord and in the Power of his Might, felt in Himself the Energy of the Spirit of Christ drawing up his Mind to high and heavenly Things, and fleeing for Refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before Him, received the Promise of an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for Him.

We see then, in the Instance before us, as well as from other Examples, that *Simplicity, Singleness and Purity of Heart, a Freedom from the worldly Spirit and Tempers* is the Characteristick of the Disciples of Christ's Religion, and the Disposition which distinguishes the sincere Professors of it. As, on the other hand, the same sensual Spirit, the same inordinate Affection to the Things of this World, which was offended at the outwardly low and afflicted Estate of the Author and Founder of our Faith, and which would not be restrained from uttering the most opprobrious Insults against Him when suffering on the Cross, *This Attachment to the World*, I say, is the true and real Ground of all Enmity to the Gospel of Christ unto this Day, and *Whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is therefore the Enemy of this holy Institution.* I speak not now of the Excesses
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or *extreme Degrees* of Lust and Concupiscence, but of *that original Taint* in the Nature of every Man, whereby He is far gone from Innocence and Righteousness, so that the Flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit; the *mere Prevalence or Superiority* I say of this evil Principle, as distinguishable from *the Excesses* or *extreme Degrees* of Concupiscence or sinful Affection, is the true Ground of all Disaffection to the Gospel of Christ, and that vicious Bias which hinders Men from receiving his Doctrine in the Love of it. And need I add that it *deserveth God's Wrath and Damnation*, inasmuch as it draws us from God, lusting continually against his Spirit, and opposing the Solicitations and the Force of that constraining Love, that *Περισσὴν* (as it is justly and emphatically expressed by some) which is the next to irresistible Effort of Divine Grace in Christ Jesus?

And now since throughout the Scriptures, in Passages too numerous to be repeated, *the Depravity of Men's Minds* is by the inspired Writers expressly affirmed to be *the Cause of their resisting or being destitute of the Truth, and reprobate concerning the Faith*; Are We not hereby authorized to regard the final Issue of the Gospel Revelation with all to whom it is offered in its genuine Form and Evidences, as the just and sure Test, the infallible

fallible Manifestation of Men's Characters? Whether They are *Renewed and Spiritual*, or *altogether Corrupt and Carnal*; Whether *the Prejudices* that may have withheld them from the Discernment and Acknowledgement of the Truth were *consistent with an honest Disposition and willing Mind*, and do carry in them the Signatures of *Infirmity*, or have their Root in that *Stubbornness and Malignity of the carnal Principle and Temper* which is nothing less than *Enmity* against God, and will not be subject to his Word and Law? And if We consider further in how different a Manner our Lord himself speaks of his Disciples and some who could not immediately believe through *Infirmity*, and of Those of a more corrupt and prejudiced Temper who had *their Eyes blinded and their Heart hardened that they should not see nor understand and be converted and healed*; and reflect that there are only two Classes or Denominations by which Men are distinguished; that there is no middle State between the Just and the Unjust; *between Him that serveth God and Him that serveth Him not*; *between Them that are in the Flesh and mind the Things of the Flesh and the World*, and Those who are after the Spirit and mind the Things of the Spirit and the Life to come; since our blessed Lord hath also declared that

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*if any Man will do his Will He shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God; and the Gospel every where supposes and promises Success to a diligent and impartial Inquiry into its Grounds and Doctrines; and expressly affirms that He that believeth not, that is, He that abideth finally in Unbelief shall be damned; doth not this Representation and these Assurances plainly imply an evil Heart of Unbelief and the Deceivableness of Unrighteousness in them that perish because they receive not the Love of the Truth that they may be saved? or, in other Terms, that Opposition to the Gospel is always founded in Neglect, Levity of Temper, Supineness and Carelessness about the most important Concerns, or in Partiality, vicious Influences, vain Self-Sufficiency, secular Cares, irregular Indulgencies, immoral Passions, carnal Inclinations, and criminal Prejudices and Prepossessions? in a Word, in the Stubbornness of the Wisdom, Sensuality and Affections of the Flesh or corrupt Nature, comprized at once under the Expression *Ὁρμητὰ σαρκος* or *Law in the Members* which will not yield to the Solicitations of the Spirit. St. John hath also expressly determined this Point (not to mention other Passages) where distinguishing between Those that are of the World and Those that are of God, He saith, *They are of the World, therefore**

fore speak they of the World, (that is, according to worldly Wisdom and Philosophy, for He is just before and afterwards speaking of the revealed Doctrines of the Gospel in Opposition to the Spirit of Antichrist which was in the World) and the World beareth them. We are of God; He that knoweth God, beareth Us; He that is not of God, beareth not Us. Hereby know We the Spirit of Truth, namely, by the Confession of those fundamental Doctrines respecting the Person and Dignity of Jesus which are the Subject of this Epistle; Hereby, saith He, know We the Spirit of Truth; that is, can distinguish Who hath the Spirit of Truth, (which is the Spirit of God) and the Spirit of Error, that is, Who hath or is led by the Spirit of Error, which is the Spirit of the World, or the corrupt worldly Spirit. How greatly then doth it behove the Ministers of Christ to take from Unbelievers those Pretences and Excuses which are the Armour wherein they trust? and, being superior to all vain Affectation of a Charitableness dishonourable to the Authority and Truth of God, and dangerous to the Souls of Men, through Honour and Dishonour, through evil Report and good Report, to expose the Insufficiency as well of a bare Regularity of Life as of all Pretences of invincible Ignorance or Prepossession,

session, and Pleas of Sincerity of Opinion and present Persuasion, when opposed to the Evidences and Doctrines of the Everlasting Gospel; to affirm that He that is not with Christ is against Him; and to press the actual Belief of Christianity and a stedfast Faith in it's essential Doctrines as the indispensable Condition of Eternal Salvation; and to shew their Charity, "not by flattering any with Security in their Errors," new-modelling the Scheme of Religion, or relaxing the Terms of Salvation, but by endeavouring to detect the pernicious Error and that Self-Deceit, the Vanity of Mind and the Spirit of Disobedience, the Attachment to temporal Things which the holy Scriptures so frequently and peremptorily charge upon the Adversaries of Revealed Religion or the Mystery of God manifest in the Flesh; and "to convince them of the Privileges and Blessings which are inseparably annexed to the Profession of the Truth;" Above all to maintain that other Foundation can no Man lay than That is laid, which is Jesus Christ in all his Offices and Characters; and that, as We are to hold to this Foundation, if We will be saved, so must We likewise take heed to the Integrity of Faith, to keep it whole and undefiled; reflecting that, if any Man build upon this Foundation Wood, Hay, Stubble, a Superstructure of such

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Sort as will not endure the fiery Trial, *his Work shall be burnt, and Himself shall suffer Loss*; and though He should be saved, yet *it will be so as by Fire*. These Things let us affirm and maintain constantly: For these are the Things which become sound Doctrine, and are good and profitable unto Men; and therefore, herein let us speak boldly as We ought to speak, *holding fast the faithful Word, as We have been taught, and by sound Doctrine both exhorting and convincing Gainayers*; and increasing our Diligence in thus maintaining the Necessity of a sound Faith, in Proportion to the greater Occasion there is to exert it in the perilous and sceptical Times in which We live. *This is the Fidelity which will never be reproved in the Sight of God; This the Conduct that will cleanse and enlarge the Church, promote the Salvation of our Brethren, and be found unto Praise and Honour and Glory at the Appearing of Jesus Christ with all his Saints.*

LUKE xxiii. 39, 40.

And one of the Malefactors which were hanged, railed on Him, saying, If Thou be the Christ, Save Thyself and Us.

But the Other answering, rebuked Him.

I SHALL now conclude what has been discoursed with some Reflections that are suggested by the Topicks of these Discourses.

And, *First*, Since *to be carnally minded is Death, and to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*, and *They that are in the Flesh cannot please God*, We cannot but be led to reflect on the Importance and Necessity of every Man's closely examining his own Heart, and searching what manner of Spirit He is of; Whether He is *after the Flesh and minds the Things of the Flesh*; or whether He is *after the Spirit and minds the Things of the Spirit*. And here the Rule of Judgment is That which is so frequently laid down in the sa-

cred Writings, *We are not in the Flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the Body is dead because of Sin, but the Spirit is Life because of Righteousness.* In order therefore to satisfy themselves whether they are yet *after the Flesh*, or *after the Spirit*, Men must enquire into their predominant and leading *Temper* and *Dispositions*; must ask themselves whether they have *set their Affections on Things above, and out of a pure Heart and a good Conscience and Faith unfeigned* do follow after Humility, Devotion, Holiness, Charity, Contentedness, Resignation and all those Graces which distinguish and adorn the Christian Profession; and, though encompassed with Infirmities, do nevertheless earnestly pray God to *create a new Heart, and renew and strengthen a right Spirit within them, imploring Him that He would try them and seek the Ground of their Hearts, prove them and examine their Thoughts, and look well if there be any way of Wickedness in them, and lead them in the Way everlasting.* By this Enquiry into the *Ends and Designs they have in view*, and in *what manner they pursue and attend to them*, they may satisfy themselves whether they are *Supine and Careless, indulging*

dulging the Desires of the Natural Man, and making it their Business to please themselves, or whether they walk in the Spirit, and having crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts, endeavour to serve and please God, and are earnestly desirous that *his Holy Spirit may in all Things direct and rule their Hearts*. For as They who walk according to the Course of this World, fulfilling the Desires of the Flesh and of the Mind, are yet carnal and sold under Sin; so Those who live no longer in the Flesh to the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God, may thence conclude that they have so suffered in the Flesh as to cease or be freed from the Dominion of Sin; or, according to the Terms of St. Paul which seem to be equivalent to, and may serve as a Paraphrase upon this less plain Text of St. Peter, have so crucified the Old Man that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, that they should not henceforth serve Sin.

So that the just Test of the Spirits of Men, the Proof whether They are of God or of the World, is not the Agreeableness or Inconsistency of their Conduct or Course of Action with the Sentiments of their own Mind, but the Complexion and Quality of their Actions and Behaviour, as expressive of the Regularity, the Purity and Holiness of their Affections and Dispositions, or of the Inordinacy of them; their

their *Transgression of the Law, or Keeping the Commandments of God*. For, as it hath been all along implied in these Discourses, *There is a Spirit of Truth and of a Sound Mind, and a Spirit of Error and Delusion*: The one is from the *Spirit of God*, and the other is *the Spirit of the World and corrupt Nature*; by Reason of which mere present Persuasion, how generally soever depended upon, is a very fallacious Rule for determining *the Sincerity and Purity of the Heart*. One of the Sufferers in the Text, and the Bulk of the Multitude about the Cross appear to have been persuaded that Jesus was not the Christ: But *this Persuasion was their Crime*, (and so it is every Man's) as being *founded in a carnal Spirit and Temper, estranged from God and spiritual Objects*, which led them, notwithstanding the many repeated Instructions of their Prophets concerning the real Character of the Messiah, and the spiritual Nature of his Kingdom, to conceive and look for Him under no other Notion than That of a *Temporal Deliverer and Prince*, who should exalt them to a State of secular Grandeur and Pre-eminence above the Nations of the World; and upon his not answering this Character and these Expectations, to upbraid Him for an Impostor: As the same Disappointment of the like worldly ambi-

ous Views of the Chief Priests and Rulers was also the real Motive, (yea confessedly the Motive, as appears from a Particular recorded by St. *John* at the 47th and 48th Verses of the 11th Chapter) for accusing Him to *Pilate* and procuring his Condemnation ; under Cover however of the Pretence that He perverted the Nation, (forbidding to give Tribute to *Cæsar*, which was notoriously false, See *Matth.* xvii. 27.) and set Himself up for a King in opposition to *Cæsar*, from whose Dominion they hoped to have been set free by the Power of their expected *Messiah*.

And thus We find that nothing is more generally approved and relied upon among Men as a safe and sufficient Apology for their Actions than *the Plea of acting according to the Dictates and Persuasion of their Minds*. Yet are they *not hereby justified* ; For still *He only that doth Righteousness is righteous* ; and the Strength of present Persuasion, far from vindicating the Uprightness and Integrity of the Heart, does too frequently convince Men of Sin ; yea and prove them most highly culpable and inexcusable ; inasmuch as the Persuasion itself may be erroneous and also *from an evil Cause* ; and in that Case it is a sure Evidence that they are led away by *fleshy Principles and Prejudices and inordinate Affections*.

Affections, and that These have not only indisposed them to serious and impartial Consideration and Reflection, and seduced them to the Pursuit of present worldly Gratifications, but have *impaired or deprived them of* the very Faculty of judging righteous Judgment; or is an Evidence, as the Scriptures speak, that *their very Mind and Conscience is defiled*, and that *the very Light that is in them is Darkness*. Which it may be feared is the Guilt and the Condemnation of more than a few Persons, whose Minds may, by long imbibing of Falsehood and wrong Principles, become so *perverted and depraved* as to have as it were a natural Relish for Error, and a confirmed Dislike for Truth and sound Doctrine.

Secondly, Another Reflection that arises from the Topicks of these Discourses, is concerning the Wisdom and Goodness of God in adapting the Scheme of Religion and the Way of Salvation to the present Capacities and Condition of human Nature, defective and corrupt as it is both in the Faculty of Reason and the Bias of the Affections. *The Thoughts of mortal Men are miserable, and their Devices but uncertain*, saith the Author of the Book of Wisdom, *and hardly do We guess aright at the Things that are before us; but the Counsel of God, and what the Will of the Lord is, and the Things pleasing unto Him, who of*
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Us could have searched out? Had our Justification and Acceptance with God been suspended on a strict and perfect Conformity to the Moral Law, the Terms had been such as We were unable as well to investigate as to fulfill; since it hath appeared that in the whole Compass of Philosophy a complete Model of Duty is no where to be found, nor yet that Assistance afforded which is requisite to supply the Defects, rectify the Affections, and help the Infirmities of our Nature; so that on this foot no Flesh could have been saved. Whereas in making Christ the End of the Law for Justification, and appointing us through the Spirit to wait for the Hope of Righteousness by Faith, God hath graciously set us free from those insuperable Difficulties with which We were naturally encompassed, and taken away all Colour and Pretence of Conditions of Salvation that are to Us impracticable, requiring us only to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus and the mysterious Means of Salvation through Him, and We shall be saved. For the Righteousness of God without the Law, even the Righteousness which is by Faith, speaketh on this wise; Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven, (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or Who shall descend into the Deep, (that is, to bring up Christ again from the Dead): But

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what saith it? The Word is nigh Thee, even in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that is, The Word of Faith which we preach, That if Thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised Him from the Dead; that is, If Thou shalt put thy whole Trust in this mysterious Scheme of Redemption by the Virtue of the Undertaking and Process of the Son of God, Thou shalt be saved. How great Cause have We, when We compare the Gospel Terms of Salvation with Those of the Moral Law and of Nature, to exult and glorify God on this behalf; that under the former The Righteousness accepted with Him is revealed from Faith to Faith, and that We are without the Deeds of the Law justified freely by God's Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood!

Nor is the Goodness and Mercy of our heavenly Father conspicuous in the Christian Scheme of Salvation, considered merely as a Dispensation adapted to the Impotence of our Nature, and an affecting Display of Divine Condescension to degenerate sinful Creatures; but likewise as a most compendious and powerful Incitement and Support of our mutual Love and Confidence in Him. For Faith in his Son, as it is the Ground and Pil-
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lar, so is it no less the grand Means of improving and invigorating our Trust in God in all Circumstances and Occasions. The Penitent upon the Cross may well be supposed to have reasoned with Himself after the manner of St. Paul; *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all Things?* And the blessed Effect of this Reflection was that He became *a Pattern of Hope and Rejoicing to them who should hereafter believe.* In like manner, When We have attained a duly affecting Sense of this stupenduous Mercy, it will work in Us mightily; will *exalt, strengthen, and enlarge* the Spirit, Faculties and Temper of our Minds, so that We *shall never be confounded, but shall come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that We may obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in Time of Need;* and being enabled to embrace with our whole Heart all the Promises of God, We become capable and meet to receive all the Benefits and *exceeding Riches of his Kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.*

But *Thirdly*, What hath been delivered leads me also to observe how capital an Error it must be for any to lean to their own Understanding, to the Imaginations of *human* Prudence, in forming a Judgement of

the Counsels of God, the Methods of his Providence, and the Dispensations of revealed Religion. It hath been observed that the Divine Wisdom and Procedure in his Dealings with the Children of Men, and more especially in the Oeconomy of Grace by *Christ Jesus*, is of quite another Kind and Order from That which guides and directs the Designs and Proceedings of Men. It is a Wisdom altogether beyond our Comprehension, too wonderful and excellent for Us; A Wisdom, whose *Effects* alone being manifest to Us, while its Measures and Process, real Tendencies and Manner of Operation are either wholly or in part undiscernible, is oftentimes in human Views disproportionate, irreconcilable, and interfering with the Purposes to be accomplished by it. *To Whom hath the Root of Wisdom been revealed, or Who hath known her wise Counsels?* saith the Son of Sirach. *And can'st Thou by searching find out God? Can'st Thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection?* saith Job. *It is as high as Heaven; what can'st Thou do? deeper than Hell; what can'st Thou know?* It is a Wisdom that attains Ends the most great and wonderful by Means, or by a Series of Means either absolutely incomprehensible by Us, or of a seemingly opposite Tendency; or otherwise, and more justly speaking, which directs

directs and over-rules Events in all human Views the most unfavourable, interfering or adverse, to the effecting it's Purposes. Now if those Methods which St. *Paul*, in a Stile of Condescension to the carnal Prejudices of the Unbelievers of his Time, terms the *Foolishness of God*, have in the final Issue appeared to be *wiser* than the *Devices of human Prudence*; and those Measures which He calls the *Weakness of God* have been manifested to be *stronger than Men*;—If both these have been approved most conspicuous Demonstrations of a supernatural irresistible Agency; then what Apology can be offered for doubting the Virtue and Efficacy of that Oeconomy which God hath ordained for our Salvation, or the real Subserviency of the Means employed to that End, though the Fitness and Operation of these Means be altogether or in a great Degree concealed from Us? in like manner as We know the Fitness of Means employed by the Wisdom of Man for attaining *his* Purposes is unsearchable to inferior Orders of Creatures. If He who *made Himself of no Reputation, and took upon Him the Form of a Servant, and humbled Himself and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, after He had thus by Himself purged our Sins, is ascended into the Heavens until the Times of the Restitution of all Things,*

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and is sat down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high; then why should it be thought a Thing incredible that He should there reign until all his Enemies be made his Footstool? or what Reasons can be given why our Idea of Him as a “Mediator and Atonement, though full of Mystery, and by no Means answerable to the perfect Nature of Christ’s State between God and Sinners, and to the real internal Manner of his Mediation and Atonement, may not nevertheless be full of Motives to the highest Degrees of Piety, Devotion, Love, Gratitude, and Trust in Him?” And with regard to Them, who having seen those greater Works by which God hath now glorified his Son, and made this Stone which the Builders refused the Head of the Corner, by the Instrumentality of Men visibly destitute of those Abilities and Accomplishments which should seem requisite to qualify them in some Measure for so arduous an Attempt as That of overcoming and abolishing the inveterate Prejudices and Corruptions which prevailed in the World; and who, notwithstanding these Demonstrations of an irresistible Spirit and Power, continue *reprobate concerning the Faith*, denying the Power and Virtue of his Sacrifice and Priesthood, or, in St. Paul’s Words, that *Christ Jesus is made unto*

unto Us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption; are not They chargeable with greater Degrees of Perverseness, Vanity and Corruption, and a greater Despightfulness unto the Spirit of Grace; and is not the Blindness of their Mind more manifest than the Crime and Slowness of those who denied Him to be The Chosen of God, because He did not save Himself by coming down from the Cross? We may here, I think, with a small Variation of the Terms, charge such Persons in the same Form of Argument with which St. Paul impleads the Heathen World; For That which may be known of Jesus is manifest, in that God hath shewed it unto Them. For the invisible Things of Him in the Redemption of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are brought to pass; even his Eternal Power and Godhead, so that they are without Excuse: Because that being hereby instructed in his Power and Godhead, they glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful, but are vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart is darkened; and professing themselves to be Wise, they become Fools.

The same Kind of Reflections tend to support our Faith in the Promises of Christ to his Church, under that Increase of Apostacy and Infidelity which is so notorious
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in the present Age. For, if our blessed Lord himself did by his Resurrection from the Grave most illustriously manifest forth his Glory after the Malice of his Enemies had seemed in all human Views to have prevailed against Him, and did establish his Religion in opposition to all the Powers and Prejudices of the World ; Why should it be thought a strange Thing if something like this Oppression of Himself should be permitted to befall the Church his Body, and it's Splendor should for a Season be eclipsed by a Defection from his Religion *through the Multitude of Deceivers that are entered into the World, who confess not that the Son of God is come in the Flesh?* Yet since *with Him is Strength and Wisdom, and both the Deceived and the Deceiver are his*, let us not doubt that He who *has promised that the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against his Church*, will in due Time (perhaps by an approaching Conversion of his antient People, foretold by St. Paul with a seeming Intimation that this grand Event shall be the Means of bringing the Church to its State of Perfection) *make his Glory to appear as at the first*, by the Vanquishing of all his Enemies, *giving it, as it were, Life from the Dead*, and advancing it's Strength and Splendor. In the mean Time it well becomes us to pray and to
exult

exult in Hope, with the devout Psalmist, *Let God arise, and let his Enemies be scattered; Let them also that hate Him flee before Him; Like as the Smoak vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away; and like as Wax melteth at the Fire, so let the Ungodly perish at the Presence of God.*

In a Word, neither the Plan of our Redemption by the Cross of Christ, nor the Ordering of his Church upon Earth, either with regard to its outward Oeconomy and Protection, or in respect of the Principles of Faith by which it is compacted and held together, are conformable to the Schemes of human Prudence. And on this Account the Divine Goodness hath at fundry Times and in divers Manners by his Prophets given a Recital beforehand of such Circumstances in the Messiah's Appearance and Character as would confound and offend human Reason, on Purpose to caution and forearm us against the Force of those Prejudices by which We were liable to be affected, and to give the fuller Conviction of his divine Authority and Patronage accompanying this everlasting Dispensation. So that the Preaching of the Gospel consisteth *not in Wisdom of Words*, but is always to be regarded as a *Revelation of the mysterious bidden Wisdom of God*: And as such it was introduced to the

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World, not by the Force of Eloquence or of any human Arts whatsoever, but by Demonstration of the Power of God. Had the Preachers of this Gospel attempted to recommend it by the enticing Words or Devices of human Wisdom, St. *Paul* affirms the Doctrine of the Cross of Christ would have been rendered of none Effect. But now when, on the contrary, *this Foolishness of Preaching*, as the Proposal of a Religion founded in the Humiliation, Sufferings and Blood of its Author, and promulged by Persons destitute of the persuasive Arts of Eloquence, and of every worldly Advantage, was accounted ; When, I say, this Foolishness of Preaching surmounted all Obstacles and Opposition, and prevailed in the World by those very Means which in all human Views tended to overthrow the Reputation and Credit of the Doctrine promulged, Then the heavenly Origin of this Religion, and the supreme Authority by which it was protected and advanced, were rendered the more conspicuous and undoubted by every Circumstance of Disadvantage and Opposition, of Weakness and Disgrace, which had gone before.

And thus our Lord's Incarnation, the Meanness of his outward Condition in the World, in the Form of a Servant, and his
 ignominious

ignominious Sufferings and Death, which might seem more likely to obstruct and over-set than to be subservient to the professed Design of his coming into the World, have yet by the final Issue appeared to be ordered by a Wisdom deeper than human Prudence, and on Views surpassing its Conceptions. For to adapt and apply to the present Topick the Conclusion of an ingenious and elaborate Argument for the Divine Mission of our Lord Jesus, “ The Schemes of worldly Policy often appear specious at first Sight and well connected together ; but the Issue soon proves them to be inconsistent and short-sighted Artifices ; while, on the contrary, the stupenduous Plans of Divine Providence appear at a great Distance, and before their Completion, like a Number of unconnected, and perhaps even interfering or adverse Events ; but when most scrupulously examined and traced to their Consummation, never fail to manifest the supreme Wisdom of their all-perfect Author.”

And in this point of View I conceive the Circumstance of the Crucifixion of our Lord between two Malefactors, (which in Justice to my Text may be thought to deserve some Notice) ought to be considered. For in the Trial of our Lord's Pretensions to a Divine Mission and Character, That human

Prudence or Wisdom of the Flesh, which could not digest the Doctrine of Salvation by the Blood of the Son of God, (which is at this Day the great Stumbling-Block to the Children of Disobedience;) This human Prudence, I say, would be yet more offended and staggered at his being *numbered with the Transgressors*, at his expiring in the Company of Malefactors, (not to mention also *the Offence of his own Disciples forsaking Him when He was seized and led away to be crucified,*) yea and by *the very Confession too which one of these Malefactors made of his being a good Man, and of his passing through this Gate of Death to a Kingdom of Glory.* These Circumstances, I presume, should not be passed over as Matters of no Moment, but ought to be ranked and reflected upon among the other Marks of our Lord's Abasement and Disgrace in that Hour of his Humiliation and Suffering, when He became *the Scorn of Men and the Outcast of the People*: Not that either of these Particulars was really in itself a matter of Ignominy and Disgrace, or such as reflected any Dishonour upon Him, but because they would be *accounted and construed such* by that worldly Spirit or Wisdom of the Flesh, which can trim and give way and accommodate itself and it's Conclusions to the Movements and Working

Working of the corrupt Passions; or, as I have more than once before had Occasion to speak, is biassed and led by *outward Appearance instead of judging true and righteous Judgment*. Yet these very Circumstances, I say, under the Direction and Controul of Divine Wisdom, may be conceived to have been ordered for the more abundant Manifestation of his Glory, inasmuch as his approaching Superiority and Triumph over every Kind and Degree not only of corporal Suffering, but also of what the Wisdom of the World accounts Ignominy and Dishonour, were rendered *the more* remarkable and astonishing by the Extremity of his foregoing Humiliation and Abasement. And with regard to the Case of the penitent Sufferer, it deserves to be particularly remarked that, as his Invocation addressed to our Lord at this Juncture administered to Him a fit Occasion of asserting under the very lowest Circumstances of Humiliation and Distress of the outward Man, his Divine Character and Pretensions to all Power in Heaven and in Earth; so the gracious Help and Assurance vouchsafed to this Man could not fail to prove an Anchor of the Soul sure and steadfast to many others * among our Lord's Followers and Disciples,

* Though it hath been supposed in the first Discourse, that the Account of the Penitent's Address, and of the gracious Answer

who may be supposed to have been, at this Time of his Crucifixion and Death, under the like trying Amazement and Consternation of Mind which is conceived to have been the Condition of this Penitent on the Cross, since even the Apostles themselves appear to have been affected in the same manner. (Luke xxiv.) And thus in this Man first, as St. *Paul* in another Case speaks of Himself, did Jesus Christ *shew forth the Riches of his Grace and Loving-Kindness for a Pattern to Them which should hereafter believe on Him to Life everlasting.* And hence also We ourselves, seeing *We have a merciful High Priest who can have Compassion on the Ignorant and on them that are out of the Way,* may derive strong Consolation and good Hope under the Frailties inseparable from our Nature, and be encouraged to direct our Prayer unto Him with Confidence that *We shall obtain Mercy and find Grace to help in Time of Need,* whenever We come unto Him with faithful Repentance.

Which leads Me to conclude with a Word

Answer to it, might be given to the Apostles by our Lord after his Resurrection, yet it doth not seem necessary to insist upon and to rest in this Supposition only, in order to account for the Knowledge of this Particular; especially since the Evangelists take Notice that Jesus in the Agonies of his Crucifixion was enabled to cry with a *loud Voice.* *Matth. xxvii. 46, 50. Mark xv. 34, 37. Luke xxiii. 46.*

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of Reflection and Exhortation in the Case of Infirmary.

It is too certain that by Reason of the Infection of our Nature and the Remainders of Sin in a Regenerate State, We shall not be able always to *stand upright, perfect and compleat in all the Will of God*, until by this Corruptible putting on Incorruption, our last Enemies Sin and Death shall be finally destroyed and swallowed up in Victory. But let us also reflect that the same Lord *who was in all Things like unto Us, Sin only excepted, and was touched with the Feeling of the Infirmitics* of that Creaturely Nature which He condescended to assume, knows exactly all the Weaknesses and Defects of all his Servants, the Measures of Grace bestowed upon them, and how far the Corruption of Nature might have been corrected and subdued by the Assistance of the Spirit; and He hath promised to accept the Offering of a willing Mind *according to That a Man hath, and not according to That He hath not*, and hath declared that He *is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, and will continue forth his Loving-Kindness unto them that know Him, and his Righteousness unto them that are true of Heart, so that Whosoever shall trust in Him shall not be confounded*. And therefore when our Spirit is willing, and the Love and Fear of God

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are the prevailing Dispositions in our Heart, but yet *through the Weakness of the Flesh. We are sore let and hindered in running the Race that is set before us*, let us neither despond under the Sense of our Infirmary, nor yet presume upon the Firmness and Constancy of habitual Attainments, but, by humble and earnest Prayer and Supplication to Him who is at *the Right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens*, derive upon ourselves further Communications of actual Grace, and doubt not that our God will *preserve and strengthen the Things that remain, and supply all our Needs according to his Riches in Christ Jesus*. Yea, He will *not only supply all our Needs*, but if the Sense of our own Insufficiency shall excite in our Hearts a more importunate and ardent Desire of his Aid, He will *make us more than Conquerors*, so that with the Holy Apostle we shall have Cause *even to glory in our Infirmities*, as finding that *when We are Weak then are We Strong*, and that the Grace of God is then most plentifully imparted, and does then most efficaciously strengthen and invigorate our Spirit, and convert our Infirmities to *his Honour and our own Profit*, when renouncing all Self-Confidence, We depend solely and intirely upon the Working of this Divine Power.

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In all our Warfare then here upon Earth be this *our Everlasting Consolation, our Hope and Rejoicing, the firm and stedfast Anchor of our Souls, that We have a great High Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who is able and ready to strengthen Those that stand, to comfort the Weak-hearted, to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down Satan under our feet. Having escaped the Corruption that is in the World through Lust, and being made Partakers of the Divine Nature, Let us constantly look unto this Rock that is higher than Ourselves, and continue to labour sincerely in the Lord, serving Him with Reverence and godly Fear, and then He will be the Strength of our Heart, and our Portion for ever; will succour us in all Dangers and Difficulties, carry us through all the Temptations of the present State, and suffer us not at our last Hour, when our Flesh and our Heart fail, for any Pains of Death to fall from Him. Trusting in his Defence, We need not fear the Power of any Adversaries, but, notwithstanding the Weakness of the Flesh; may with the humble Penitent in my Text, commend the Keeping of our Souls to Him as into the Hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour, and receive from*


O Him

Him the same Blissful Assurance, *This Day shalt Thou be with Me in Paradise.*


In that Hour may *his Rod and his Staff support and comfort Us, and his Ministring Spirits conduct Us in Peace and Safety through the Valley of the Shadow of Death to the Mansions of everlasting Rest and Joy!*

Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, even the only Wise God our Saviour be Honour and Power everlasting. Amen.

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*The Alliance of HERESY with DEISM,
and of DEISM and APOSTACY
with the BLASPHEMY that shall not
be forgiven: With some Reflections tending
to expose the true Sense and Meaning, and
pretended Right of PRIVATE JUDGMENT
in Religion; and a Comparison of the An-
cient and Modern OPPOSERS of the
Church of God.*



I CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

Let no Man deceive Himself : If any Man among you Seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may Be Wise.

IN the Beginning of this Epistle St. Paul reproves the *Corinthians* for the Divisions and Contentions that prevailed among them, while one said, I am of *Paul*, and another, I of *Apollo*, a third declared himself for *Cephas*, and others, as it were in contradiction to the Teaching of the rest, professed themselves the Disciples of *Christ*; and He expostulates with them, Whether *Christ* was divided, or *Paul* crucified for them, or whether they were baptized in his Name or in the Name of any of his Fellow-Labourers in the Gospel; insinuating that, while they were thus broken into Factions and Parties, they seemed to forget that the Gospel which each of them preached was not, (as He elsewhere speaks) *after Man*; that

that is, was not of human Invention, or received from Man, but was the Revelation of *Jesus Christ* unto those Ministers by whom they had believed, who were, one and all, Labourers together with God that gave the Increase or Blessing both to Him that planted and to Him that watered; their Concern therefore He tells them was to speak the same Thing, and be perfectly joined together in the same Mind and the same Judgment, even as *Paul* and *Apollo*, He that planted and He that watered, were one; i. e. in perfect Agreement, having the Mind of *Christ*, (an Admonition This by the way very unfavourable to that Latitude and Diversity of Opinion in Religion, which is contended for by those who have not learned *Christ*;) yet each of them confessedly nothing in themselves, however by the *Corinthians* preferred one above another; that it was God only who enabled them and gave Success to their Ministry, and that they, the Church or Society of Believers, were *God's Husbandry* and *God's Building*; that the Gospel preached to them was *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery*, even *the hidden Wisdom which God ordained before the World and Men existed*; and which none of *the Princes*, or Men of the greatest Genius
of

of this World, *knew*; yea, so far was it from being understood by them, that God had *by the preaching of this Gospel*, as He speaks in the first Chapter, *destroyed or confounded the Wisdom of the Wise, and brought to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent*. For what Purpose then did they set up one above, or in Opposition to another? And *where was the Wise, the Scribe, and the Disputer of this World?* Since God had made *foolish the Wisdom of this World, and had seen fit to save Men by the Foolishness of Preaching*, i. e. by a Doctrine which by the Wise Men of this World was accounted *Foolishness*. Now This being the Case, the Apostle observes repeatedly that, while there was Envy, Strife and Divisions among them, one saying *I am of Paul*, and another, *I am of Apollo*, and they thus gloried in Men, this Behaviour afforded but too plain Evidence that *they were carnal, and walked as Men, or according to Man*, as the marginal Reading is; meaning *according to the Notions of human Wisdom and the Spirit of the World*. Thus the Divisions among them were owing, not to any Disagreement between the Teaching of *Christ* and of *Paul, Apollo and Cephas*, but to the Ignorance and Prejudices of Those among them *who being carnal* could
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not apprehend and imbibe the true Principles of the Christian Doctrine, but were like those Jews of whom our Lord saith *They did not understand his Speech because they could not bear his Word; and therefore did not hear or apprehend God's Word because they were not of God.* (John viii. 43, 47.) Instead of being thus puffed up for one against another, They ought to have reflected that the common Foundation laid by *Himself* and *Apollo* and *Cephas* was *the Doctrine of the Cross of Christ*, and that *other Foundation than This* could no Man lay; and that *whatsoever any Man should build on this Foundation, his Work should be tried of what sort it is.* And then applying to them, not as Individuals, but in their collective Capacity, He asks, *Know Ye not that Ye are the Temple or Church of God? and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in You? i. e. in his Church.* If any Man defile the Temple of God, that is, by any corrupt Principles, any such as will not endure the Trial, *Him shall God destroy; for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple Ye are.* So that when St. Paul speaks in this place of *defiling the Temple of God*, He is to be understood of bringing into the Church or Christian Society any unsound Doctrine, any Doctrine not agreeable to the wholesome Words
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of our Lord Jesus Christ or the Mystery of Faith. And then, having thus admonished them of the Guilt and Danger of introducing such Doctrines, He repeats his Censures on *the Vanity of human Wisdom or the fleshly Mind, and its Insufficiency to search the Things of God*; endeavours to lay a Restraint upon it, and cautions them, in the strong and emphatical Words of my Text and of the following Verses, against being *spoiled by Philosophy and vain Deceit*, against *glorying in Men*, and imagining that any one is qualified by the Strength of natural Parts to become a Teacher of the Gospel; *Let no Man deceive himself; If any Man among you seemeth to be Wise in this World, let Him become a Fool that He may Be Wise; for the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God*; that is, Let him discard his carnal Reasoning, i. e. *the Spirit of the World, or the enticing Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth*, (as his Sentiment is expressed in the 12th and 13th Verses of the preceding Chapter) that so he may be meet to receive *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, or that hidden Wisdom, those deep Things of God which none of the Princes, or Men of the most penetrating Genius in the Things of this World, knew, and which God only revealeth unto*

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Us by his Spirit. So that this Passage being one of the many Protestations in St. Paul's Epistles, of the utter Inability of natural Reason to guide Men into the Way of Divine Truth and Salvation, yea of it's obstructing their Edification in pure Religion, and of the Necessity of being *dead from the Rudiments of the World* in order to the attaining of *true Wisdom and spiritual Understanding*, I intend, from the Scope and Relation of the Text and Context thus stated, to take Occasion to enquire into, and, by Authorities of Holy Scripture and the Force of various Passages compared together, shew *the Source* and maintain *the Criminality* and *extreme Danger* of Infidelity, as it respects either Christianity at large, it's *Evidences, Doctrines* and *Authority*, which is denominated *Deism*, and is a downright Rejection of, or Apostacy from the Religion of *Jesus Christ*; or with regard to some of the main and fundamental Articles of Revealed Religion, which though usually distinguished from the former by the Name of *Heresy*, will appear to spring from the same Source, to be so nearly *allied to*, and to have so much *the Nature*, as to *deserve, so far as it goes, the Name* of *Infidelity* or *Defection from the Faith*. After which I shall offer some Reflections on the true Sense and Meaning and pretended

tended Right of private Judgment in Religion, with a Comparison of the Ancient and of our Modern Opposers of the Church; and shall also point out that Procedure and Conduct by which We shall be preserved from the Delusions of Private Judgment, and attain that Unity of Mind in our Christian Profession, which was the Scope of the Advice and Exhortation in my Text, with which *St Paul* sums up this part of his Argument and Expostulations with the Church of *Corinth*.

First then, I purpose to enquire into the Source, Criminality and extreme Danger of a *Rejection of the Gospel*, and also of *Heresy or Misbelief*, as the Defects of Faith with regard to any fundamental Articles of revealed Religion are usually distinguished and denominated; and also to shew the near Alliance of Heresy and Infidelity by Authorities of Holy Scripture and the Force of several Passages combined and compared together.

For the Discovery of which Points I have prepared the Way by the introductory part of this Discourse, where in explaining the Text it has been remarked that the Apostle opposes *the Spirit of the World and the Spirit of God*, and alledges the former as the Obstacle to Men's perceiving

or knowing spiritual Things, or *the Things that are freely given us of God*; for by these and other equivalent Expressions, too many to be collected together, are the Objects of the Gospel Revelation described. Now by *the Spirit of the World* I take St. Paul to mean at large an *Attachment of the Mind, Will and Affections to Things present and sensible*; that Spirit which in the ninth Article of our Church is well and comprehensively denoted by the Term *φρονημα σαρκος*, as comprizing in it at once *the Wisdom, the Sensuality, the Affection or Desire of the Flesh or corrupt fallen worldly Nature, and implying a darkened State of the Understanding, and an Alienation of the Mind, Will and Affections from God and the Things of the World to come*. This is that Spirit which exalteth itself against the Revealed Wisdom of God, and renders Men incapable of a spiritual Sense and Discernment, and therefore must be bowed down that We may be able to receive and admit the Things which are brought to us by the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It was this worldly Spirit which, having possessed both *Jews and Greeks* with false Notions of Honour and Dishonour, of Shame and Glory, made the Doctrine of a crucified Saviour to the one a *stumbling Block*, and

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to the other *Foolishness*, as this Apostle every where insists. *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.* And to the same *Root of Bitterness* He ascribes it that many are *defiled with Heresies*, or, according to his Expression immediately before the Text, *that the Temple or Church of God is defiled* by a Superstructure of such Doctrines as are unworthy of the Foundation, and will not endure the Fire that is to try of what sort these Doctrines are. Now since by *Heresies* are meant *Misperceptions*, or some Defect of Faith concerning any essential Points of the Christian Doctrine, it needs little Process of Argument to shew, (for it is directly evident from the Apostle's expressly denominating them *Works of the Flesh*, and from his telling the *Corinthians* that He could not consider them, *whilst divided, as Spiritual, but as Babes in Christ*, and that He must address himself to them *as carnal*) that these are *mere carnal Prejudices*, springing from the *Φρονιμα σαρκος*, or Conclusions of that *corrupt Philosophy* by which Men *knew not God*, but while, in Opposition to the Advice of my Text,

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they professed themselves under the Guidance of it *to be Wise*, have ever verified and given an involuntary Testimony to the Soundness of the Apostle's paradoxical Exhortation, and the Necessity of inverting their own Measures and Procedure, since they had been only so bewildered by worldly Wisdom as to *become Fools*, and to transform the Glory of the incorruptible God into Images of Him which their own Δοκνησιουργία (if I may be allowed to use a Word compounded of the original Terms of St Paul in the Text,) which their own visionary Conceits, I say, suggested; because they did not *compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual*, or with the *Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, but adapted Divine Things or the Doctrine of Revelation to a Standard formed by human Fancies or the Spirit of the World. Now all Heresies, considered as Misperceptions or Misbelief concerning any Essentials of Religion, have, I say, so far as they go, the Nature of Unbelief, inasmuch as they proceed from *the Spirit of the World*, which throughout the Holy Scriptures is opposed to *the Spirit that alone reveals unto us the Things of God*, or disposes and enables us to *know the Things that are freely given to us of God*; even the *hidden Wisdom that*
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God ordained before the World to our Glory. Where then is boasting, or what room is there for glorying in Men? as the Apostle argues with the Corinthians, since the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God, and the Lord knoweth the Thoughts of the Wise or natural Man, that they are vain; and the Things revealed unto us by the Spirit are such as Eye hath not seen nor Ear heard, neither have they entered into the Heart of any of the most penetrating Genius's of this World; even those deep Things that are contained in the Promulgation of the Mystery of Christ Jesus of God made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. These were the Things which offended the Wise Men after the Flesh, neither could they know them, because they are spiritually discerned; that is, by the Illumination of the Spirit of God; without whose Influence, while the Preachers of the Gospel are unto God a sweet Savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish, the Word of the Gospel preached is to carnal Hearers a dead Letter, and the Savour of Death unto Death.

This then is the Ground of the Resemblance and Affinity between Deism and Heresy, as the Degrees of Opposition to
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the Christian Religion are distinguished, namely, that *the Spirit of the World is their common Source and Origin*; and that both the one and the other of these Opposers of the true Gospel of *Jesus Christ* are yet *in the Flesh*, destitute of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. Hence it came to pass that, when our Lord began to declare his Divine Character, by affirming that the Cure performed upon the impotent Man *was the Work of his Father and of Himself*, (which was bringing to their Ears a Doctrine as strange and incomprehensible to Reason, as was St. Paul's Doctrine of *Jesus* and the Resurrection to the Philosophers at *Athens*,) the *Jews* were offended and sought to kill Him; chiefly, *because He said that God was his Father, making Himself equal with God*; and, after continuing to assert and vindicate this Character, *Jesus* declares that *their not believing Him whom the Father had sent, was an Evidence that they had not his Father's Word abiding in them* (John v. 38.); * and adds, *I am come in my Father's Name, and Ye receive Me not; If another shall come in his own Name, Him Ye will receive.* (v. 43.) In which Words our Lord's Meaning seems to be, that the mysterious Character which He

* See also John viii. 47.

claimed

claimed of being *the Son of God* confounded their Reason and Prejudices, and was the Ground of their Objection to Him ; as if it had been said, Take away the Mystery implied in this Character which offends your carnal Apprehensions, and suppose Me to come, like others, in their own Name, that is, in the Form and Character of a mere Man, and then Ye would receive Me. From our Lord's Discourses with the *Jews* recorded in this and the following Chapters* of this Gospel, it is abundantly evident that the mysterious Doctrines of his *Divine Mission or Coming forth from God, and being One with the Father, and of Salvation or Life Eternal by Him who declared Himself to be the Bread of God which cometh down from Heaven and giveth Life to the World*, that these Doctrines, I say, were the Stumbling-block and Rock of Offence at which they stumbled ; and accordingly our Lord tells them that the Reason why *they did not understand his Speech was, that they could not bear his Word*, (*John viii. 42, 43.*) that is, could not apprehend or receive the grand Principles of the Revelation which He brought unto them ; which he repeatedly calls *God's Word and the Truth by which Believers should be sanctified* ; and accordingly He saith, *He that is of God, heareth God's Words : Ye*

* See particularly vi. ver. 41st to 66th.

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therefore hear them not, because Ye are not of God. (ver. 47.) And He had before said that every Man that hath heard and learned of the Father, that is, who had heard and understood God's Word, cometh unto Him. And of Those who receive not this Word He declares that He knows them that they have not the Love of God in them, (John v. 38—42.) that they know neither Him nor his Father, (John viii. 19, 55.) and are not of God, (John viii. 47.) yea, that they hated both Him and his Father, inasmuch as though He had done among them such Works as none other Man did, (John xv. 24.) they did not believe nor receive his Words, but still walked in Darkness. And on account of these Doctrines We find great Numbers, particularly of the Pharisees, were offended; and among these who pretended to be Disciples, (such probably as, like the Deists of our Times, approved of nothing else in his Teaching but the Morality of it) many went back, and walked no more with Him. John vi. 27—66.

In these carnal Jews, as in all other Opposers of our Lord's Divine Pretensions and Doctrines, supported as they were by such mighty Works as never Man did, We see our Apostle's Declaration exemplified, *The God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the Image of God should shine unto them.* For when a Man
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isled by this Spirit of this World, those mighty Works, by which the Understanding should be opened, and the Heart affected to Conviction, serve only to confound, and often to irritate and strengthen the Prejudices, instead of overcoming the Stubbornness of the natural Man; of which We have remarkable Instances in the eighth Chapter of St. *John's* Gospel, and other places. Now whether these Works are pretended to be an insufficient Evidence of a Divine Mission and Character, or whether (which is most probable) they are rejected because Men cannot comprehend the Doctrines introduced under the Sanction of that Character; in either Case, This will be the Condemnation of ungodly Men who abide in Unbelief, *That Light is come into the World, and They, after their Hardness and stubborn Heart love Darknes rather than Light.* For our blessed Lord argues that, *though they believe not Him, yet they ought to believe the Works, or for the Works sake;* (*John* x. 38. xiv. 11.) and of those who reject the Evidence of his Works He declares that *they have no Cloak for their Sin,* (*John* xv. 22.) and that *their Sin remaineth,* (*John* ix. 41.) and, as hath been just now observed, plainly imputes their Unbelief, to *their hating both Him and his Father;* (*John* xv. 24.) and implying the

Sinfulness of Unbelief, *sith, He that believeth not is condemned already, because He hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. (John iii. 18.)*

On the other side, How different was the Success of these Doctrines with the Disciples? For We read that St. Peter in the Name of them all professed that these Principles of the Religion of Christ were *the Words of Eternal Life, (John vi. 8.)* and that *they did believe and were sure that Jesus was that Christ the Son of the living God* who had been promised as the Saviour of the World. (ver. 69.) And of many also among the Jews, and particularly of those who had seen the Miracles which He did on them that were diseased, (John vi. 2.) and had themselves been of the Number of the five Thousand miraculously fed with the Loaves and Fishes, We read that they were convinced that *He was of a Truth that Prophet that should come into the World. (Chap. vi. ver. 14.)*

And not to accumulate Passages in Confirmation of the Point I have been speaking to, our Lord himself declares that *This is Life Eternal to know his Father the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent; (John xvii. 3.)* and after having proclaimed Himself *the Light of the World, which*
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Whoſoever followeth ſhould not walk in Darkneſs, but ſhould have the Light of Life, (John viii. 12.) He tells the carnal Pharifees that, if they believed not that He was the Chriſt or promited Meſſiah of Divine Nature, they ſhould die in their Sins; (John viii. 24.) and his beloved Diſciple, (for this very Reaſon probably diſtinguiſhed as *the beloved*, becauſe He appears, as is plain from all his Writings, to have been beyond the reſt filled with this Divine Wiſdom and Spiritual Underſtanding, and for the ſame Reaſon of all the Evange- liſts probably the moſt lightly regarded by Unbelievers,) He, I ſay, induſtriouſly dwells on the Witneſs which God hath given to the Divine Nature of his Son, and *the Record that the Eternal Life which God hath given us is in his Son. He that hath the Son, ſaith this Apoſtle, hath Life, and He that hath not the Son hath not Life. (1 Ep. Chap. v. ver. 12.)* On the Authority of theſe Paſſages We affirm that the afore-mentioned Principles of our bleſſed Lord's *Divine Eſſence and Miſſion by the Father, and of Sal- vation or Life Eternal by Him, and his being the Light and Life of the World* that theſe Articles of Religion, and all ſuch Doctrines as are ſo intimately connected therewith, that without the Acknowledgment thereof neither the Scope of his Revelation can be aſcertained,

ascertained, nor the Design of his coming into the World be shewn to be accomplished ; (which will include the Doctrine concerning the Dignity, Office and Ministration of the Holy Spirit) that These, I say, are *the Words of Eternal Life and fundamental Truths* ; Ignorance or Disbelief of which is a sure Evidence that Men are still *in the Flesh* or Natural State, under a Spiritual Blindness of Mind, and have no part in Him *who of God is made unto Believers Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.*

The Application of these Principles of my Argument to the Cases of Deism and Heresy will lead directly to the Conclusion I mean to establish, of the Alliance, Criminality and Danger of Each as springing from the same Source, namely, such a Vanity or Spiritual Blindness of Mind as hath been insisted on, such a Prevalence of the Worldly Spirit or Attachment to Things present and sensible as renders Men callous and obstinate against all Evidence and Information concerning those deep Things of God, upon the Belief of which an Interest in the Benefits of Christian Redemption is suspended. For the Gospel being a Revelation from the Father of Lights, which vindicates to God the whole Glory of Man's Salvation, and teaches

us that this gracious Purpose is effected by a Wisdom which is quite of another kind, or specifically different from human Wisdom; (for This I take to be the Apostle's Meaning when He calls *the Testimony of God* which He declared to the *Corinthians*, *the hidden Wisdom or Mystery which the Princes*, or the deepest Philosophers of *this World*, were so far from knowing or discerning, that there was a Necessity that they should become *Fools in this World*, that is, discard all the *Preconceptions of human Wisdom* that they might *Be Wise*, or capable of receiving the Doctrines of this Revelation;) We are hereby in a plain and lively manner instructed to regard all Opposition to the Word of God, as proceeding from the *Φρονημα σαρκος* or Spirit of the Natural Man, which will not yield Assent to *the deep Things reported by Those who have preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven*. And therefore since the Deist and the Heretick agree in affecting to be *Wise in this World*, instead of casting down *Imaginations*, and bringing into Captivity every Thought that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and the Things which are revealed unto Us by his Spirit; there is no room for a Distinction between the Root of Deism and Heresy, but only in the *Points and Degrees of Opposition* by which each

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would subvert the Gospel, and consequently in *the Degree of the Criminality* in this Opposition and Enmity. For the One is too much entangled in the Briers of human Wisdom to apprehend the Truths of the Gospel in their genuine Form and Simplicity; and *the Heart of the Other is waxed so gross, and the Understanding so darkened*, as to reject at once the Doctrines and Evidences of the Revelation, which while *they hear with their Ears, they understand not with their Heart*, neither perceive their Force and Truth.

Thus Heresy appears to be divided but by thin Partitions from Deism and Apostacy; the former being according to the lively Description of our Apostle a *Μεθοδεία πλάνης*, which with Sleight and Craft would undermine those Revealed Doctrines which are the Pillar and Ground of the Christian Dispensation, while the latter is a direct and barefaced Opposition of human Reason to the Grace of God and his Testimony concerning the Salvation brought unto us by the Revelation of *Jesus Christ*; and Each hath it's Foundation in the *Φρονημα σαρκος* or the fleshly Principle; those Lusts and inordinate Affections corrupting the Reason, and attaching the Mind to earthly sensible Objects, and rendering it incapable of the Illumination
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and Teaching of the Spirit concerning *the Things that are freely given to Us of God.*

And hence We see the Reason that both Heresy and Apostacy or Deism are in holy Scripture represented as incompatible with Salvation; but with a Distinction, as hath been observed, as to the Degrees of their Criminality and Danger. For the one, though tending and leading on to Apostacy, and so to Perdition, is nevertheless not altogether desperate and past Remedy; while the other is declared to be absolutely incapable of Repentance and of Pardon; and therefore should seem to be the very same Sin which We are assured *shall not be forgiven either in this World, or in the World to come*; even the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. For of the latter, that is, of Apostacy or the falling back into Deism and Infidelity We are taught in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* that *it is impossible for Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and been made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, If They shall fall away, to renew them again to Repentance*; and the Reason assigned is because under these Advantages they yet *crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open Shame*; and in another Place We are in like manner informed that to

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Those who, after *having received the Knowledge of the Truth*, that is, after having been instructed in the *Word of Life*, shall sin wilfully, or do such despite unto the Spirit of Grace as to reject the Christian Covenant and become Unbelievers and Heathens, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful Looking for of Judgement and fiery Indignation which shall devour these Adversaries or Opposers of the Divine Counsels for the Salvation of Mankind. Which is agreeable to our blessed Lord's Declaration, *He that believeth not is condemned already, i. e. is already in the State of Condemnation, because, having loved Darkness when Light is come into the World, He hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God.* (*John iii. 18, 19, 20.*) Now that the Apostle in these Texts asserts nothing less than a strict and absolute Impossibility of the Repentance and Pardon of such Offenders is too evident from the Reflections which He in a summary Manner applies for the Illustration of his Meaning in the Close of each of these Passages, which are such as have no Congruity or Pertinency under any other Acceptation of the Terms of his Argument. For whereas the one is summed up with the Observation that hath been just repeated of *the Vengeance which God will recompence to them who shall tread under Foot his Son, and account*
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the Blood of the Covenant wherewith We are to be sanctified an unholy Thing, and contumeliously treat the Spirit of Grace, because otherwise the Rejection of the Christian Covenant would appear to be less severely resented by God than the Contempt of Moses's Law, the Penalty of which was Death without Mercy or Reprieve; The other Passage in the 6th Chapter concerning Those who should fall away after having been enlightened, is thus concluded; For the Earth which drinketh in the Rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth Blessing from God; (which first Part of the Reflection I take to be applicable to the Encouragement of those Persons whose Acknowledgement of the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ shewed that they had received Blessing from God, to go on unto Perfection); and then it follows, But that which beareth Thorns and Briers is rejected, or is reprobate, [ἀδόκιμος] and is nigh unto Cursing, whose End is to be burned. Now the Reference and Application of each of these Reflections to the Contexts, both severally and jointly considered, seems to be no other than This; That since there remaineth no more or other Sacrifice for Sins, after the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all, Those who having received the Knowledge

of the Truth, They to whom the Gospel had been preached, or, in the Language of the other Text, who having been once enlightened by the Gospel, and having tasted of this heavenly Gift, and been made Partakers of all the Advantages accompanying the Grace shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ, should nevertheless fall away, and, like the hardened Jews, treat as an Impostor Him who was once sacrificed for them, and account his Blood of no Virtue or Efficacy ; (the Points implied in the Charge of crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open Shame, and counting the Blood of the Covenant a common Thing) are hereby proved to be as incapable of a Renewal unto Repentance, and of the Mercy and Blessing of God, as that Soil is shewn to be unfit for Culture and incapable of Improvement, which, instead of being rendered fruitful by the plentiful Showers which it drinketh in, produces nothing but Thorns and Briers ; and so being manifestly ἀδόκιμος, reprobate and unfit for Use, is nigh unto Cursing, or near receiving it's Curse, which is to be burned and destroyed ; or, to apply now again and conjoin the*

* The exact Propriety of the Expression *nigh unto Cursing*, as applicable to Infidelity, seems worthy of Notice ; for so it is *nigh unto Damnation*, as distinct from being already consigned to immediate actual Punishment.

Terms of the other Passage, *hath nothing to look for but Condemnation and the Destruction of Fire.* For the Purport of the Denunciation in each Passage is exactly the same, notwithstanding some Diversity or Variation in the Terms and Comparisons or Emblems by which the Apostle hath expressed and illustrated his Sentiment.

And now, if reflecting upon the Matter and Scope of these Texts, We turn our Thoughts to our Lord's Declaration, that *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost working Miracles in the Person of the Son of Man hath never Forgiveness, neither in this World, nor in the World to come, but is in Danger of or is consigned, or reserved to Eternal Damnation* (*εὐχὸς αἰῶνις κριτέως* Mark iii. 29.); a Denunciation which well accords with St. Paul's Expressions of *being nigh unto Cursing, and having nothing to look for but Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour them*: Doth there not appear, from the Comparison of these several Texts, to be much Cause to believe that the Unpardonableness of Infidelity, whether manifested by a *continued resolute Rejection of the Evidences of the Gospel, or by drawing back from the Truth* after having been enlightened by it, the Thing meant by sinning wilfully after receiving the Knowledge of it, (if the supposed Possibility of
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an Apostacy of *true Believers*, and the Application of these Texts thereto is not precluded* by several Expressions of our Lord in St. *John's* Gospel, and also by other parts of Holy Writ, on which Consideration We should understand *the being enlightened and the having received the Knowledge of the Truth of the Tender of the Means of Grace*,) that the Unpardonableness, I say, of absolute Infidelity, lies in an Impossibility of renewing unto Repentance Those who *having the heavenly Gift of this Gospel* (i. e. the last and most powerful Means which the Wisdom and Mercy of our heavenly Father hath provided for the Recovery of our fallen Race) *imparted to them*, shall stubbornly resist it's Light and Force? inasmuch as they hereby *do despite unto, i. e. even contemptuously treat the Spirit of Grace*, and by resisting this Divine Testimony, do in effect *crucify to themselves afresh, and put to an open Shame*, (that is, by treating Him as if He was an Impostor, and his Sacrifice an unholy Thing) *the Son of God, or the Son of Man declared to be the Son of God by the Spirit of God dwelling and working in Him*; and by such their Barrenness under

* See *Witsius* de Conservatione, in the third Book de Oeconomia Fæderum. He who shall read this Chapter will, if I mistake not, be inclined to think that the Arguments for the Indefectibility of Believers preponderate.

the Means of Grace, (which for it's Influence and Effects, is in several places of Holy Writ compared to the *Dew and Rain of Heaven*,) shew themselves to be of the same Nature with that Earth, which, by it's bearing nothing but Thorns and Briers after having been watered with plentiful fertilizing Showers, is proved to be *αδύναμος* or fit only for Destruction ; or, according to the Comparison applied by St. *Jude* to the Adversaries of the Truth, *like unto Trees whose Fruit withereth, without Fruit, twice dead, i. e. naturally dead* to the Things of the Spirit, and *dead also under the enlivening Dew of Heaven, or the Grace of God shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ.*

Such and so horrible is this Sin of Deism and Apostacy, or Renunciation of Christianity, and with it of the Means of Grace and Mercies of the new Covenant in *Christ Jesus* ; and Such the just Judgment of God upon those Persons whose Disaffection to the Gospel hath withstood the most wonderful Demonstrations of the Spirit and Power ; and because they *are not altogether blind*, but, like the *Pharisees* of old, *have known the mighty Works by which God hath born Witness to the Revelation of his Son*, but with a like carnal Aversion and Unwillingness to yield to their Force, *their Sin also remaineth* ; and
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they are condemned already, as our Lord's Words are concerning those who will not come to Him that they might have Life.

And herein precisely, that is, in the resolute Rejection of the Works of the Holy Ghost shewing forth themselves in the Person of our Blessed Saviour as Divine Attestations of his Mission and Character, and in the being rather exasperated and provoked to revile Him for an Impostor, than converted by the Force of them, which is charged upon the *Scribes and Pharisees* as the Blasphemy that shall never be forgiven; herein especially, to discourse with Precision, I conceive doth consist the Crime of Deism or that determined wilful Infidelity which, while it setteth at nought the highest Evidences of the Revelation of *Jesus Christ*, doth imply the like Censure and Blasphemy against our Lord's Divine Character and Pretensions: But which I apprehend to be very different and distinguishable from that more wavering kind of Dissaffection, or certain Lukewarmness towards the Gospel, which is grounded upon wrong Views of his State of Humiliation and outward Condition, which was the Offence taken by the Bulk of the *Jewish* People, and is a Prejudice against Him *as the Son of Man*, and not *as declared to be the Son of God with Demonstration of*
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the Spirit and of Power. And if such an hardened Opposition, which amounts, I say, to a calumniating the most plain and powerful Attestations of the Godhead dwelling and working in Him, in which consisted that unpardonable Blasphemy of the *Pharisees*, doth also, strictly speaking, constitute the precise Nature and Crime of the Infidelity and Deism of our Times, then may We cease our Astonishment at the exceeding Stubbornness of these Adversaries to the Testimony of *Christ*, since Himself hath declared that this Sin of *blaspheming*, or, in the Terms of the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, *doing despite to the Holy Ghost working in Him*, shall never be forgiven neither in this World, neither in the World to come; doubtless for the Reason already assigned, because the Enmity and Aversion implied in thus sinning wilfully after receiving the Revelation of the Truth confirmed by Signs, and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, is so malignant* and inveterate, as to prove Men incapable of Repentance and Conversion that the Sin may be blotted out.

Should an Exception be taken to this Reasoning on account of the supposed Examples of the actual Conversion of Deists

* Of the Sinfulness of Unbelief, See *Matth.* xi 21—24. *Mark* vi. 11. *Luke* x. 10—15.

and Infidels, I must beg leave to observe again that This is the very Point in Question, and to repeat and enlarge upon the Argument as directly opposed to this Objection, which is presumed to rest upon a Fallacy in the Allegation from Experience; which Fallacy lies in the Want of Precision in the Idea of a Deist or professed Unbeliever and wilful determined Infidel. For it is insisted upon that there is a wide Difference between that absolute Infidelity which boldly denies the Authority and Revelation of the Gospel and the Testimony of the Holy Ghost in the Person of *Jesus Christ*, and the Labouring under carnal Notions and Prejudices, and a wavering State of Mind on account of the Meanness and Disadvantages of our Lord's outward Condition, and his Appearance and Sufferings in the Flesh, and other Difficulties,* which, for want of just and precise Ideas, may have been some times mistaken for positive Disaffection to his Gospel, and a Rejection of Him *as declared to be the Son of God with Power*; which I take to be the specifick Character and *Distinction* of Deism, strictly and properly speaking; for these carnal Prejudices, from which the Apostles themselves were not from the first exempt,

* Such as those mentioned in *Matth.* xvii. 10. *Mark* ix. 11. *John* vii. 27, 40—44.

may be only the false Biass or dead Weight of human Wisdom subjecting Men to a trying State of Mind, rather than a Labouring with set Purpose to subvert the Evidence for the Gospel of Christ, and resisting the most cogent Attestations. And this Judgment I doubt not should be passed on some Persons whose fluctuating Condition hath at length determined in a firm and zealous Attachment to the Gospel; and that We ought to consider the final Issue of the Gospel Revelation with all to whom it is offered in it's genuine Form, as the infallible Manifestation of Men's Characters and Dispositions, the just and sure Test whether they were within the Reach and Influence of the Spirit, or have been altogether carnal and corrupt; whether the Prejudices that have withheld them from the Discernment and Acknowledgment of the Truth were such as ought to be ascribed to Infirmary, or had their Root, like those of the *Pharisees* in St. *John's* Gospel, (Chap. viii. ix. x.) in that Stubbornness and Malignity of the carnal Principle and Temper which is nothing less than *Enmity against our Lord as the Most High God*, and would not be subject to even Divine Authority. For, as generally speaking, Difficulties in Speculation may be as fit an Exercise of Virtue as Difficulties in Practice, this kind of Difficulties may be-

come to such Persons, while they continue to be Wise after the Flesh, as St. *Paul* speaks, a chief part of their Trial and Probation ; inasmuch as, according to the Measure of mere natural Parts, and the Strength of worldly Notions and Prejudices, They may be the more entangled in the Toils of carnal Wisdom, or *Philosophy falsely so called*. In the mean Time They may be so far from maliciously denying the Truth of Christianity, that their Merit may in the final Issue I say become the more conspicuous and exalted for the Difficulties they surmount, and the Strength of their Virtue be the more manifested by the Victory of Faith over the Biass of corrupt Nature and the Vanity of the fleshly Mind.

I beg leave then to repeat that If We reflect upon the wide Difference there is between *the being STAGGERED*, as the Apostles themselves were for a Time, *by some Circumstances and Predictions relating to the Condition of the Son of Man during his Abode upon Earth, which were not easily reconcileable to the Notions of human Prudence, and the RESISTING the Force of the most plain and powerful Works of the Spirit of God shewing forth themselves in Him, which amounts to a blaspheming the Godhead, and is a Refusal to submit to any Demonstrations ;* there will remain on the one Side room to regard the former

mer as a State of Difficulty and Trial, as well as much Cause to fear lest the Root of Bitterness which in our Times exalteth itself against these Attestations should be indeed nothing less than *the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, or *the Sin unto Death*, which St. John declines to say that a Man shall pray for; and that such Adversaries to the Gospel are incapable of Repentance and Conversion, and are *already condemned*, (as our blessed Saviour speaks of *Those who do not believe in Him as the only begotten Son of God*) as being proved to love *Darkness rather than Light*, and to be possessed by a Malignity, and a Disdain of the Blood of the Covenant in *Christ Jesus*, so inveterate and rooted, that they will, with the Evil One, persist in opposing the Kingdom of God throughout all Ages.

Thus that wilful Dissaffection to the Gospel which is meant by Deism or Infidelity, like the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, is, I conceive, in strict and proper Acceptation to be considered *as a Disparaging and Dishonouring the Supreme Being by an Opposition to his Divine Testimony*, and, as such, subjects Men to the like certain Perdition.

But it will be proper before I go on to improve the Argument from other Passages of Scripture, to take a particular Notice of the Calumny of the *Pharisees and Scribes* in attributing

tributing our Lord's Miracle in the casting out Devils to *Beelzebub*, and of the Reply to it, and to ascertain and limit the precise Importance of this Portion of Scripture, which I think will also much conduce to the establishing of my Argument. When the Fact of his casting them out, which convinced the rest of the People who were Witnesses to it, that He was *the Son of David*, that is, *the promised Messiah*, was too notorious to be denied, these *Scribes* and *Pharisees* still offended at the mysterious Character He claimed of being *the Son of God* which confounded their Reason and Prejudices, and ever desirous to oppose the Belief of this Divine Character and Mission, pretended that the Miracle was performed by the Power of *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils over the rest of the Evil Spirits; and required of Him a Sign from Heaven before they would confess Him. Upon which St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke* inform Us that *Jesus* KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS, shewed them that this Pretence was so absurd and inconsistent as to confute itself, and, had it not been altogether perverse and vain, might have been retorted upon those among themselves whom they believed to be endued with a like Power. *Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to Desolation, and an House divided against an House*

House falleth ; and so, If Satan also be divided against Himself, how shall his Kingdom stand ? And if I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Sons cast them out ? The Conclusion therefore to which He knew them to be averse, namely, that *He cast out the Devils by the Finger*, or, in St. Matthew's Word, *by the Spirit of God*, must stand good ; and there was no pretence for doubting that *the Kingdom of God was come unto them*. Now the Matter in regard of which *Jesus* is said to have KNOWN THEIR THOUGHTS, must questionless have been something distinct from That which they spoke out and declared. And from considering the Passage, and the Character of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, who *seeing would not perceive lest they should be converted*, what can We reasonably suppose This to be but the Design of evading this Conclusion of his Divine Mission and Character, or of *the Kingdom of God being come unto them*, which was forced upon *them* as well as upon the rest of the People, by the Miracle wrought before their Eyes, which they meant to depreciate and traduce by this perverse Pretence that there was no Necessity of ascribing it to a Divine Power, since it might be effected by a Power which the Chief of the Devils might be supposed to have over the rest ; and which our Lord in-

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lists upon as a Conclusion so far from being
 disproved by this Supposition, which they
 invented to prejudice the People against
 Him, as to be established by the palpable
 Absurdity and Perverseness of the Pretence.
 The unpardonable Crime therefore of the
Scribes and Pharisees, I take to consist not
 in this particular Article of Calumny, (for
 This, groundless and vile as it was, should
 seem from the scriptural Distinction to have
 been not absolutely unpardonable, had it
 been intended against *Jesus merely as the Son*
of Man) but to be chiefly and ultimately re-
 solvable into a stubborn Refusal to yield to any
Demonstrations of the Spirit of God, working
Miracles in the Person of our Lord Jesus, in
proof of his being the Son of God, while they
regarded the pretended Exorcisms of their own
Children, perhaps also the Miracles of the Apostles
and the Seventy who preached the Kingdom
of God in their Cities with Authority over all
Devils, which were Facts too notorious to be
denied, (Matth. x. 1. Luke ix. 1. 6. x. 17) as
wrought by a Power no less than Divine: For the
Rejection of these Attestations as unworthy of Cre-
dit, which I apprehend to be the just and precise No-
tion of Infidelity, and the only Sense that comes
 up to the Charge of *making GOD a Liar*,
 which is St. *John's* Construction, (as it must
 be every Man's) of *not believing the Record*
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which God testified of his Son, where He is speaking of THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, that is, of THE WITNESS OF GOD, as greater than THE WITNESS OF MEN, and of THE SIN UNTO DEATH; THE REJECTION OF THIS TESTIMONY, I say, which is the JUST AND PRECISE NOTION OF INFIDELITY STRICTLY DEFINED, is A BLASPHEMY OF THE GODHEAD, or eternal self-existent all perfect Nature, which I take to be in this Passage most properly denoted by The Holy Ghost, because the Divinity of Christ being veiled in the days of his Flesh and Humiliation, while He appeared as a Man, in the Form of a Servant, was to be manifested and proved, not by his bearing Witness of Himself, but by the Testimony of a distinct Person. Such is the Holy Ghost, who while, in respect of the one undivided Essence of the Supreme Being, He is the Fulness of the Godhead dwelling in the Man Jesus bodily, in regard of the distinct Personality from That of Christ, He is the Witness, as well in Earth as in Heaven, by which the Father testifieth of his Son; (1 John v. 8. 9.) on whose Testimony, i. e. mighty Works, Whosoever believeth not, hath blasphemed, or made God a Liar, because He believeth not the Record that God thus gave of

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his Son whom He sent to be the Saviour of the World. So that when our Lord, after the former part of his Reply, in which He shewed the Absurdity of their Cavil against the Miracle wrought in their Presence by the Power of his Godhead, KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS declared unto them further in these Words, *Wherefore I say unto You, All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men; But the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men; and whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven Him; But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come*; I presume We are to consider Him as referring and charging it upon their own Consciences, that their real Meaning was, under Cover of the aforementioned Cavil against this mighty Work of Jesus, to speak against or blaspheme the Godhead dwelling and working in Him, by casting out unclean Spirits, and healing all manner of Sicknes and Disease, and giving them to understand, that by rejecting this Testimony of his being the Son of God, and of the Love which God had to Us in Him, they had brought upon themselves swift Perdition or Condemnation, as St. Peter and St.

Jude

Jude speak concerning the like Adversaries of the Lord that came into the World to redeem them, in Texts which shall in the next Discourse be further considered and discanted upon. Which Acceptation of our Lord's Words, *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost*, as denoting a perverse Infidelity or Rejection of the Divine Attestations to his Mission and Gospel, I think will be much strengthened by observing that St. *Luke* introduces this Denunciation, not immediately with the mention of *this particular Calumny* of the *Pharisees*, but at a great distance afterwards, when our Lord is preparing to send out his Disciples in the Power of the same Spirit to preach the Gospel, *joining this blaspheming of the Holy Ghost with*, and, as it should seem, *making it equivalent to the denying Him before Men*, or *stubbornly rejecting their Message*, as a Crime distinct and different from speaking against the Son of Man;* and, with that

* He that denieth Me before Men, shall be denied before the Angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven Him; but unto Him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. And when they shall bring you unto the Synagogues, and unto Magistrates and Powers, take Ye no Thought how, or what Thing Ye shall answer, or what Ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same Hour what Ye ought to say. *Luke xii. 9—12.*

Accuracy which is very remarkable and striking in many Texts of this Evangelist, insinuating, as it may reasonably be presumed, by the Change of the Terms *επει εις*, which He makes use of with regard to *the Son of Man*, for the Word *βλασφημησαντι* when speaking of *the Holy Ghost*, the higher Criminality and Aggravation of this *Opposition*.

I CORINTHIANS

 1 CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

Let no Man deceive Himself: If any Man among you Seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may Be Wise.

IN support of the Position in the foregoing Discourse that Infidelity, whether as denoting Deism or Apostacy, hath a close Alliance with, or is resolvable into the Sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, some further Reflections shall now be offered. For an heedful Attention to certain Passages and Terms of the Holy Scriptures, and *the Denunciations We read against Those who should reject the Gospel*, and a View of the Enmity implied in this Rejection, (always considered, as I beg leave to repeat, as distinct from Prejudices grounded on any Circumstances in the Appearance of our blessed Lord *as the Son of Man*,) will, I think, add weight to this Argument, and conduce to shew that there is no material Difference between the Blasphemy of the *Scribes and Pharisees*,

risees, and the Deism or Apostacy of our Times, but that the Crime of each is of one and the same Nature and Complexion.

This may be argued, *First*, from the Correspondency and Similarity which hath been in some measure already taken notice of in the *Terms* and *Characters* by which both the *Heinousness* and *Penalty* of each are described in the Passages of Holy Scripture which have been under Consideration. For, whereas We are taught by our Blessed Lord, *that the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost hath never Forgiveness*; so in the Texts with regard to Infidelity in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, Of Those who have had *the Gospel preached unto them with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven*, it is declared by his Apostle that *if They shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto Repentance, and that there remaineth to such Adversaries only a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to consume them*. Now since We are instructed that *all manner of Sin and Blasphemies wherewith soever Men shall blaspheme, may be forgiven unto them, but only the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*; can We learn or infer less from a Comparison of these Texts, than that the Crime which renders or shews Men incapable of Renewal unto Repentance, and to which there remaineth
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nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, is the very same with the Sin for which a Man is in Danger of, or is *bound over* to Eternal Damnation? as I conceive the Word *ενοχος* might have been properly translated; especially since, without confirming yet further this Sense of the Apostle's Assertions by the united Force of another Passage of similar Import about the beginning of this Epistle, (Chap ii. 1, 2, 3, 4.) where He in like manner argues *the Impossibility of our escaping the Vengeance of God, if We should neglect the great Salvation offered to us*, there is, as hath been before remarked, just Ground to understand these Assertions as implying nothing less than a strict and absolute Impossibility of the Repentance and Pardon of such Persons, from the Reflections which He applies in the Close of each of these Passages; the Oversight of which hath been the Occasion of qualifying and bringing down the Apostle's Meaning to That of a moral Impossibility or extreme Difficulty only; whereas these Reflections and the Comparisons whereby the End of such Men is likened to That of an unprofitable Soil and of the Contemners of *Moses's* Law, do plainly enough obviate our understanding Him to intend a

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moral Impossibility only, or to speak merely of the Issue of *permanent or of final Infidelity*, on account of there remaining no more Sacrifice for Sin to them who shall *thus* reject the Benefits purchased by the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all; and oblige us, I think, to expound the Expressions and Denunciations of some Root of Bitterness or particular Instance of wilful Sin* after having received the Knowledge of the Truth, which either renders or shews the Temper of Men to be hardened to a Degree that is absolutely *incapable of Change or Renewal unto Repentance*, or *that is grown utterly past all Feeling and Sensibility of the Love and Goodness of God*; and by Reason whereof there remaineth nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to devour them *without Mercy or Compassion*, as the Words *χωρίς οίκτισμων*, in the Parallel of Divine Vengeance for the Contempt of *Moses's* Law, authorizes and directs us to understand the

* Which particular Instance of wilful Sin, the whole Passage and Context shew to be the forsaking the Christian Assemblies or Church, which was considered as an Evidence of the not retaining stedfastly the Profession or the Confession (as the Word *εμολογια* is elsewhere translated) of their Hope; for the Word is *ελπιδος* and not *πιστεως* which by some Inadvertency hath been rendered into our English Version instead of the former.

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following Threat; as does also the Expression ἐσθίων μέλλοντες τὰς υπεραστίας; for the precise Sense of the Word μέλλοντες is that this Judgment and fiery Indignation *only lingers, or delays for a Time the certain Destruction* of these Adversaries or *covert Opposers*; Terms these, which in the *Measure* of their Signification (if a seeming Redundancy of Expression may be excused) exactly correspond to Those that in the other Texts are applied to that *rejected uncultivable Soil* said to be ἀδοκίμος, which is made the Emblem of these Reprobates; namely, *nigh unto Cursing*, as our Apostle, with a nice and striking Propriety and Precision, (and probably not without a Respect to the Woe denounced by his blessed Master to the blaspheming *Pharisees*) had in the 6th Chapter expressed his Sentiment concerning *That whose End is to be burned*. So pregnant, I apprehend, will these Passages be found, if heedfully considered, with Arguments applicable to the Support of that Interpretation of the Alliance or Sameness of Infidelity with the unpardonable Sin, which hath been here advanced; and so exactly does the Importance of the Terms used by our Apostle in each of these Texts tally with the Substance and the Form of the Sentence announced by

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his Lord and Master against every such Adversary in the Words *ενοχος εστιν αιωνιη κρισεως*. *
 It would be a Defect in a Disquisition of this Importance to leave out what may be learnt from St. Peter, who, speaking of the false Teachers that should bring in *damnable Heresies*, or *Heresies of Perdition*, and upon themselves *SWIFT Perdition*, leading many also into the same Perdition; (for He repeatedly all along makes use of the same Term *απωλεια*) and by Reason of whom the Way of Truth should be evil spoken of, declares that the Judgment of these Men now of a long Time lingereth not, and their Damnation slumbereth not. A Passage This which seems to deserve a more exact Notice and Investigation than hath been bestowed upon it, and from which the following Particulars may be extracted; namely, that *the damnable Heresies of these Teachers*, consisted in denying the Lord that bought them; that is, in denying his Divine Mission and Character, Merits and Satisfaction, i. e. in Apostacy; the Mischief of these Heresies to themselves in bringing upon them *swift Perdition*; (swift as contradistinguished from the ordinary Method of God's Dealings, which waits with much

* *ΕΝΟΧΟΣ αιωνιη κρισεως*

Καταρας ΕΓΓΥΣ, ης το τελος εις καυσιν

Ενδοχη Κρισεως η πυρος ενδιειν ΜΕΑΛΟΝΤΟΣ.

Long-Suffering for the Repentance and Conversion of Men, that he may have Mercy on them; to other Men *in the seducing them into the same Paths of Perdition, and into Blasphemy against the Way of Truth* or Form of sound Doctrine; whilst with Greediness these Men should with *feigned Words*, that is, Words or Principles not drawn from the Scriptures, but artfully devised by themselves, gain many over to their Party: Of such St. Peter saith their *Judgment* or Sentence of Condemnation (for *κριμα* is of the same Importance as *κατακριμα*, See *Matth.* xxiii. 14. *Mark* xii. 40. *Romans* ii. 3.) *ΕΚΠΑΛΛΑΙ ΕΝ ΑΡΓΕΙ, καὶ ἡ ΑΠΩΛΕΙΑ αὐτῶν ἔνυσταζει*; of which Terms I conceive it to be a just Exposition that, little as they may be apprehensive of it, *the Damnation* or *accursed State* under which they were absolutely concluded, or in regard of which they were even then *ἐν ὁρῇ αἰῶνις κρίσεως*, and *κατὰρως ἐς θῶς* in St. Paul's Sense, was continually *making advances*, and *ripening* into actual or rather into complete Execution; for *the swift or immediate Perdition* they bring upon themselves by denying the Lord that bought them, as well as the Analogy of the other Passages of Scripture which I have been descanting upon, leads us to understand St. Peter's Words of their being, not only, like other Sinners, *in Danger of*,

but by the irrevocable Decree gone out against them *actually bound over*, or in St. Jude's Words concerning the same Persons, (which determine the Meaning of St. Peter's) *of old ordained*, or proscribed to *Damnation*,† and, as it were, in the Jaws of the bottomless Pit; *καταρας τετρα*, as St. Peter also speaks of them. Such is the Account given us by St. Peter of Those who should defile the Temple or Church of God by such He-

† It seems worthy of Notice here that St. Jude's Words, *of old, or a long Time since, ordained to this Condemnation*, which explain and determine the Meaning of St. Peter's *swift Destruction*, are not applicable to the Proof of any absolute Decree or Predestination of Sinners generally considered, to eternal Perdition, but are restricted to that particular sort of ungodly Men He is speaking of; certain Men who had crept in among Christian Professors unawares, turning the Grace of God, i. e. the Doctrine of the Grace of God, as I understand it, into *Lasciviousness*, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus have these Apostles by the Spirit of Prophecy given Notice to the Catholick Church of a Race of ungodly Men, Opposers of our holy Religion, and cautioned Christians in succeeding Times that, knowing these Things before, they might beware lest, being led away with the Error of the Wicked, they should fall from their own Stedfastness; as hath likewise St. Paul to the same Effect, when He enjoins the Elders of the Church of Ephesus (Acts xx.) to *take heed unto themselves and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He had purchased with his own Blood, because He knew that after his Departure grievous Wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the Flock, and of their own selves should Men arise speaking perverse Things, to draw away Disciples after them*. Perhaps some Texts in his Epistles might have a respect to the same sort of Persons.

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refers as *the Denial of the Lord that bought them*; and also by *St. Jude*, as we shall see presently, of the same ungodly Men and Mockers who turned *the Grace of God*, that is, the Doctrine of the Gospel concerning the free Grace and Love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, *into Lasciviousness*, treating it with Contempt and Mockery, *and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*; the same sort of Men who in the Apostolical Constitutions are described to be such as *πλεμῶσι Χριστῷ καὶ Μωσῇ*, fight against God and *Moses*, pretending at the same Time to value both; and again as *Θεὸν βλασφημῶντες, καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καταπατῶντες*, yet communicating with the Church, (as both *St. Peter's* and *St. Jude's* Expressions imply * of the false Teachers they are speaking of) while they corrupted it's Faith; and while they busied themselves in a licentious new modelling the Gospel according to their own Devices and in perverting it's Doctrines, pretending by no means to oppose it, but only to rectify Men's Notions about it: Which seems to be the Thing meant by *St. Peter's* Expression *ἐκ πλεονεξίας πλαστοῖς λόγοις*, as well as to shew the Propriety of that distinguishing Denomination given by *St. Paul* to Those, who hav-

* οἱ τῶν παρρησιαζομένων αἱρεσεις 2 Pet. ii. 1.
παρρησιόυσαν γὰρ τινες ἀνδρες. Jude 4.

ing received the Knowledge of the Truth should sin after such sort that there would remain nothing but a certain fearful looking for of that fiery Indignation which was about to devour them ; namely, τὰς υπεραντις,* *covert* Adversaries or Opposers ; and the Nature and Kind of whose Sin He charges as amounting to a treading under Foot *the Son of God*, counting the Blood of the Covenant ordained for our Sanctification as an unholy Thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace ; which Observations do, if I mistake not, harmonize and bring into Concert with *St. Paul*, in support of my Argument, the Description given by *St. Peter* and *St. Jude*, and also That now repeated from the Apostolical Constitutions ; and unite all the Texts I have commented upon, and make each of them, and every distinct part and member of each of them, appear as so many converging Rays inclining towards each other till they meet, as in their proper Center, in that awful Canon pronounced by the Judge of Quick and Dead concerning Those who should deny Him, and condemn the glorious Divine Demonstrations of the Spirit and of Power which were exhibited as the Evidences of his

* So the Terms τὰς υπεραντις αὐτῷ in *Plutarch's* Apophthegmata are by *Xylander* translated, *qui clanculum se opposuerint*.

Godhead ; *Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him neither in this World, neither in the World to come.*

And now if We compare the Practices of Those who in our Times have been visited with the Light of the Gospel, in corrupting it's Faith in essential Points, licentiously new-modelling and perverting the Doctrines of Revelation by their own Inventions, covering their Enmity and Opposition to them by arrogating to themselves the Character of Men of *liberal Thought* ; (which in just Construction answers to that part of the Character which St. *Peter* and St. *Jude* have given them of *speaking great swelling Words of Vanity,*) pretending all the while not to oppose, but only to rectify Man's Notions concerning the Scriptures ; thus, according to St. *Peter's* Censure, if I misconceive it not, εν πλεονεξια πλασταις λογοις εμπορευομεναι ημας ; some of them at the same Time communicating with the Church whose Foundations they labour to undermine with an Industry like That of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* proverbially described by compassing Sea and Land to make a Proselyte : Do not these Practices appear to be a Transcript of the Sin and Arts of those false Teachers of whom St. *Peter* foretold that they would *privily bring in* damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them,

them*, *with feigned or artful Words*, i. e. such as were of their own devising and not drawn from the Scriptures, making merchandize of Men, (a Term which may allude to the buying and selling of Slaves, for so the Profelytes they make are gained for Bond Slaves to the Devil) seducing them into the same Paths of Perdition, and into Blasphemy *against the Way of Truth*; and of the Presumption of those ungodly Men of whom St. Jude complains that they had *unawares crept into the Church*, turning *the Grace of God*, that is, the Doctrine of the Grace and Love of God in Christ, *into Lasciviousness*, and *denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ*? or, as He afterwards describes them, *Murmurers, Complainers and Mockers walking after their own ungodly Lusts, separating themselves, sensual and having not the Spirit*? Who are the Men whose Practices resemble the Characters and Descriptions here given by these two Apostles, is well known to those who are not Strangers to the Conversation and Writings of Deists; and

* That St. Peter's and St. Jude's Expression *denying the Lord that bought them*, imports the same Charge that is intended by our Lord in St. Luke's Gospel, when He saith, *Whoever shall deny Me before Men*, may be argued with some Colour of Reason from the Use of the Verb ἀρνέομαι *abnego*, in these Texts, which is the same that St. Luke uses in Opposition to ἐμολογέσθαι *emoloyesthai*.

Those who, under Pretence of being Men of liberal Thought, set at nought the distinguishing Doctrines of the Gospel. To whom therefore We may apply the Censure of our blessed Lord to the Hypocrites of that Age: Wherefore Ye are Witnesses unto yourselves that Ye are the Children of those false Teachers, filling up the Measure of your Fathers Iniquities. And why need We scruple also to accost and include them in the Conclusion of his Rebuke, Ye Serpents, Ye Generation of Vipers, how can Ye escape the Damnation of Hell? For since it appears that they come up to these false Teachers in their Principles and Practices, they must be accounted of the Number of those of whom one of these Apostles tells us that they are *reserved* unto the Day of Judgment to be punished, and the other, in almost the same Terms, that unto them is *reserved* the Blackness of Darkness for ever; suggesting at the same Time that their Doom is irreversible, not only by the Term *reserved* or *kept*, (*τηναι* and *τηναι*) but also, if I mistake not, by *those Examples of Vengeance* with which they are by both of them in these Epistles *associated*; namely, the *Angels cast down into Hell*, *Korah*, and the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* destroyed by such a signal and sudden Overthrow as *left no Place*

for Repentance ; and That, as it seems reasonable to believe, principally on Account of Indignities and Dishonour towards Divine Persons, which rendered their abominable Sin yet more exceeding sinful. (See Genesis xviii, xix.) From which Chain of Reflections and Argument, grounded all along on the Authority of Holy Writ, there is but too much Reason to believe that St. Peter and St. Jude in their Epistles, as well as St. Paul in That to the Hebrews, speak of Apostates, and that Deism or Apostacy, that is, Infidelity, (to comprehend both under a general Term) that all Infidelity, I say, strictly and precisely defined, includes the Guilt of Blasphemy against the Godhead, or is resolvable into the same Crime ; and to fear that when Men are once arrived to that pitch of Heresy and Dissaffection to the Gospel as to become Infidels in the just and proper Sense, rejecting the Witness of God which He hath testified of his Son and of that Eternal Life which is in Him ; resolutely refusing his gracious Offers, and setting at nought the Riches of his Love in Christ Jesus, and so wilfully and maliciously revolting from God and our Lord Jesus Christ to the common Enemy ; from that Time they have provoked the Divine Indignation to consume them in a Moment, (Numbers xvi. 21) having sinned the Sin unto
Death,

Death, and effectually excluded themselves from the Mercy of God in *Christ Jesus the only Propitiation for the Sins of the World*.

And then as to the *Characters* and *Effects* by which Infidelity is described, These likewise appear to accord with and even to come up to the Malignity shewn by the Blasphemy of the *Pharisees*. For what can be imagined to surpass *the Criminality* of crucifying the SON OF GOD *afresh*, and putting him to an open Shame? or making a public Example of Him, as if He were an Impostor, παραδειγματίζοντας; for the Force of this Word is equivalent to the *stigmatizing* Him, as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did for One performing Works by the Power of an evil Spirit: or what can import an higher Pitch of Virulence towards the ever blessed Author of our Redemption, than the Expressions of *treading Him under Foot*, counting the Blood of the Covenant wherewith We are to be sanctified, an unholy or common Thing, and doing *Despise* unto the Spirit of Grace? which the Apostle closely charges upon those who *having been made Partakers of the heavenly Gift of the good Word of God*, or received the Knowledge of the Truth, should draw back from it, or come short of the Promise of God through Unbelief. Where it is remarkable that

these horrid Acts of Contumely are spoken of as having for their Object *the Godhead in particular*, and indeed *each several Person in the Godhead*, as I conceive; the counting the Blood of the Covenant ordained for our Sanctification *a common Thing*, a Thing of no Value or Efficacy, that conferred no Privilege, no Benefit, no Holiness, *implying a Contempt of the free Grace and Mercy of the Father, as well as a Despightfulness to the Son and Spirit*: Which *Contumely of the Godhead* I take to be the great Aggravation that discriminates the *Blasphemy* of the *Pharisees* from all other Blasphemies against our Lord as the Son of Man *, (expressly contradistinguished as *these* are by the Evangelists from the Blasphemy against the Divine Being) and renders it unpardonable. These Considerations favour the Distinction that hath been laid down in order to settle the precise Notion and Criminality of Deism or Infidelity, and tend to the Confirmation of my Ar-

* Such as being a Glutton, a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners; (Matth. xi. 19.) immediately after which our Lord upbraids the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, and considering them as more desperate Offenders, denounces to them, as it seems. *only in different Terms*, on account of their Impenitence and Unbelief, the like Woe that he pronounces against the *Pharisees*, as for their Rejection of and Blasphemy against his Miracles.

gument that Infidelity in general, according to the strict and proper Notion of it, is one and the same with the unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, and that there is no material Difference or Ground of Distinction between them.

Which Judgment is also, I think, authorised and made good by the Passage in *St. Luke's Gospel*, (Ch. xii. 8—10.) where, without mention of the Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* in particular, our blessed Lord having declared in general terms to his Disciples *to whom He was then giving some Instructions in order to their going forth to publish his Doctrine, that Whosoever should confess Him before Men, Him should the Son of Man also confess before the Angels of God; but that Whosoever should deny Him before Men, should be denied before the Angels of God,* immediately subjoins, *And Whosoever shall speak a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.* Whence it may be argued, on considering the Context, and comparing one Passage of Scripture with another, that *the setting at nought, rejecting and discrediting the Authority of his Mission and Gospel, whether promulged by Himself or by his Disciples, attested as it was by Signs and Wonders,*

Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, was the Thing meant by the Blasphemy † which should not be forgiven. Now this is the Intendment, and the Sin of every Deist and every Apostate from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and surely it hath not only a Resemblance to the Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* who meant to discredit and vilify our Lord's divine Character, but also resolves itself into the same Article of Calumny that they uttered, as well as into a Rejection of the Testimony of the Holy Ghost; Since whatsoever Spirit is supposed to *aid and set his Seal to an Imposture*, must necessarily be regarded as an *impure or evil Spirit*. And so we have found in our Deists and Free-thinkers the whole envenomed Spirit of these *Vipers*, and the Dregs of their Maliciousness.

† The *Jews*, on account of their Rejection of Jesus's Pretensions to be the Christ as an Imposture, are by St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, and one of the Sufferers on the Cross on the same account, is by St. *Luke* said βλασφημειν. Hence it may reasonably be inferred, that the *Charge of Imposture* is the Thing precisely meant by *Blasphemy*; and whether it amounts to the unpardonable Sin is to be determined from the Nature and Dignity of the Person or Being against whom it is uttered. The general Meaning of the Word in holy Scripture, where not restricted by other Words, is *the uttering any Thing derogatory to God or holy Things*.

And

And as the Parallel holds with regard to the whole Substance of the Calumny and Cavil in which the Blasphemy consisted; so no less, I think, in the Resistance of the Evidences which during our Lord's Abode upon Earth were exhibited in his Person, and the Resistance of the same Evidences set forth in the written Revelation, We may discern such a Resemblance and Proportion (yea, why need I scruple to say such a *perfect* Resemblance and Proportion?) between the Crime and *Stubbornness* of modern and antient Unbelievers rendering or shewing each of them incapable of Repentance, as must be understood to involve them in the like Condemnation. For since the Evidence of the Authenticity and faithful Transmission of the Facts recorded by the Evangelists is such as moral Beings are bound to be influenced by, and cannot without inexcusable Stubbornness and Guilt withstand; yea, since this Evidence, justly weighed in the Balance, will be found to be not less sure, irrefragable, and convincing than even ocular Evidence of the Works wrought by the Holy Ghost for the Confirmation of the Gospel; and the same that was afforded to the Bulk of Mankind at the Time of it's Promulgation, (the greater part being then left to receive the

the Gospel upon the Credit and Testimony of others concerning the Signs and Wonders which attended it ;) there seems to be no Reason that the mere Want of ocular Demonstration should exempt any from the Denunciation of our Lord against Those who should blaspheme or speak against the Holy Ghost. *Which speaking against the Holy Ghost*, whosoever shall compare the Words I have repeated from the 9th and 10th Verses of the 12th Chapter of St. *Luke*, abstractedly from the other Arguments here offered, may, I think, from thence perceive to be *equivalent to the denying Christ before Men, or discrediting his Pretensions, and rejecting his Gospel*. From which Reflections it seems sufficiently clear that the Woe denounced to the *Pharisees* and whosoever should speak against the Holy Ghost, *belongs to all those who shall deny Christ and his Gospel*; always understanding such a Denial of a deliberate and resolute Rejection; and not of a temporary Revolting through Fear of extreme Danger, or the Suddenness and Violence of a Temptation, which being the Effect of such unhappy Emotions of Mind and painful Conflicts as are widely different from that Malignity of Heart, which is the Root of all *determined positive Disaffection to our Lord and his*

his Gospel, We humbly trust are Cases not incapable of Repentance, but should be regarded as Offences and Failings that not only admit of Extenuation in the sight of our Redeemer who knoweth whereof We are made, and pitieth the Infirmary of human Virtue in the best of his Servants, but, by exciting in us a just Sense of our own Unworthiness, and of the Instability of our Hearts, may be converted to our future Profit.

But further, The Woe denounced to the Cities wherein most of our Lord's mighty Works were done, *because they did not Believe in Him and Repent*, is worthy of especial Notice, whether regarded only as a presumptive or probable Argument tending to the Support of the Position which hath been laid down as the Ground-work of this part of my Subject, or, which would be more decisive, considered as holding forth Instances in point, as I apprehend, of what is declared in the Epistle to the *Hebrews* concerning the Impossibility of a Renewal unto Repentance of those Persons *who should stand out against the Powers accompanying the Publication of the Gospel, and of the Unpardonableness of Disaffection to the Revelation of the Son of God under these Advantages.* For We are taught that it shall
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be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom in the Day of Judgment than for those Cities; because if the mighty Works which were done in Chōrazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, had been done in them, they would have repented long ago, and have remained unto that Day. Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom were Places distinguished by Wickedness and vile Affections; yet even These are pronounced less incapable of Repentance and Mercy, than the People who having been visited with the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, refused to believe in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, but loved Darkneſs rather than Light, and having ſettled on the Lees of Ungodlineſs, made God a Liar in rejecting the Record which God gave of his Son. From which plain deciſive Judgment of the ſuperlative and ſingular Demerit of theſe Cities on Account of the Contempt of our Lord's mighty Works, and alſo from an equivalent Denunciation, which hath been remarked, againſt thoſe who ſhould reſiſt the preaching of the Apoſtles when they ſhould go forth with a Divine Power againſt unclean Spirits to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of Sickneſs and Diſeaſes ; and, which ought alſo to be taken notice of*

* See *Matth. x.* ver. 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 33. and *Luke 10—16.*
here.

here, from St. Paul's (*Acts* xviii. 5, 6.) *shaking his Raiment against the Jews that OPPOSED themselves and BLASPHEMED when He testified to them that Jesus was the Christ* †, (agreeably to the Direction of our Lord to his Apostles as a Testimony against those who would *not receive nor bear them*, (*Matth.* x. 14. *Mark* vi. 11.) and instantly taking his leave of them with those Words, *Your Blood be upon your Heads, I am clean*: From these and all the

† The Opposing this Testimony seems to have been *the Blasphemy*. In like manner (*Acts* xiii. 44, 45, 46) when almost the whole City of *Antioch* came together to hear again the Word of God and the Testimony concerning the Lord *Jesus* which He had delivered to them on the foregoing Sabbath-Day, and the *Jews seeing the Multitudes were filled with Envy, and spake against those Things which were spoken by Paul, CONTRADICTING and BLASPHEMING*, Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, *It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to You, but seeing YE PUT IT FROM YOU, and so JUDGE or CONDEMN YOURSELVES AS UNWORTHY OF EVERLASTING LIFE*, (for agreeably to a foregoing Remark, *Κρινω* and *Κριμα* bear the same Sense as *κατακρινω* and *κατακριμα*) *Lo, We turn to the Gentiles*. And (ver. 50, 51.) when a Persecution was raised against them, and they were expelled out of their Coasts, *They shook off the Dust of their Feet against them*: Which was a Token or Symbol appointed by our Lord to signify that they renounced all Fellowship with such profane Persons, whose Offence in rejecting the Gospel was more heinous, and Punishment at the Day of Judgment should be more severe than That of *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, (*Matth.* x. 14. *Mark* vi. 11.) whose horrid Indignity toward the Divine Persons that visited them in the Form of Angels, but without the like Demonstrations of Divine Authority and Power, was less unpardonable than *the Impiety of making God a Liar* by rejecting the Testimony which He gave to his Son *Jesus*.

foregoing Observations and Reflections it may be thought a just and too sure Conclusion that Infidelity is one and the same with the unpardonable Sin, and that it hath it's Origin in such a Root of Bitterness, and implies such a stubborn confirmed Perversion of Heart as is incorrigible ; yea, is so far from being *subdued*, as to be only *exasperated** by the Revelation of the Grace and Mercy of God toward sinful Creatures, and by all the Means which it applies with Effect to the Cure of the other Corruptions with which the Nature of Man is infected.

Less than This I think We cannot infer from these Representations collected from various Parts of the Sacred Writings. Wherefore, since the Design of the Manifestation of the Son of God in the Flesh

* Such Instances We have (besides those already taken notice of) *in the Chief Priests bribing the Soldiers with a large Sum of Money to falsify concerning our Lord's Resurrection ; and again in their consulting to put Lazarus to Death because that by Reason of Him many believed on Jesus ; and in the Command to Peter and John to speak no more nor teach in the Name of Jesus, when the Miracle they had wrought by his Name was too notable and manifest to be denied ; and in Those likewise who, in order to discredit the miraculous Gifts conferred at the Day of Pentecost for the Propagation of the Gospel, mocking said these Men are full of new Wine ; though it was then but the third Hour of the Day, and a Season of the Year also, when there were no Fruits from which new Wine could be produced.*

was

was the Destruction of the Works of the Devil, and the Recovery of the fallen Race of Man from the Captivity in which We were held by this apostate Enemy to God and his Creation, the Denial of that Divine Mission and Authority by which the Publication of the Gospel was enforced, must be considered as a direct Opposition to both the Redemption of Man, and the Glory and Dominion of God, which is a consummate and hellish Malevolence. And indeed since Unbelievers and Adversaries *to the Way of Truth and Salvation* are in the Scriptures described to be actuated by the same Spirit of Disobedience and Malice, which suffered not the Angels to keep their first Estate, and which instigated wicked Men to those daring Attempts recorded in Holy Writ, *by which they designed to dishonour the Divine Being or his Messengers*, (such, I mean, as those that have been mentioned of *Korah* and the Men of *Sodom*) it seems reasonable and just to regard *Infidelity as a malicious Association with the Powers of Darkness to obstruct the Kingdom of God and of Him whom God hath appointed to be Head over all Things to the Church*, and to conclude that these Adversaries shall for such Wickedness be in a signal manner *separated unto Evil*, and exposed to a *Sentence*

tence of Vengeance, no less in it's *Swift-ness* (to refer to St. *Peter's* Expression and Doctrine) than in it's *Severity* proportional to those Judgments which consumed *the apostate Spirits and ungodly Men who in Times past rose up against the Lord and his Anointed.*

Such is the baneful Influence of the Spirit of Infidelity ; an Influence, not like That of particular inordinate Affections by which Men are sore let and hindered in pressing toward the Mark and giving all Diligence to make their Election sure, but a Bias which carries them on to a contemptuous and stubborn *Renunciation of the Grace and Benefits and Prize* of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus, and a wilful Desertion from God and our Lord Jesus to the common Enemy. How great must be that Darkness or Prejudice of Mind, how deep, how irretrievable and reprobate, *and therefore nigh unto Cursing,* that Depravation of the Capacities and Affections of an intelligent and moral Nature, which will confess neither *the Power* of the Supreme Being in the casting out Devils, the instantaneous Healing of all manner of Sicknes and Disease, Raising the Dead, and all the marvellous Works which accompanied the Preaching of the Gospel ;
nor

nor *the Riches of that Grace and Love* which provided a Sacrifice and Price for our Redemption, the Dignity and Merits of which as highly surpass the combined Value of an Offering of all the Systems of created Beings, as *He that built the House and made all Things, is more honourable than the House, and the Things that are made!*

Thus the losing all Respect for the Christian Religion and then falling into Infidelity is too often the Consequence of Heresy or explaining away the capital Doctrines of the Gospel. *In regard of which Progress of Error* it may be presumed the Sacred Writers St. Peter and St. Jude, in the Passages I have had Occasion to consider, comprize the *denying the Lord* that bought them (in a Sense equivalent, as I apprehend to our Lord's own Sense of *denying Him*, expressed in the Gospels, (*Luke xii. 9. Matth. x. 33.*) when He sent out the Preachers, by the same Verb *απεποιεω*, and opposed to the making Confession in Him) the Sacred Writings, I say, comprize the denying our Lord, as I have observed, under the Denomination of *an Heresy* *, but

* That the Word *ΑΙΡΕΣΕΙΣ* translated *Heresies*, which is now ordinarily considered as distinct from *Deism* and *Apostacy*, and understood in a more confined Sense for a Disavowal of some particular Doctrine or Doctrines of our Faith, and not for a Rejection of the Gospel, is however in the Scriptures, and particularly

with a Term of Exaggeration, calling This a Heresy of Perdition, or which brings on Men *swift* Perdition, or *an immediate and irrevocable Sentence of Condemnation*. Which Remark of the Latitude of the Scriptural Sense of *Heresies*, as comprehending the

ticularly in this Text of St. Peter to be taken in a more extended Sense, (and which seems to be the genuine original Sense of the Word) may, I presume, be ascertained by the following Considerations: St. Peter saith that the Authors of the Heresies against whom He is here cautioning the Catholick Church, do bring upon themselves *swift Destruction or Perdition*. This *swift Perdition*, I apprehend, must be understood of a *swift or immediate irrevocable Sentence or Decree of Perdition*, unless We had the Warrant of Experience for interpreting it of a sudden signal Perdition or Judgment actually executed upon them. Such a *quick or immediate Sentence of Perdition* answers to the Woe denounced against Those, and Those only, who should speak against the Holy Ghost, which would not be revoked either in this World, or in the World to come. But We are taught that this Sin alone, and no other, should expose Men to such an irreversible Condemnation. Therefore *the Heresy of Perdition* here spoken of *as bringing upon Men swift Destruction* must be the same Offence with *That*, which consisted in vilifying the glorious Attestations given by the Holy Ghost to the Divine Mission and Character of Jesus, and thereby discrediting his Gospel, expressed by St. Peter, after our Blessed Lord had completed the great Work of Man's Redemption, by *denying the Lord that bought them*. Hence it is plain, that the Word *Apostasy* in Scripture is used to denote as well a Rejection of the Gospel in general, as a Disavowal of particular Articles of Faith.

But if it be understood of merely disbelieving the Article of the Godhead of Jesus Christ, Heresy in this Point doth virtually amount to, and imply the denying the Christian Religion, as disowning the Authority on which it rests; as, on the contrary, The Confession of this Principle of his Divinity *implies* an Acknowledgment of his whole Doctrine.

several

several Degrees of Defection from the Truth and Word of the Gospel, from Error in any fundamental Point to downright Apostacy, gives Force and Support to the Principle of these Discourses concerning the Alliance or Similarity of Heresy with Infidelity, or of the former having so much of *the Nature*, as to deserve, *so far as it goes, the Name* of Unbelief. Which Position shall lead me back to the Subject of those Heresies which grow into the horrid Sin of Apostacy; after observing that, with regard to the several Particulars in the Description of this sort of Adversaries, *as walking after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleanneſs, despising Government, being presumptuous and self-willed; not afraid to speak evil of the Things that they understand not; counting it pleasure to riot in the Day Time, sporting themselves with their own Deceivings, having Eyes full of Adultery and that cannot cease from Sin, beguiling unstable Souls, and having an Heart exercised with covetuous Practices, having forsaken the right Way** and being gone astray; being like to Wells

* Forsaking *the right Way* is St. Peter's Expression for forsaking *the true Religion* called by Him in Ver. 2d, *the Way of Truth*, which is opposed τὰς ἀπώλειαις ψευδοδιδασκαλῶν, rendered in our Version agreeably to the Sense and Meaning, by *the Way* [or Road] *of Perdition*. There is a Similitude of Sentiment and of Language in Verses 2d and 15th.

without *Water and Clouds* that are carried away with a *Tempest*; speaking great swelling Words of *Vanity*, and alluring through the *Lusts of the Flesh*, through much *Wantonness*, those that were clean escaped from them that live in *Error*; making Men large *Promises of Liberty* and *Freedom* from the *Restraints of Religion*; thus taking Advantage of the evil *Concupiscence* and disorderly Affections of corrupt Nature to make *Merchandize* of them and gain them over to follow their *pernicious Ways*; as to these Particulars, I say, here charged upon these Opposers of our holy Profession, which, according with the Description of them by *St. Jude*, may suffice without a distinct Recital from that Epistle also; every considerate Reader will discern in this Delineation such Marks of an excessive, and, as it should seem, uncontrollable Spirit of *Pride and Independency*, of extreme Disorderliness and Dissoluteness of Mind, and most wanton Sensuality and Licentiousness of Manners, as proves them to be what *St. Peter* affirms, *Servants of Corruption*, Slaves to their own Passions, and implies that Ripeness and full Growth and inveterate Malignity of Sin and Corruption, which is so far from yielding to the Power of Divine Grace, as only to apply

ply itself to the *turning the Doctrine of the Gospel into Lasciviousness*, or, according to St. Paul's Words, *to tread under Foot the Son of God, counting the Blood of the Covenant an unholy or a common Thing, a Thing of no Value or Efficacy.*† And so the Picture here given by the two Apostles* of these Adversaries was, I doubt

† It is also remarkable that St. Peter after the Description of the Character and Practices of the false Teachers and their Followers contained between the 9th and 20th Verses, speaks of their *Destiny* in Terms which much resemble and are of like Import with those of the 4th and 6th Verses of Chap. vi. and 26th and 27th of Chap. x. of the Epistles to the Hebrews. For after a Break made in the Thread of his Argument by that Description, He, in the 20th Verse which should be read in Connection with those Words of the 9th *and to reserve the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment*, saith, *For if after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter End is worse with them than the Beginning.* For it had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them. Here is the Substance of the Declaration concerning the Impossibility of renewing unto Repentance those who should fall away after having been enlightened, and of there remaining nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment to those who should sin wilfully after receiving the Knowledge of the Truth. Which Observation further justifies the Position that the same sort of Persons are meant in each of these Texts, and confirms the Arrangement and Application of them all to the Support of the main Principle and Argument of this and the preceding Discourse.

* For a particular Explanation of which I beg leave to refer the Reader to the continued Commentary on the Epistle of St. Jude, by that solid and pious, elegant and useful Author Witsius, at the End of his *Meletumata Leidenſia*.

not, intended to point out the true Motives and Tempers, or *that Body of Sin* by which they are instigated to oppose our Religion ; or, to keep to St. *Peter's* Expression, *The Way of Truth*, which prescribes the Mortification of such disorderly corrupt Affections, and to *deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ who came to redeem us out of this evil World, and to purify to Himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

I CORINTH.

I CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

Let no Man deceive Himself : If any Man among you Seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may Be Wise.

I Resume now that Part of my Argument which relates to those Heresies which grow into the horrid Sin of Apostacy. Let us reflect wherein the Crime and Danger of these doth consist.

It hath been observed that Heresy is to be understood of a Corruption or Defect of Faith in Fundamentals, or those Points without the Belief of which the Religion of the Gospel cannot subsist, or maintain it's Ground and proper Value. It hath been taken Notice of that the Doctrines of *the Trinity*, of the *Incarnation and Satisfaction of our Lord Jesus*, and of *the Grace of the Holy Spirit* are such Fundamentals in the *Eternal Purpose of God*. Now each of these being of such Importance, that without a sincere and hearty Confession of them

them We cannot ascribe to God the Glory of our Salvation, it is obvious that the high Crime and Danger of Heresy in these Points lies *in a Derogation from the Glory of God as our Redeemer and Sanctifier*; in evacuating and bringing to nothing that mysterious Work of the Eternal Trinity which is God's great Glory, the most illustrious Manifestation of his unspeakable Grace and Mercy to the sinful Race of Mankind; and the most powerful Obligation, Incitement and Support in them that believe, to the Affections of Love, Trust, Devotion, Gratitude, and all that Worship, Service and Obedience which correspond to this marvellous Love and Condescension of the Father, and these important and affecting Relations and Offices of the Son and Spirit. And hence it appears that Heresy is divided from Deism but by a thin Partition, having the same common Nature, Source and Bottom; namely, that *fleshly Wisdom* which rejects the Doctrine of Salvation by the Son of God who came into the World *that He might give us an Understanding that We might know the true God and have Eternal Life*. For as St. John declares of the Infidel, of Him *who believeth not that God hath given to us Eternal Life, and that this Life is in his Son, that such an one hath not Life*; (1 John v. 12.) intimating

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also presently afterwards that *He hath sinned the Sin unto Death, for which He declines to say that a Man shall pray*; so the Heretick who professeth to believe *the Witness which God hath testified of his Son*, and ascribes, or feigns to ascribe the Redemption of the World to Jesus Christ; yet without confessing Him to be *very God, the Brightness of his Father's Glory and express Image of his Person*, doth no less deny to the true God the Glory of Man's Salvation; and so this Heresy approaches to Idolatry, which was the capital Sin under the Jewish Dispensation. This then, the Destruction of all pure and sound Religion, and Exclusion of the most affecting Obligations to the Worship of the only Lord God *in Spirit and in Truth*, by thus refusing to ascribe the Glory of our Salvation to the marvellous Love of God in *sending his only begotten Son and Heir of all Things* to redeem, and his Holy Spirit to guide and to sanctify us, appears to be the Point in which Heresy and Deism conspire and center. And of each respectively St. John saith, *He that hath not the Son hath not Life; and whosoever abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ hath not God: But He that abideth in the Doctrine of Christ, He, and He only, hath both the Father and the Son, the true God and Eternal Life.* (1 Ep. Chap. v.

12, 13, 20. 2 Ep. ver. 9.) Which Considerations should lead us to reflect with awful Fear on the great Danger and manifest Tendency of Heresy to lead Men into Infidelity, and should put all the Disciples of the Gospel upon their guard against every Deviation from *the old Paths of the Catholick Faith once delivered to the Saints*, and engage them, according to our Apostle's Exhortation to the *Hebrews*, immediately subjoined to his Representation of the Divine Character of *the great High Priest of our Profession*, to give *the more earnest heed to the Things they have heard, lest at any Time they should let them slip to the making shipwreck of Faith and good Conscience.* For if, as the Apostle here also argues, with respect, as it should seem, to the Importance again so strongly set forth in the sixth and tenth Chapters, and connected with his Argument of *retaining stedfastly the Confession of our Hope, the Word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every Transgression and Disobedience received a just Recompence, How shall We escape, if We neglect that great Salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord Himself, and hath been confirmed and transmitted to us by them that heard Him, and by their Testimony of God's bearing Witness to this Salvation with Signs and Wonders and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the*
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Holy Ghost ? Wherefore let us, as before all Things is necessary, have a stedfast Faith in the Mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ ; and give the more especial heed to hold fast those capital Articles of our holy Religion which, while they manifest to us, do also warm our Hearts with a Sense of the Grace and Glory of the Eternal Trinity. For if We believe Jesus Christ our High Priest and Mediator to be truly God, very God of very God, as, on the one hand, We shall be impressed with a lively Sense of the Heinousness of Sin which God condemned and punished in the Flesh of his beloved Son, and of the Terror and Certainty of that Judgment and fiery Indignation which awaits those who reject so great Salvation ; so, on the other, We shall be no less convinced of the Sufficiency of the Price which hath been paid for our Redemption, and of the Efficacy of the Intercession of our Advocate with the Father in Virtue of it ; and of the Power of his Spirit to renew, to strengthen and to perfect Us, and of our Obligations to walk worthy of God who hath called us unto his Kingdom and Glory, giving Thanks continually unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, by thus delivering us from

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the Power of Darkness, and translating us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.

Thus while in regard of the ineffable Merit of the Oblation which hath been made for Us, the most confirmed Christian hath Cause with the deepest Humiliation to address the Divine Majesty in that pathetic Form, *Lord, I believe, Help thou mine Unbelief*, Raise and exalt my Faith that it may have some Proportion to it's great Object; even the fearful Heart may be encouraged thankfully to adore the Riches of Divine Mercy, and having Access with Confidence to pour out his Soul in the Transport of the devout Psalmist, *Lord! What is Man that Thou hast such Respect unto Him, and the Son of Man that thou thus visitest Him!*

In a Word, Whosoever are convinced of their own Wretchedness and Unworthiness, of their manifold Defects and Corruptions, if God should enter into Judgment with them, and of their lost Estate and Inability to recover themselves from the Captivity in which they are held; all such Persons will cordially embrace *as the Words of Eternal Life* those important and inestimable Doctrines which are brought to us by the Revelation of Jesus Christ. For Heresy (as well as downright Infidelity from which it hath been shewn to differ, not in it's Source and Origin, but only in

in the Degree of Inveteracy) is ever grounded upon a Spirit of Pride and Self-Sufficiency, and an Affectation of an Independency of the Creature upon the Creator; than which nothing can be conceived more unnatural and monstrous, or be a stronger Indication of the Prevalence of that corrupt fleshly Principle or Spirit of the World, to which every Departure from the Word of Truth, the Gospel of our Salvation, is charged by this Apostle and by our Lord Himself.

Thus We have seen how near an Approach Heresy makes to Deism; that there is a visible and a near Alliance between them; that they are indeed an Offspring from the same Stock, the *Φρονιμα σαρκος* or fleshly Wisdom; Heresy being indeed, so far as it goes, Infidelity, and Deism only a more inveterate Growth of the same Root of Bitterness. And since it is obvious that when a Man is become an Heretick or Unbeliever as to any capital fundamental Article of Revealed Religion, He must be barren and unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, We may easily discern, and need not scruple to pronounce that, as He is already upon the Borders, a single Step will carry Him into that accursed Land which bringeth forth nothing but Thorns and Briers; because

these Points in which Heresy accords with Deism, namely, the Denial of the Divinity of Jesus, and of the Holy Ghost, and by necessary Consequence the Rejection of, or Refusal to ascribe to, the true and only Lord God, the whole Glory of Man's Redemption and Sanctification ; these negative Principles, I say, by which the transcendent Excellency of the Christian Religion is depreciated, do gradually lead Men on (in like manner as the same Defects of Faith did those *Jews* in *St. John's Gospel*, who began with objecting to our Lord's mysterious Divine Character, and at last blasphemed his mighty Works) after thus undermining the fundamental Doctrines, and by Consequence disparaging the Benefits of the Christian Religion, to call in Question first *it's Value*, and then to disclaim *it's Truth and Authority* ; inasmuch as *the Consistency or Congruity* of it's several Parts, and it's *Importance, Value and Benefits* can be justly estimated and honoured no longer than while it is considered as a *Revelation of the Coequality and Glory of an Eternal Trinity mysteriously conducting the Work of our Redemption*, and also as a *Doctrine requiring us in the Power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity*.

It will be proper now to sum up this Part of my Subject, (not without a particular Respect
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to what hath been advanced concerning the Alliance of Heresy and Deism) with an Inference and Exhortation corresponding to That which in the Introduction of these Discourses was observed to be the Scope of *St. Paul* in the Text and Argument with which it is connected ; namely, The Importance of Unity in the Faith, and the Necessity of it unto Salvation ; I mean in essential Points. For though this Unity is rather to be wished than expected, and by Reason of the Corruption of Human Nature there will be Heresies, yet to the Authors of them We may apply our blessed Lord's Denunciation, Woe unto Them by whom these Offences, the Corruptions of Religion, come. The Arguments of Hereticks for Liberty and free Enquiry, like the Pretences made by Deists of a Regard for the Interests of the Gospel, are a mere Cloak for a Design of modelling the Revelation of *Jesus Christ* according to their own Fancies ; and both the Doctrines and Arguments insisted upon by each, when driven up to their true Principles and unmasked, and also the pernicious Effects of such Doctrines and Arguments upon Men of weak and unstable Minds, do warrant us to pronounce the Abettors of them to be False Prophets who come in Sheep's Clothing whilst inwardly they are ravening Wolves.

It

It makes but little Difference, except the mere saving Appearances to Men of superficial Thought, whether the sacred Records of our Religion are immediately traduced, or whether the Principles by which they are distinguished, are disparaged through the Sides of the Church and the Stewards of the Mysteries of God *who teach the wholesome Words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Doctrine which is according to Godliness.* Every Procedure which tends to discredit those Doctrines which are the Pillars of our most holy Religion, and to introduce Scepticism and Uncertainty in these momentous Points, however conducted and cloaked over with the Plea of Free Enquiry or Pretences of an enlarged Benevolence, *is the Suggestion of that carnal Mind which is Enmity against God and our Lord Jesus Christ; and proceedeth from Him who was a Murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in Him.* And all these Arts must be resolved into a *Μεθοδία πλάνης*, (if I may apply again the acute and lively Delineation of our Apostle) a crafty treacherous Design to beguile unstable Minds, and to lay open the Fences of the Vineyard that all they that go by may pluck off the Grapes; i. e. destroy the pure and genuine Principles of Religion and the right Worship of the Deity

ity which are found in the Church. In Opposition to all such Advocates for Freedom and Diversity of Opinion, I would here again ask with St. Paul, *Is Christ divided?* and am warranted by the same inspired Teacher to aver that He and his Fellow Labourers in the Gospel were *ONE*, that is, in perfect Agreement, and that there is but *One* Faith; and therefore He beseeches the Members of the Corinthian Church *by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, into whose Fellowship they had been called, that they would all speak the same Thing, and that there might be no Divisions among them*; for Divisions, this inspired Apostle saith, are a Sign that some of them were not led by the Spirit, but were carnal; and exhorts them that they would *be perfectly joined together in the same Mind and the same Judgment*. An Advice and Instruction This which is supported by that most pathetick and affecting Address in the seventeenth Chapter of St. John's Gospel, where our Lord Himself declares concerning *Those whom his Father had given Him out of the World, that He had given Them the Words which his Father had given Him, and that They had received them*; and in the immediately preceding Words, *that They had known that all Things whatsoever his Father had given Him, were of Him*; and prays
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that they might be One ; which must imply the holding that Faith concerning his Father the true God and Himself in which He affirms that Eternal Life doth consist, in Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, and Sanctification of Life. From all this it is evident that, according to the Teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostle, Unity of Faith, speaking the same Thing without Divisions, or the being perfectly joined together in the same Judgment is attainable ; and the Way and Means by which We shall infallibly attain thereto is the giving up Ourselves to be led by the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation ; for This is One ; and Christians, i. e. all True Believers, are declared to be One ; i. e. to be joined together by, and to have drank into the same Spirit. But here is the Fault and the Condemnation, that All have not the Spirit ; the Fault and Condemnation I say ; even because they will not resign themselves to his holy Guidance ; will not bring into Captivity every Thought, but, according to the Words of my Text, Seem to themselves to be Wise in this World, and will not become Fools that they may Be Wise. For, as a Conceit of the Sufficiency of natural Reason and Knowledge, or of the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, can be productive of nothing but profound Ignorance and infatuated Opposition

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to the Things which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; so if, on the contrary, in conformity to the wholesome Admonition and Example of our Apostle, We are content to *become Fools*, to renounce the Prejudices of that Philosophy and vain Deceit which opposes the Influence of the Spirit of Christ, then We shall *be Wise* indeed ; because then *the Light of Divine Truth will shine into our Hearts*, and the Clouds and Darkness of the carnal Spirit and Understanding being dissipated and purged away, *Wisdom will prevent our Desire by making Herself known unto Us ; She will shew Herself favourably unto Us in the Ways, will meet Us in every Thought, and give Us a right Judgment in all Things.*

To Which now of these two Predicaments must We refer Pretences that “ the *free*
 “ Exercise of *our own* Reason and Judgement
 “ concerning religious Faith and Doctrine is
 “ a Right and Privilege holden of God only,
 “ and subject to his Authority alone ? which
 “ is not to be under Restraint by a Requisition of Assent to *any* Articles and Confessions of Faith and Doctrine drawn up by
 “ fallible Men, and on this account called
 “ human Doctrines and human Explications ; and that such Requisition deserves

“ to be considered as an Encroachment on
 “ an undoubted Right competent to Us as
 “ Men, and as Members of a Protestant
 “ Establishment, and an Hindrance to the
 “ Spreading of Christ’s true Religion?” * Do
 not these Principles, which, as we shall see,
 exalt human Reason and Judgement above
 it’s own Sphere and Province, and in effect
 constitute That which as it subsists in different
 Men can be reduced to no Standard, the
 Arbiter of religious Truth and Doctrine, ex-
 pose their own Futility and Incongruity, and
 carry with them their own Confutation, as
 well as an evident Disregard and Irreverence
 to the Authority and Revelation of our Lord
 Jesus Christ and the *one* Sense of his Word
 and Doctrine? For since *all* Declarations of
 the Faith and Doctrine taught in Holy Scrip-
 ture are here considered and objected to as
merely human Explications of the Scriptures,
 (the Fallacy and Oversight in which Deno-
 mination, or the equivocal Use and Applica-
 tion of it, and of another Term closely con-
 nected with it, shall hereafter be distinctly
 noted) and the free Exercise of *our own*, i. e.
 of *this human* Reason and Judgement, which
is indeed, and is averred to be a fallible Guide
in religious Enquiries, is nevertheless claimed

* See Petition to Parliament against Subscription to Articles of Religion.

as “ a Privilege competent to Us as Men and as Members of a Protestant Establishment,” and insisted upon as “ a Right or Privilege holden of God only, and subject to his Authority alone ;” and is also asserted with a Jealousy which appears plainly enough to construe the mere Exercise of the Judgment of other Men (that is, of *the Church or Believers*) in *framing and proposing Articles of Faith and Doctrine* as a “ *Requisition of Assent* (which it may suffice, without Repetition, to have remarked in this Place) and *an Encroachment and Restraint on a confessedly common Privilege*.” Will these Principles consist either with themselves, or with *That* of the “ Sufficiency of Holy Scripture alone ?” or doth “ a general Profession of *the Authority and Sufficiency of Holy Scripture itself*, or of *the Belief of the Christian Religion as it is contained in the Scriptures*,” whilst it is evidently intended merely to serve as a Pretence for objecting to “ *any Explanations, any Declaration*” of the Sense of holy Scripture, and especially *by superseding it’s Use and Purpose, to obviate the Proposal of “ any Formulary of religious Faith and Doctrine whatsoever” by Believers* ; doth this Profession, I say, cover the Inattention, if it may not rather be deemed Disaffection, which these Claims and Objections carry in

them to the Authority and Revelation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the Teaching of his Spirit? to which the Exercise of our own Reason and Judgement, instead of being free and unrestrained, ought in all religious Matters ever to be immediately subject and conformable; inasmuch as *God* hath exalted Him to be *a Prince and Ruler and Legislator* over all Things in his Kingdom the Church, and He hath promised to *abide with his Church for ever by his Spirit, to dwell with them, and be in them*, as We read in St. *John's Gospel* (ch. xiv. 17.) If just Notions of Religion are of the last Importance; If it is impossible that We should be religious in our Lives, and render to God a Service worthy of Him and pleasing to Him, unless We are rightly informed in the Nature and Meaning of the Dispensation under which *God* hath put us; and if by the Dispensation of our Lord *Jesus Christ* *God* hath destroyed the Wisdom of the Wise, and confounded the Understanding of the Prudent, and We have been brought out of Darkness and Error into the clear Light and true Knowledge of God, *not by the Wisdom of this World*, but by a *Doctrine which the Princes, or Men of the highest Attainments, in worldly Wisdom, accounted Foolishness*; It should seem that “the free Exercise of Reason

Reason or private (i. e. a Man's *own*) Judgement concerning revealed Doctrines" is so far from being a "natural or undoubted Right competent to us both as Men and as Members of a Protestant Establishment," that Whosoever would assert the "Protestant Privilege of rejecting human Authority, and search what may or may not be proved by Holy Scripture, and remove every Hindrance to the Spreading of Christ's true Religion," must consider the casting down the Imaginations of the Natural Man, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to be ordered and governed by the Spirit of Revelation, as the first Step toward the Attainment of these Purposes; and regard *the Claim of the free and unrestrained Exercise of each Man's OWN Reason and Judgement in Religion*, (which may be considered as implying that the moral Doctrines of Scripture, which are the proper Objects of Human Intellect, are also the whole of Christ's true Religion) as incompatible with *the Supremacy of Christ over his Church*, as an *Encroachment on his Prerogative*, and as a *Rejection of that Unction from the Holy One*, as St. John speaks of the Teaching of the Spirit of Christ, which is to *guide us into the Truth*, and *make known to us the good and acceptable and perfect Will of God*.

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It is to the Neglect of disciplining our Thoughts into a Subjection to the Scriptures, or, in other Words, it is to the free Exercise of *mere human Reason* or *private Judgement* (which *laying aside the Commandments of God teacheth for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*) to which as being “pregnant with Danger to true and scriptural Religion,” those original Principles of our Reformation and Protestant Establishment were opposed, which are now wrested to maintain a pretended natural Right of thinking for Ourselves without being under any Restraint from the Principles of the Gospel; It is to the free Exercise of this “invaluable Privilege of private Judgment,” which is only another Term artfully applied to cover that Licentiousness of Thinking which will not be circumscribed by the Oracles of Revelation, that every Departure from *the Truth in Jesus* is to be ascribed; that every Heresy and also every Instance of Deism and Apostacy owes it's Birth and Growth. For even *as the Word of God which is by the Gospel preached unto Us, is that incorruptible Seed by which We are recovered from our vain Conversation, and shall be made perfect by Obedience to the Truth through the Spirit; so the Word of Man's Wisdom or of private Judgment is that Seed which in the Children*
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of Disobedience springeth and groweth up a Man knoweth not how, and the Embryo of that future Son of Perdition that opposeth and exalteth himself against the Teaching of the Holy Spirit, and all that is called God or that is worshipped.

St. Peter therefore, immediately before He cautions the Catholick Church in the Passage which I have endeavoured to explain, against *false Teachers that would privily bring in damnable Heresies even to the denying the Lord that bought them, so bringing on themselves swift Destruction*, admonishes the Brethren to consider that *no Prophecy, that is Revelation or Doctrine, of the Scripture is of, or is submitted to, any private Interpretation, or the Construction of a merely human Judgement; neither came it at any Time, (πολε) by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*: Where he contradistinguishes Prophecy or divine Revelation and Doctrines from Ideas and Notions of human Reason; and charging them to take heed unto this sure *Word of Prophecy as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place*, until the Light of the Gospel should dispel the Clouds and Darkness of the human Spirit, expressed by *the Day-dawning and the Day-Star arising in their Hearts*, instructs them that the Doctrines of
Revelation

Revelation could be apprehended only by the Help and Illumination of the Spirit that imparted them, and by *comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual*, one Passage of Scripture with another; which amounts to denying that Right and restraining that *free* Exercise of human Reason in passing Sentence on Matters and Doctrines of divine Revelation, which is so stiffly asserted among Us under the Name and Plea of private Judgement, and condemning Those who pretend to such a Privilege as *stretching themselves beyond their Measure*, or applying the rational Faculty to Objects which transcend it's Powers, and are exempted from the Censure of human Intellect.

Private Judgement or Interpretation therefore being in the Sense of St. Peter, and, as will hereafter sufficiently appear, in common Acceptation also, the same with *human* Judgement or Interpretation, or *the Opinion of mere human Reason*; and that Judgement or Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures which is grounded upon a serious attentive and just Comparison of the several Parts of them, and authorized thereby, being *opposed* to *private* or *human* Judgement, Interpretation or Opinion, as being in equitable Construction *the Sense of the Spirit* which dictated the Scriptures; according to the Teaching
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of St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul* also in the Passage I have had Occasion to repeat from the Beginning of his first Epistle to the *Corinthians* concerning *the Spirit only revealing the Things of God, and the Inability of the natural Man to discern and to receive these Things*; it appears that, instead of the *free Exercise of Reason and private Judgement*, that Exercise of it only is *regular and conducive to the Understanding of the holy Scriptures* which is *humble, cautious and circumspect*, and *bound down by the Principles of the Gospel, or the Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; or, which is only repeating the same Sentiment, That Exercise of our Faculties in studying the Scriptures alone *is free* which is *disengaged from and unbiaſſed by preconceived Opinions and the Wisdom of this World, which St. Paul affirms knoweth not God*, but *resisteth and opposeth itself to the Light and Teaching of the Spirit*. Thus the Admonitions of Those who were first put in Trust with the Gospel and received it not of Man, are utterly at variance with the Principles of our Asserters of *a Right of private Judgement* or the *free Exercise of our own Reason*, concerning *the Doctrines of Revelation*; as an Assertion in general Terms, without Restriction or Reserve in regard to any of the Doctrines of holy Writ, obliges us to under-

stand the Meaning and Extent of this Claim. *They are directly opposite and contradictory to each other.* For though Reason, when it follows and is led and guided by the Principles and the Sense of Scripture, will carry us on, or, to speak with Precision and Propriety, will *be carried on* in the Knowledge of the divine Will, and in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding, yet, if it applies it's own preconceived Opinions to the Interpretation of the Word of God, (which is the proper, reasonable and just Acceptation of the *free Exercise of Reason and of private Judgement*, and the Privilege contended for by the Advocates of this Claim) it will on the contrary then rather obstruct than further our religious Improvement. Agreeably to which Sentiment St. Paul observes that at the first Preaching of the Gospel *not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble were called*, i. e. converted; and setting at nought the Talents and Accomplishments of the natural Man, as altogether incompetent to attain *the deep Things of Revelation*, asks, *Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World?* thus virtually affirming that God had *made foolish the Wisdom of this World*, as his Words are; and in my Text, in a Form of Speech which carries in it
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great Spirit in the Sentiment, and no less Energy in the Expression, avers that they who relied on the Force of natural Wit and Parts to make them Proficients in the Gospel, *deceived themselves*, and that in order to *Be Wise* in the Doctrines of the Cross, they must *become Fools*, or discard the Prepossessions which they had imbibed from the Lessons of Philosophy; thus teaching us that *the Wisdom of the natural Man* is of quite another Kind, is specifically different from that *hidden Wisdom which God ordained before the World to our Glory*; that these are not homogeneous. This latter therefore cannot be an Object of Reason and Science to any of *the Princes*, that is Philosophers or Men of the greatest natural Parts; but is to be submitted to, and, if I may so speak, to be *imbibed and embraced*, so far as We are capable of *attaining to some Perception* of the deep Things of God, *by a Reliance on divine Testimony, by humbling our own Imaginations, and giving up ourselves to be taught of God*; or, as St. Peter speaks, *desiring the sincere Milk of his Word that We may grow thereby*, and imploring the Spirit who dictated the sacred Oracles to preserve us from the Delusions of carnal Judgement; and to *open and enlighten our Understanding that We may understand the Scriptures*, instead of *walking in*

the Light of our own Fire and in the Sparks which We have kindled, or confiding in the free Exercise of human Reason.

Now if these Principles and this Reasoning is warranted by the Word of God, Where is the Piety and Affection to the Christian Religion, or the moral Sincerity and Consistency of an Attempt to disparage and to set aside Articles and Confessions which assert those Doctrines that distinguish our Profession from every other Form of Religion? and which under Cover of an outward Acknowledgment of the Authority and Sufficiency of holy Scripture, and a Pretence of Concern for the Spreading of Christ's true Religion, *means to imply and to insinuate*, or in fair and just Construction must be considered as *blindly implying and insinuating*, that the Inspiration of God (if indeed the Scripture is believed to be given by Inspiration of God) is rendered unprofitable through the Fallibility or Incompetency of Human Reason and Judgement; "the free Exercise of which is" nevertheless, for the Purpose of overturning Revealed Doctrines, insisted upon as "a natural Right and invaluable Privilege competent to Us as Men, and as Members of a Christian Church;" while the acknowledged Authority and Sufficiency of holy Scripture, instead of *curbing* this free

free Exercise of carnal Judgement, appears to be applied only *to cover and conceal from our Notice* the Pestilence which thus worketh in Darkness. And what can We think of the Zeal, and Devotion, and Modesty, and Consistency of Those who, while they thus trim and prevaricate and aim at subverting a Church which requires *nothing to be believed as of Necessity to Salvation but what may be proved by Holy Scripture*; instead of admitting any Confession of Religion for the maintaining the Doctrine of the Scriptures, would leave *the one Sense* of the Word of God to be modelled by the Opinion of each Individual? and of the Understanding or Modesty of those Factors also for the same Cause who, having been accustomed to extoll whatsoever disparages the Revelation and Excellency of the Covenant of God in *Christ Jesus*, and to dignify it with the specious and soothing Appellation, or, to speak in Terms more apostolick, with *the great swelling Words of Liberty of Sentiment*, have not feared to pronounce of this Medley of Inconsistencies, this Essay of Despightfulness toward the Religion and Church of Christ, that it is “drawn up with Modesty and Judgement?” hereby *serving*, it is certain, *not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies*. Doth not such a Versatility and Incongruity of Sentiment, and
such

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the Light of our own Fire and in the Sparks which We have kindled, or confiding in the free Exercise of human Reason.

Now if these Principles and this Reasoning is warranted by the Word of God, Where is the Piety and Affection to the Christian Religion, or the moral Sincerity and Consistency of an Attempt to disparage and to set aside Articles and Confessions which assert those Doctrines that distinguish our Profession from every other Form of Religion? and which under Cover of an outward Acknowledgment of the Authority and Sufficiency of holy Scripture, and a Pretence of Concern for the Spreading of Christ's true Religion, *means to imply and to insinuate*, or in fair and just Construction must be considered as *blindly implying and insinuating*, that the Inspiration of God (if indeed the Scripture is believed to be given by Inspiration of God) is rendered unprofitable through the Fallibility or Incompetency of Human Reason and Judgement; "the free Exercise of which is" nevertheless, for the Purpose of overturning Revealed Doctrines, insisted upon as "a natural Right and invaluable Privilege competent to Us as Men, and as Members of a Christian Church;" while the acknowledged Authority and Sufficiency of holy Scripture, instead of *curbing* this free

free Exercise of carnal Judgement, appears to be applied only *to cover and conceal from our Notice* the Pestilence which thus worketh in Darkness. And what can We think of the Zeal, and Devotion, and Modesty, and Consistency of Those who, while they thus trim and prevaricate and aim at subverting a Church which requires *nothing to be believed as of Necessity to Salvation but what may be proved by Holy Scripture*; instead of admitting any Confession of Religion for the maintaining the Doctrine of the Scriptures, would leave *the one Sense* of the Word of God to be modelled by the Opinion of each Individual? and of the Understanding or Modesty of those Factors also for the same Cause who, having been accustomed to extoll whatsoever disparages the Revelation and Excellency of the Covenant of God in *Christ Jesus*, and to dignify it with the specious and soothing Appellation, or, to speak in Terms more apostolick, with *the great swelling Words of Liberty of Sentiment*, have not feared to pronounce of this Medley of Inconsistencies, this Essay of Despightfulness toward the Religion and Church of Christ, that it is “drawn up with Modesty and Judgement?” hereby *-serving*, it is certain, *not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies*. Doth not such a Versatility and Incongruity of Sentiment, and
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such Boldness of Speech too plainly discover, yea, in effect avow, that Disaffection and Enmity to the Religion of *Christ* which it labours to disguise? and exemplify our Apostle's Observation that Men, after *having severed from the Faith, turn aside unto vain Jangling, desiring to be Teachers of the Law in Opposition or Disparagement to the Covenant of Grace? understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*; unless We may suspect that by such irregular *Deublings* breaking and distracting the Argument, That which seems to carry in it and to aim at Something, was yet designed to be perplexed and confounded; that so by keeping out of sight it's real Drift it might *unawares beguile unstable Souls*? though not without giving it too much the Complexion and Resemblance of that Species of Writing, whose peculiar Advantage it is to be *altogether* incapable of being either answered or contradicted. How widely different is a Jargon of Words from sound and solid and consistent Principles which will maintain their Strength and Ground by their own Plainness and Simplicity? and, leaving no room for Inconsistencies and Cavilling, disdain to borrow Help or Disguise from equivocal, ambiguous and delusive Expression.

And

And may I not, under the Safeguard of the Principles of the Word of God, ask also, Where is the Solidity of those Harangues, and what is the Credit derived to the Appeal of the Adversaries of our religious Establishment by the Harangues which have lately arraigned the Articles of our Church, grounded as they are *upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and having Jesus Christ Himself for the Chief Corner Stone*, as Usurpations on a Right of private Judgment which, it is pretended, “no Man
 “can give up without offending God and his
 “Conscience, and incurring the Guilt of
 “Prevarication and Hypocrisy,” (a Guilt more justly chargeable on the Inconsistencies which have been detected in the late Application) “and as having been framed when
 “liberal and enlarged Notions were yet in
 “their Infancy; and because they do not
 “breathe that Air of Freedom, that *liberal*
 “Spirit which they might have acquired” (and praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that they have not acquired) “had they been examined and discussed in the great Council of the Wise
 “and Noble and Great” according to the Flesh, the Politicians and Disputers of this World. For then indeed, instead of offending human Reason and *common Sense*, (that
 is,

is; the Prejudice of the natural Man who, being destitute of the Principles of Revelation, is unable to *compare Spiritual Things with Spiritual*, and so doth only labour to degrade Revealed Things to a Standard formed by the Spirit of the World, and therefore rejects the Treasure of Divine Wisdom, *preserved* as St. Paul speaks, *in Earthen Vessels*, because He *cannot discern the Truths taught by the Holy Ghost*) our Ecclesiastical Polity, that Building now fitly framed together and growing unto an holy Temple in the Lord, the Bulwark of the Reformation and of Protestantism, might, to apply the Language of the Prophet *Isaiah*, have been *stretched out by the Line of Confusion and Stones of Emptiness*. It is therefore no Disparagement, yea, it is rather the Advantage and Commendation of the Articles of our Church; that they were drawn up in Ages in general less informed and learned than our own; unless it can be shewn that the present Age is distinguished above those Times by a more serious and reverent Attention to, and Study of the Word of God, and particularly that Those who appeal against them, and Those to whom the Appeal is addressed, do surpass in Wisdom and Piety, and are *more fervent in Spirit, and more mighty in the Scriptures* than Those who formed these Articles and

Confessions

Confessions of Faith. For *the Word of Christ was not bound*, nor did his Spirit need the Assistance of these more informed Times to lead our pious Forefathers into the understanding of the Truth; nor leave the Rule of Faith so obscure and precarious that it could not be ascertained by those who should *seek the Truth in the Love of it*, and with an humble and reverent Affiance in his Promises and the Teaching and Guidance of his Spirit. *The Upright God hath promised to guide in Judgment, and those that are gentle, then will He teach his Way; and the Secret of the Lord We are taught is with them that fear Him, and to such He will shew his Covenant.* So that the Doctrine and Sense of holy Scripture being one and consistent, and an heedful Attention to, and Comparison of the several Parts of it being the only right Method of studying it, and which will not fail under the Divine Blessing to render it plain to every ingenuous and humble Enquirer, and lead Him into a true and certain Understanding of it, especially in essential and fundamental Points, notwithstanding the Variety of Interpretations that have been suggested by private Judgement; the contrary and too common Practice of reading the Word of God under the Biass of pre-conceived Opinions, and by what is called the

free Exercise of Reason .wresting it to the Support of such Opinions, will also (notwithstanding the several Pleas by which Men full of their own, that is, of *a merely human* Spirit, or in the Language of Scripture, *vainly puffed up by the fleshy Mind*, attempt to palliate Error,) bring *them* under St. Peter's Censure of expounding the Sacred Oracles *καὶ οὐκ ἔχοντες λόγους*, with Words and Sentiments of their own inventing, or of *human* Intellect; and thus convicting them of Prevarication and Insincerity in handling the Word of God, leave Heresy more without Excuse than they are disposed to believe. Thus Heresy and Error, I conceive, ought not to be imputed to a Weakness or Defect of the rational Faculty whereby Men are ordinarily incapable of *apprehending* the Principles of Revelation, on the Acknowledgment of which our Interest in the Benefits of God's Covenant depends, and *discerning their Consistency, Weight and Importance*, but are resolvable into *the Influence and Effect* of inordinate Passions and Cares, which choak the Word, debase and blind the Understanding, and interrupt or destroy it's Regard and Attention to *the Law and the Testimony, the Message which God hath sent Us by his Son*. Men do not consider the Scriptures with that Humility, Assiduity and reverent Application of Mind

Mind which their Authority and Consequence, as the Message of God, demands: do not compare Scripture with Scripture, and examine and try the Conformity or Consistency of the Opinions they imbibe, with the capital leading Truths of Revelation; and so being *not stablished in the Form of sound Words*, fall into a Confusion of Thought and into Scepticism; imagining that the Sense of Scripture cannot be attained, because it is not attained by those who are destitute of the true Principles of the Word of God; whereby *The Wise and Humble who have had their Understanding enlightened, are filled with the Knowledge of the Divine Will, while the Wicked and those who are yet in the Flesh understand not.*

Here then, I say, is the Bane which infects many Readers of the Book of God, that, instead of searching what is contained in it, and imbibing with Reverence and godly Fear the Principles it inculcates, and correcting the Reflections of Reason by these Principles as the Rule and infallible Criterion of Truth, the sacred Oracles are distorted from the genuine Meaning to a Sense that shall be subservient to their Prejudices. For the Maxims of Free-Thinkers and Asserters of the Right of private Judgement are thus truly exhibited: *Id nullo modo verum*

esse potest cui Ratio prorsus communisque Sensus repugnat ; adeo ut si id Scriptura asserat, non tamen credendum sit, quod Ratio contra militat. Exactly in the Spirit of which it hath (if We have been rightly informed) been asserted in that Council where the Articles of the Church might have “ acquired an Air of “ Freedom and a liberal Spirit,” that “ hu- “ man Reason and common Sense, by which “ alone We can judge of Revelation itself, “ (i. e. of the Doctrines of Revelation) re- “ volt against them ;” which is indeed only the same Impeachment of *them* that St. Paul tells us was brought *against the Doctrine of the Apostles* when He saith, *It was to the Greeks Foolishness* : And on such Views of Things *Divine and Supernatural* as human Reason and common Sense, that is, Reason without any Divine Assistance, is vainly sup- posed capable of, several of these Articles are pronounced to be “ absolutely unintelligible, “ and even contradictory and absurd ;” a Charge from which the Censure of “ *abso- “ lutely unintelligible*” should have saved them harmless. But the following liberal Profes- sion, applicable to any revealed supernatural Doctrine, most justly speaks the Genius and Procedure of all Free-Thinkers and stiff As- sertors of a Right of private Judgement con- cerning religious Faith and Doctrine, to
whatsoever

whatsoever Class or Denomination they belong. *Credimus etiam si non SEMEL atque ITERUM, sed SATIS CREBRO et DISERTISSIME scriptum exstaret, Deum esse Hominem factum, multo satius esse, quia hæc Res sit ABSURDA et SANÆ RATIONI PLANE CONTRARIA, et in Deum blasphema, MODUM ALIQUEM DICENDI COMMISCI, quo ista de Deo dici possint, quam ista simpliciter ita ut Verba sonant intelligere.* What is This but bringing Scripture to the Trial of Reason, instead of correcting human Notions about Divine Things by the Standard of God's Word? To such We may well apply our Lord's Censure on the Scribes and Pharisees, of whose Hypocrisy Esaias well prophesied, saying, *This People honoureth Me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from Me; In vain do Ye Worship Him, laying aside the Commandment of God, and holding the Traditions and Doctrines of Men.* May We not now be permitted to oppose to this *Licentiousness of Reason*, the following Just and Wise Vindication of *the Authority and Preeminence of the Word of God*? *Si de Rebus agatur obscuris*, (such are the chief Doctrines of Revelation to our Faculties, to which I would be understood to have respect in opposing the Pretensions of private, i. e. mere human Judgement) *non est in id adhibenda RATIO quasi*

quasi SCRIPTURÆ aliquid affirmanti aut neganti OPPONI possit, sed tantum ad declarandum an quidpiam Scriptura contineat. SI CONTINERE CONSTET, QUIDQUID TANDEM RATIO CONTRA DICAT, FALLI EAM NECESSE EST. With which corresponds the Determination of a Person, if any, confessedly of too enlarged Views and superior Intellects to be disparaged by the narrow contracted Spirit of Libertinism. *Prærogativa Dei TOTUM Hominem complectitur; nec minus ad RATIONEM quam ad VOLUNTATEM humanam extenditur; ut Homo scilicet in universum Se abneget, et accedat Deo. Quare sicut Legi Divinæ obedire tenemur, licet reluctetur VOLUNTAS, ita et Verbo Dei Fidem habere, licet reluctetur RATIO.**

But the further Application of these Arguments, and combating the Plea of private Judgement, with a Comparison also of the Ancient and Modern Opponents of the Church of God, and some other Particulars which I proposed to speak to, shall be the Business of another Discourse.

* Lord Bacon *de Augment. Scient. Lib. IX.*

I CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

Let no Man deceive Himself: If any Man among you Seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may Be Wise.

HAVING contrasted the Principles and Sentiments which Men bring to the interpreting the Revelation of the Gospel, according as they are *obedient Children* or *disaffected* toward God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Argument shall now be illustrated, and the Wisdom and Duty of a reverent and heedful Attention and Submission to the Word of God be recommended and confirmed by taking Notice of the Behaviour of the Father of the Faithful under a Command in all human Views not less irreconcilable with the Divine Promises, than shocking to natural Reason and the most affecting Ties and Obligations; an Example the Wisdom and Piety of which, though it should be set at nought by Those who *seeing will not perceive, and bearing*

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ing will not understand lest they should be converted, will ever be accounted worthy of Praise and Imitation by the Sons of Abraham, who have had the Eyes of their Understanding enlightened by the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.

God commanded this Patriarch *to take and offer up for a Burnt Offering his Son, his only Son Isaac whom He loved, in whom God had promised to establish his Covenant with Him for an everlasting Covenant, and with his Seed after Him ; (Genesis xvii. ver. 4—9, 19, 21.)* and in whom alone, according to the Tenor of the Divine Promise, and in all human Views his Seed could become *as the Stars of Heaven (Genesis xv. 5.)* and grow into a mighty Nation, so that all the Families of the Earth might be blessed in Him. *(Genesis xii. 2, 3. and xviii. 18.)*

In the Submission to a Command which carried in it such an apparent Repugnancy at once to the Divine Promises, to the clearest Dictates of Reason, and the strongest Affections of Humanity, there were such Difficulties, such virtuous Reluctances to be surmounted, that carnal Intellect would, (according to the Rule of understanding God's Word insisted upon in that liberal Profession which hath been repeated as descriptive of the Temper and Conduct of the natural Man)

Man) have explained away the Command, and bent it to it's own Notions and Principles, instead of reverencing it's Authority. Not so did *Abraham*; but being assured that the Sacrifice of *Isaac* was the Command of God, and probably observing from the Form of it, *Thy Son, thine only Son whom thou lovest*, that He was not permitted to oppose to it any Plea of natural Reason or Reluctancy of parental Affection, We hear of no such Objections. He was staggered by no Difficulties, but being *fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform*; and Reason itself (which had it not been subdued to the Obedience of Faith, and so carried as it were beyond it's own Sphere, would have *opposed itself*, like our *free-thinking Reason or private Judgement*, to either *the Authority or the Meaning* of the Command, or *have called in question the Truth* of the Promises) his Reason, I say, being convinced of the Authority of the one, and contemplating the supernatural Means by which the other might nevertheless be fulfilled, namely, *the Power of God to raise up Isaac even from the Dead; He rose up early in the Morning*, and, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks, (giving due Praise to the *Virtue* of the Worthies most distinguished

in the Church of God) *By Faith offered up* Isaac.

Here now is an Example of the most cautious Attention and implicit Submission to the Word of God under Circumstances of the most trying Perplexity, which comes recommended to us by *the Wisdom and Piety*, and *the Blessedness* of the great Representative of the Children of God; to whom as *it was imputed for Righteousness and Performance of the Divine Will*, so shall the like reverent Attention and Submission be imputed to Us, if in searching the Sacred Oracles We *handle them not deceitfully, but, walking in the Steps of this Faith of our Father Abraham*, receive with an entire and unreserved Confidence whatsoever is therein declared to Us.

I might take Notice that *Moses* who hath recorded this eminent Expression of Faith and Devotion to God for our Admonition and Example, hath also left us in his own Conduct more than one Instance of like precious Affiance in the Divine Truth and Power. But waving any Enlargement here upon these Instances, I refer to the Illustration and Reflections on some remarkable Passages in *a Discourse upon his Petition to be blotted out of the Book of God*. And to these several Examples of Faith in the Divine Word, and also to whatsoever Degrees of Confidence in
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the same Testimony We ourselves shall attain in meditating on the Holy Scriptures, let us apply (and thereby *perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle our Hearts in Devotion and Obedience to God, and the patient Waiting for Jesus*) a Reflection of that great Author, superior (as hath been said) to all Disparagement, whose Judgement hath been before opposed to the Conceptions of Men of little and corrupt Minds, vaunting themselves in *a Wisdom the very contrary to That which descendeth from above; Quanto Mysterium aliquod divinum fuerit magis absonum et incredibile, tanto plus in credendo exhibetur Honoris Dei, et fit Victoria Fidei nobilior.**

Wherefore let us not be Followers of Them who with Sleight and cunning Craftiness labour to corrupt and deprave the Word of God by carnal Prejudices, and to disparage and reduce it, as far as in them lies, to a dead Letter, by *condemning ALL Confessions whatsoever* of Faith and Doctrine, *ALL* Declarations of the Sense of Scripture, as merely human Doctrines, while yet they *contend for* a Right or Privilege of private Judgement, which, *as it respects Doctrines revealed from Heaven*, can be only a newly applied specious equivocal Term for the Exercise of hu-

* Lord Bacon in the Passage before quoted.

man Reason *without*, and too often *against* the Teaching of the Scriptures, concerning Matters *which cannot be learnt but from the Scriptures*. If the great Objects of Divine Revelation, as transcending the Capacities of the natural Man, must necessarily require the Submission of human Judgement, and can be *apprehended* only by the Illumination of the Spirit of God, how can the free or unrestrained Exercise of our Reason with respect to such Matters be either a “Right” competent to us as Men, or a Privilege of “Protestants?” For is not *the Illumination of the Spirit the GIFT of God to the Disciples of his Son*, instead of a *Right competent to Us as Men?* and if the Sense of Scripture is the Scripture; if We are exhorted *from the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ to go forward unto Perfection*; if God hath provided *Pastors and Teachers on purpose to preserve his Church from being tossed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine by the Wiles of Them that lie in wait to deceive, and in order to the perfecting of the Saints, and the continual Edification of the Body of Christ*, that is, for rendering religious Faith and Knowledge more distinct and consummate; and if it was the Practice of our Lord Jesus and his Apostles to reason with their Hearers out of the Scriptures;

Scriptures ; * Doth not the Rejection of “ *any* “ Explications of Scripture, *any* Formulary “ of Religious Faith and Doctrine *whatsoever* “ besides Holy Scripture” (i. e, the Words of Holy Scripture) “ itself”, lest it should misrepresent the Scripture, (yet not without asserting at the same Time “ a Privilege of “ freely exercising human Reason” in Opposition to the Confessions of *Believers*,) whilst it contradicts these Purposes, instead of appearing to be “ the undoubted Right “ of Protestants”, rather resemble the so much “ abhorred unchristian Spirit and “ Maxims of Popery”, which, under the same Pretence of the Danger of expounding Scripture, doth, by shutting up and concealing the Word of God in an unknown Tongue, and *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, obstruct religious Edification, and “ undermine religious Liberty”? yea, and doth not the objecting to all Arguments and Proofs of Doctrines (as the Church of *Rome* likewise doth in several Points) but such as are alledged in the very Language and Words of Scripture, while the free Exercise of Reason, I say, is at the same Time insisted upon for the contrary Purpose of opposing the Confession of Believers, most inconsistently preclude *all*

* See Bishop *Smalridge*'s Sermon on Acts xvii. 2.

Use of human Understanding in Matters of Religion, as if Men were, under proper Restrictions, incapable of a just, regular, and faithful Application of it's Powers? Do not Principles so much involved in Confusion and Perplexedness, or at least Incongruity, as These which disallow *all* Explications of the Scriptures, and would confine *Us* strictly to the very Language of Holy Writ, and yet assert to those who differ from us about the Sense of the Scriptures, a Right of private Judgement or Interpretation, while they reciprocally clash and interfere with each other, prove the Abettors of them (unless they will confess that they understood not themselves and what they were about) to be *false Apostles, deceitful Workers? who do but transform themselves into Apostles of Christ*, when they *say that they are Christians, and are not, but are of the Synagogue of Satan*: Men who, instead of being consistent and true to their Profession of rejecting *all human fallible* Explications, and following and being led by *the one Sense* of Scripture, mean to assert *each his own particular Sense or Opinion*, which, being the Interpretation of carnal Judgement, is *merely human and equally fallible with That* of other Men, and to exclude or reject the Judgement or Interpretation of *Believers* only: For the Meaning and Drift of a late Address “ *in contending for the free*
“ *Exercise*

“ *Exercise of Reason and objecting to the Pro-*
 “ *posal of any Articles of Faith and Doc-*
 “ *trine,*” when unravelled, appears to be
 plainly This, namely, that *other Men may,*
 but that *Believers may not* declare the Sense
 of Scripture; which is in effect to set a-
 side Revealed Doctrines which are the Ob-
 ject of Faith only, and the Essence of the
 Gospel. May not such Reformers be too
 justly compared and associated with *those*
false Teachers by Reason of whom St. Peter
said, the Way of Truth would be evil spoken
of? and whom St. Jude, agreeably to St.
Peter's Account of them, describes as hav-
ing gone in the Way of Cain, i. e. given
themselves up to the Guidance of natural
Reason or private Judgement without regard
to Divine Revelation; and who running
greedily after the Error or Deviation of Ba-
laam for Reward, have had the Persons of
Men in Admiration, i. e. have paid undue
Homage to their outward Quality in the
World and Distinction according to the Flesh,
with an abject and servile Submission con-
forming their Opinions and Conduct to the
licentious Principles and Humours of the
Times and of the Great and Powerful; and
by a Gaynsaying or Opposition proceeding
from a like Spirit with That of Korah ren-
dered themselves also obnoxious to Perdition;
while without Fear they set themselves up for
Pastors,

Pastors, as ἀποβας εαυτες ποικαινοτες I incline to think might justly, as well as pertinently, be rendered. Thus with regard to the two hundred and fifty Assailants on our Church who, by objecting to a Requisition of Assent to “ANY DECLARATION WHATSOEVER OF RELIGIOUS FAITH AND DOCTRINE,” and preposterously insisting on “a Right of interpreting *the Truth as it is in Jesus*,” that is, the Revelation of *the hidden Wisdom of God in Him*, “by the free Exercise of their own,” i. e. of *human finite fallible* “Reason” vainly cloaked over with the delusive equivocal Denomination of “*private Judgement* ;” and without any Notice, as is remarkable, or Recognition of *the Authority and Headship of Christ over the Church*, claiming this as a “natural Right holden of God only, and subject to his Authority alone ;” (thus in effect *superseding the Truth as it is in Jesus* by the Assertion and Exercise of an imaginary “Right or Power competent to Us as Men” of interpreting *the Mystery of the Gospel* by the free Conceptions and Notions of human Reason, or implying, as hath been remarked, that the moral Doctrines of the Scriptures which are the proper Objects of human Intellect are also the whole of Christ’s true Religion;) and then (whether consistently with the Safety of their “capital Principle

Principle of the *free Exercise* of our own, i. e. of human Reason and Judgement concerning Religious Faith and Doctrine as a natural Right," or whether pulling down what they have built, and giving up the Point, let those who are least esteemed for Wisdom now judge) insisting upon it as "a Protestant Privilege *to question every human Doctrine,*" (which must include their own Interpretations) "and bring it to the Test of Scripture," as a superior Authority; thus themselves "*encroaching*" on that boasted natural Right which, without any Notice, as it should be repeated, of the Revelations brought unto us by Jesus Christ, or explicit Confession of the divine Eternal Purpose in Him whom the Father hath appointed to be Head over all Things to the Church, they claim to **HOLD OF GOD ONLY**; Terms These which, conjoined as they are with the Claim of interpreting Scripture by the free Exercise of our own Reason, may, without such express Acknowledgement of the divine Authority in Christ Jesus, be thought hardly to leave room for discriminating these outward Professors from that Sort of Men of whom St. John affirms, *He that abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ hath not God,* (2 John 9.) and our Saviour, *He that hateth Me, hateth my Father also;* (John xv. 23.) and more-

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over by insinuating it as a Reflection upon our religious Establishment that it “admits and authorizes doubtful and precarious Doctrines,” meaning Doctrines “concerning which there is a Diversity of Opinion,” while their own Plan tends to introduce and to *promote* far more general Discord and Confusion in the Interpretation of Scripture; With regard to these Men, I say, who by this Procedure and involving their Address in such manifold and palpable Contradictions, have proved themselves for Want of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to be also destitute of the true and just Medium of Argument, and, far from evading the Imputation of “joining with the Adversaries of Revelation,” have given but too just “an Handle” to Believers and Members of the Church to retort upon their Application the Censure which they have *seconded* on our Religious Establishment “as inconsistently framed,” and to reproach them with “a Departure from their Subscriptions and Disaffection to the Church, and with Prevarication and Insincerity in the Profession of Zeal for *our common Christianity* and the spreading of this true Religion,” whatsoever they shall allow *this common Christianity* to import and mean; and to suspect that, instead of yielding to “*Scruples and Embarrassments of Conscience*”

science in regard to chearful Continuance in the Exercise of the Ministry," they have been excited by "lucrative Views, or political Considerations" and Respects, first to accommodate their Principles to the sceptical Humour of the Times, and then to plot the Subversion of a Community which, *rooted and built up and stablished as it is in the Faith of the Mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ,* will not receive as Members of Him, nor bid God speed to them who have crept in unawares, and bring not this Doctrine; it is not difficult to shew that they do resemble those Adversaries of the antient Church of God, spoken of by St. Peter and St. Jude, scarce more exactly in their Number than in the Objects of their Envy and Gainsaying, and the Tendency, Design and Manner of their Attack upon our Establishment. For as *Korab* and his Company setting at nought a Divine Ordinance, and admitting of no Distinction among the Congregation, under a Pretence that *they were* holy every one of them, attempted to make the Priestly Office common, (which Thing *Moses* charges upon them as *a gathering together against the Lord,* because such an Attempt being an Opposition to God's own Appointment, and which, supposing the Success of it, could have been productive of

Nothing but Disorder and Confusion, and of manifold Neglects in the Services of Religion, was in effect nothing less than laying the Axe to the Root of the Ecclesiastical Polity which was the Medium instituted to preserve the Faith of God's covenanted Mercies to all Mankind in the promised Seed); So the Attack on our religious Establishment intended to set all Men upon a Level in expounding of Scripture, and so to disparage and supersede the Uses and Functions of the Pastors and Teachers whom *Christ* hath appointed, and who have been the ordinary providential Means both of the Progress of the Gospel, and of it's Support unto this Day, and the chief Obstacle in the Way of those who have attempted either to corrupt or extirpate Christianity out of the World, hath no less Tendency to weaken and unsettle the Provision which God hath been pleased to make for *perpetuating the Church which his Right Hand hath planted*, and under Colour of reforming, to dissipate the Faith of Christian Professors in the true Principles and Doctrines of the Gospel. A Charge This which, far from being fictitious and artful, must be thought but too just, solid and well founded by every intelligent considerate Person, who will not fail to discern that the View of a Scheme *which,*
under

under Pretext of a strict Attachment to Holy Scripture alone, arrogates to itself an unbounded Liberty of private, i. e. of each Man's own Judgement or Interpretation, (opposed as human Judgement or Interpretation is by St. Peter to, and therefore certainly incongruous with the Word and Intendment of Prophecy, 1 Pet. i. 20, 21.) must be highly insidious and hollow, and “pregnant with Mischief to true Religion;” Especially when He shall reflect on the Opposition which is surely known to be intended by it most particularly to the main and fundamental Doctrines of the Trinity and of the true and proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus. For a Gaynsaying or Disaffection to these Articles carries in it an Enmity and Opposition, not merely to the Tenets of the Reformed Church of this Nation, but to the true Catholick Faith and Church of Christ throughout the World; inasmuch as it is a Gaynsaying of those Points of Faith and Doctrine, of that Religion, for the maintaining of which the Church is honoured with the Character of the Household of God and the Pillar and Ground of the Truth; and in regard of which it is eminently the Witness and Keeper of Holy Writ; and after departing from which We know the Eastern Church soon wandered from it's whole

whole Faith, *and was given up to strong Delusion to believe a Lie.* May We therefore regard the Defection and the Reprobation of this Church as an Example for our Admonition; and reflecting awfully that every Attempt to overturn the Establishment of the true Catholick Faith and Church of Christ is the Suggestion and Device of *the Father of Lies, who abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in Him,* abhor it as such; lest We tempt *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to work a Work in our Days,* and to recompence Us likewise with a Vengeance worthy of Those who hold not fast the Confession of a true Faith without Wavering and Defection.

Thus the Exercise of the ministerial Function for the Edification of the People in the Word of God being virtually disallowed, and it's Use and Purpose for the maintaining of Agreement in Faith and Worship intentionally set aside and defeated, (for the total Exclusion of, or an utter Disregard to all Explications of Holy Scripture, especially such as come recommended by Authority or any peculiar Claim to Attention, which is the apparent Drift, and would be found to be the Upshot and Consummation of a Plan for
abolishing

abolishing all Assent to Articles of Religion or any Formulary of religious Faith and Doctrine besides Holy Scripture itself, will justify this Imputation); it is easy to discern the Point or Ground of Resemblance in the View of our modern Opposers of the Church of God, with that impious Attempt of *Korah* and his Company to whom the Adversaries described by St. *Peter* and St. *Jude*, are by the latter in express Terms compared. For as God had under both the Jewish and Christian Dispensation provided that there should never be wanting a Succession of Men set apart to perform the several Offices of the Priesthood, and thereby maintain the *Jewish* and *Christian* Religion, and the Crime of *Korah* consisted in attempting by the Abolishment of that Distinction to set aside and render ineffectual this Divine Provision and the Intent of it; So the manifest Tendency and Effect of the Attempt among Us under Pretence of reforming the Church, is by destroying Subordination among the Members of it, depreciating the Dignity and Usefulness and *superfeding the Offices of the Christian Ministry, and introducing Confusion and Disagreement in the Faith*, to render ineffectual the like Appointment, and gradually
to

to unsettle the Doctrine; abolish the Worship, and extirpate the Religion of the Gospel. In which View and Purpose of undermining Revealed Religion, for the Effect and Consequence is too *obvious* and *immediate* to be overlooked, I must repeat it, There is not a fictitious and imaginary, but a too real Resemblance, as is *avowed* in St. *Jude's* Argument, between the Confederacy of the antient, and *That* of later Adversaries of the Church of God: For with regard to that extraordinary Overthrow with which the Divine Providence saw fit to visit this first Instance at the original Ordering of the Ecclesiastical Polity of the *Jews*, since *the Punishment* of a Crime is altogether a distinct Matter and Idea from the *Crime* itself, the Charge of Resemblance and Proportion between Instances of the latter will not be invalidated by a Difference in the immediate visible Issue, or any seeming Defect or rather Delay of the like Vengeance. However, not to expatiate on the Necessity of maintaining God's own Ordinance and the Authority of his Servant *Moses*, who had been recently appointed under Him the Governor of a People that were to be kept separate from the rest of the World, by Means of a peculiar Constitution, in order

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to the future Accomplishment of his gracious Purposes towards the whole Race of Mankind in the promised Seed, as a Reason, not common to other Times and Circumstances, for so remarkable a Demonstration of God's Vengeance on that first Instance when the Ecclesiastical Polity not having attained it's complete Form and Establishment might otherwise have been actually subverted and dissolved; not to enlarge, I say, on this momentous Difference between that Conjunction and succeeding Times as suggesting just and obvious Reasons for a more signal Manifestation of the Almighty Power and Authority, especially under a Theocracy where God himself was the sole Legislator, and the supreme civil Magistrate to decree and to execute Wrath on the disobedient and rebellious; *The SWIFT DESTRUCTION* which those Adversaries who shall *deny the Lord that bought them*, are said by St. Peter to *bring on themselves*, and their *HAVING PERISHED in the Gainsaying of Korah*, as St. Jude expresses Himself concerning the same Adversaries, doth imply that the certain Issue of all like crafty and malicious Purposes to subvert or undermine the Gospel and Church of our Lord *Jesus Christ* shall be no other than such a Judgement and fiery Indignation

as shall sooner or later actually *consume* Them also *without Mercy*, as well as those ungodly Men *before ordained to Condemnation* for a like Impiety, whom these Apostles have set forth as *Examples suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire*.

Thus the Construction here insisted upon of all Attempts to disparage and bring into Contempt *the Divine Ordinance* of a Christian Ministry, and to stifle or to unsettle and render precarious the true Principles and Doctrine of the Gospel, and so to dissolve the Church of *Christ, as a Striving against God*, and an Opposition proceeding from a like Spirit of Ungodliness and pursuing the same mischievous Design with the Conspiracy of *Korah*, being warranted both by Scripture and by Argument, too aptly applies to the Confederacy of the *foulish Prophets* among Us.* For the whole and ultimate End and Design of setting aside all Subscription and Assent to *ANY Articles of Religion*, and especially of the *Opposition meant to the grand and fundamental Mystery of the Trinity on which the Divine Fabrick of Christianity stands*, and of the *Obtaining Indulgence to every Man to follow his own Spirit and prophesy out of*

* *Ezekiel's Censure* on those who prophesy out of their own Hearts: Terms synonymous to the free Exercise of Reason or private Judgement.

his own Heart, is, as far as human Artifice can reach to work the Effect, visibly and clearly the virtual at least, if not, by these Steps and Degrees, the formal *Abolition of all Revealed Doctrine*, and therewith, *by direct and certain Consequence, as well of all Agreement in ANY Form of Worship as of Consent in Religious Doctrine; Which is a Destroying the Christian Religion, Root and Branch.* A Plan thus insidious, an Attack on our Religious Establishment thus similar in the Onset, aiming at the Superfeding all Proposal of or Assent to any Exposition of Scripture, all Test and Rule and Restraint in Doctrine, and so frustrating the Use and Functions of the Christian Ministry; and Consequences to human Apprehension so immediate, so sure and inevitable, so comprehensive, so obvious, and so horrid as these now insisted upon, well justify the Comparison of this Attempt to That of *Korah* and his Confederates; and (how little soever those who are ignorant of the *Devices and Wiles of the Evil One* may have reflected upon these Tendencies, and some of the Agents and Abettors of this Business may have considered *what Master* they serve) could not but to serious and thinking Persons have laid open *the Depths of Satan*, had there been no Parallel marked by Divine Vengeance; as, God be

thanked, there is *One only*, and that, corrupt as the World hath been, and leagued in Impiety, it appears not from the Annals of it that *the Exterminating of the true Religion and right Worship of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* hath ever been thus attempted by more than twice two hundred and fifty Insurgents. But We trust that these Seducers, who resist the Truth and oppose Christ and his Church, *shall proceed no further deceiving and being deceived*; and that *their Folly shall be manifest unto all Men as their's also was who withstood Moses and the antient Church*. Have We not however Cause to reflect on the Attempt among ourselves as having been followed in these Days of Luke-warmness and Disaffection to *Christ* and his Church, by an Effort to weaken the Establishment and Security of that Provision which under the *Mosaick* Oeconomy by immediate divine Appointment succeeded the Judgement on *Korab* and his Associates? that is, against the temporal Supports as well as the vital Principles of our holy Religion? Both which may the Wisdom and Goodness of our Almighty Protector over-rule, and, as of old, graciously convert to the more firm Establishment of each, and the greater Display of his Providence

vidence and Glory ! and so save us from the Reproach of setting aside a true and sound System of Doctrine, and giving a national Sanction as it were to Apostacy, and from impairing the Supports of our holy Religion, for the Contentment of *two hundred and fifty Chiefs of the Assembly, famous in Council, Men of Renown who have gathered themselves together, or of Any other whose Minds are vitiated and become disaffected to the Christian Church through an Unskilfulness in the Word of Righteousness and vain Prejudices against the wholesome Doctrines of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We have seen now the Mischiefs arising from *private* Judgment or *private* Interpretation of the Word of God, that is, from *the free unrestrained Exercise of mere human Reason or natural Wisdom concerning the Things which God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit* ; that this private Judgement or Interpretation is the Source and Origin of the several Degrees of Heresy, Schism, Infidelity, and all Opposition to pure and sound Religion. And therefore, with regard to the Advocates for this pretended “ natural undoubted Right and invaluable Privilege,” whether they are the *Murmurers and Complainers* among us who,
under

under Disguise of an Abhorrence of the Spirit of Popery and an Affectation of Concern for the further Reformation of a Protestant Establishment, it is too certain do really mean nothing less than to maintain an Opposition to the essential and fundamental Principles of the Catholick Faith; or whether they are *open and professed Unbelievers*, let us not scruple to teach and to affirm boldly, as We ought to do under the Authority of the Word of God for the Assertion, that Those who thus oppose the Truth, and *separate themselves, are of the World, sensual, not having the Spirit*; Men who, when *Christ* is preached, have, like the *Jews* when *Moses* was read, *the Vail of a worldly Spirit* upon their Hearts; and, while they combine in speaking *ὑπερβολὰ παραλογισμοῦ*, as *St. Peter* (and *St. Jude* in like manner) with a just and striking Energy denominates the vain Prejudices of the natural unregenerate Man against *the Wisdom revealed from Heaven*, and in bringing to nothing those Doctrines which are the Objects not of Reason *but of Faith*, they shew themselves to be all of the same Grain and Complexion, differing from each other only as one *Ethiopian* differs from another. It is an illiberally artful and equivocating Abuse

buse of Language, a slender Covering of
 Disaffection to the true Gospel of *Jesus*
Christ, and a weak Refuge to which both
 the Deceivers and the Deceived betake
 themselves, when they substitute the spe-
 cious Terms of *Private Judgement* or *Li-*
berality of Sentiment in the Place of the
 vanquished Banner of *Free-Thinking*,
 whilst under a Change of Colours they
 veer about to the same Point. For by
denying the Lord that bought them, that is,
disowning Christ's Divine Nature and Merits,
and the mysterious Work of the Godhead in
our Redemption, they labour to raze, as
 far as in them lies, the Foundation of our
 Faith and of the Church. It remains only
 to rescind *all Consent* in Articles of Faith,
 that so the Doctrines of the Scriptures
 may come to be regarded as vague and
 undeterminate, and then *the Candlestick of*
the Gospel being removed, and the Church
 and Religion of *Christ* disappearing, as it
 were, from among Us, and his Promise of
 defending and governing his People unto
 the End of the World being pretended to
 have failed, the Mystery of Ungodliness
 will no longer undermine in Disguise, but
the Sons of Perdition, after having broken
 in upon the civil Establishment of Re-
 ligion, and obtained a Licence for every
 Man

Man to do what is right in his own Eyes, shall (like their true Type Korah and his Company of two hundred and fifty Men of Renown) count it Pleasure to riot in the Day, openly strive against the Lord Jesus Christ, and exalt themselves against all that is called God or that is worshipped.

How greatly doth it behove these false Apostles, that is, all the Advocates for private Judgement in Religion, who pretend to lament the Corruptions and unchristian Spirit of *Popery*, to examine and to check their own Disaffection and *lurking Enmity to the true Principles of the Catholick Faith and Church*, before it shall have attained *that mature State in which Men are incapable of Renewal unto Repentance!* awfully reflecting that God hath declared by his Apostle that *if any Man defile his Temple*, that is, by bringing into the Church any unsound Doctrine, any Doctrine contrary to *the Mystery of Christ*, (for this is undeniably *the Defilement* particularly meant in the Passage to which my Text belongs) *Him will God destroy*: And considering also how much more horrible is that Depravedness of Mind and Despightfulness which hath nothing to look for but such an irreverfible Judgement and fiery Indignation as shall devour them without

out Mercy, than the Condition of Those who may yet be saved, though so as by Fire! And with what Solitude and Diligence should the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, after the Examples of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus, put in Remembrance and caution as well Those who, being received into the Bosom of the Church, are escaped from them who live in Error, as Those who through the Corruption of the Flesh are most liable to be deceived, that they follow not the pernicious Ways of false Teachers and ungodly Men who bring in damnable Heresies, neither be intangled with the Yoke of their Bondage! Thus, according to St. Jude's Admonition, having Compassion on Some, making a Difference; and others saving with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire; whilst We build up Ourselves on our most holy Faith, and keep Ourselves in the Love of God, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto Eternal Life.

From divers of the foregoing Considerations and a just Attention to several Passages of Holy Writ We must be convinced how agreeable to the Pleasure of the Divine Will is that Petition in our Liturgy

that the Holy Catholick Church may be so guided and governed by God's good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the Way of Truth, and hold the Faith in Unity of Spirit and in the Bond of Peace ; and how unreasonable, how insidious and contrary to the Principles and Doctrines contained in the Scriptures are the Complaints of this degenerate Age of ANY System of Articles, and of the Requisition of Subscription or ASSENT TO ANY Articles of Religion as Grievances, arbitrary Impositions and unjustifiable Restraints on the Liberty of private Judgement and the Rights of Protestants. For if our Lord Jesus gives Glory to the Father that they whom his Father had given Him out of the World had received and kept his Word, and prays that they might be sanctified through the Truth and be all One ; if elsewhere in the Scriptures We are taught that We being many are one Body, and the Christian Churches are exhorted to keep the Unity of the Spirit, because there is one Body, one Hope and Fellowship of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and are enjoined by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to speak the same Thing, to take heed that there be no Divisions among them, but on the contrary to be perfectly
joined

joined together in the same Mind and in the same Judgement ; must not some Testimony of an Agreement in Articles of Religion be regarded as a Means which Christian Prudence will ever suggest and prescribe as conducive and necessary to the holding together the Members of the Church that there may be no Schism in the Body of Christ ? and for maintaining that Character which the Church, instructed, sanctified and governed by his Spirit, ought ever to preserve of being the Pillar and Ground of the Truth ? and is not an Attempt to abolish such Test and Bond of Unity in the Faith a direct Opposition to the Teaching and Exhortation of the Holy Ghost in these and other Places of Holy Scripture ? and therefore not the Dictate of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation and of Zeal for the Interests of Religion, but of that Spirit of the World which knoweth not the Scriptures, and which, it is to be feared, would use an unbounded Liberty of private Judgement for a Cloak of Maliciousness aiming to triumph in the Ruin of our Religion and Church ? For if the Doctrines of the Gospel are not to be ascertained and set forth by any System of Articles, but the Sense of the Scriptures to be left undeterminate, the Consequence

will be, either that the Bible will become a neglected Book, or the Principles of Religion contained in it will be liable to be corrupted and explained away by all those who arrogating to themselves the Character of Men of liberal Sentiments, shall under this Cover take upon them with the Deists to new model and oppose our most holy Faith, and pretend only to improve and rectify Men's Notions about it. How little must the Advocates for a Right of private Judgement reflect, or else how much must they dissemble and endeavour to conceal the Reflection (if indeed they give any Attention to the Scriptures) that this Liberty in Matters of Revelation is by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour spoken of as altogether unwarrantable and presumptuous? particularly by St. Paul *where he declares the Inability of the natural Man to know the Things of the Spirit of God*; and St. Peter, who, immediately before He warns the Catholick Church in the Passage I have commented upon, *against the false Teachers that would privily bring in damnable Heresies*, admonishes the Brethren to consider that *no Prophecy, that is, Revelation or Doctrine, of the Scripture is of any private, or of a Man's own Interpretation, neither did it come by*
the

the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. May they, instead of being thus vainly puffed up by the fleshly Mind, learn to regulate the Exercise of private Judgement by the Measures and Limits which the Word of God allows and prescribes ; ever bearing in Mind that the best Gifts of Nature and Acquisitions of Study, and all the Improvements attainable by the Application of human Faculties are utterly insufficient to search and discover the infinite Nature of the Deity and his Wisdom in the Mystery of our Redemption ; and that the Powers of Reason, unless they are under the Direction of the Spirit of Christ, will only pervert the Gospel, and deprive us of the Benefit of the heavenly Gift and of the only Knowledge that can make us wise unto Salvation. May such Reflections find Access and sink deep into their Hearts, if peradventure God may give them Grace that they may no longer deceive themselves with vain Words, disparaging the Truths, and slighting the Benefits offered by the Gospel, while they are carried away by the contrary Biass of private Judgement, mistaken for Sincerity and the Dictate of Conscience ; which We know can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth.

But

But while We endeavour to confine within due Bounds the Exercise of private Judgement, that is, the merely human Judgement of Individuals, (for in this Sense I have hitherto been speaking of private Judgement, as being the Sense into which in the Course of this Argument it is justly resolvable) it should not be forgotten that there is another Acceptation of private or human Interpretation which is more large and extended, and, as I may be permitted to speak, *mixed*, and so in some Degree *authoritative*; I mean as importing the Judgement of the collective Body of *BELIEVERS*, or *the Church instructed, sanctified and governed by God's Spirit*, which hath a Pre-eminence by Virtue of the Promise of it's Head *to be with the Church alway even unto the End of the World*; and which therefore, so far as it's Doctrines, Acts and Constitutions are agreeable to the Word of God, and proportioned to the Measure and Limits which Christ hath appointed, hath a just Claim to the Reverence and Submission of it's Members; as being not *merely human*, but carrying the Sense and Authority of *the Spirit of God*, or being the Interpretation of *the Spirit* delivered in and by the Church. That particular Churches and Councils have erred is too certain. Nevertheless, saving to the Word of God it's Prerogative as the

Touchstone

Touchstone as well of the Judgement of collective Bodies of Christian Professors as of Individuals, it can be no more doubted that the Church of *Christ* hath some peculiar Pre-eminence and Authority *in Subordination to Him*, than that inferior Civil Magistrates have a Claim to Respect and Obedience from the Subjects in Subordination to the Authority of the Sovereign. For if no Assistance, no Benefit is derived upon the Church from *the Presence of the Holy Ghost*, the Promises of *Christ* to his Church of *the Spirit to abide with it for ever, and teach them all Things*, are vain and delusive; and so is our Apostle's Asseveration when, in the Passage of which my Text is a Portion, addressing himself to the *Corinthians* in their collective Captivity, He asks, *Know Ye not that Ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in You? If any Man defile the Temple of God, that is by introducing any unsound Principles, Him will God destroy: For the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple Ye are*; by these last Words, as well as by the foregoing, implying the Presence of God by his Spirit with the Church. And indeed, were not the Subject of too serious a Nature, it might be treated as an Instance of Lightness and Inconsistency worthy of nothing but Derision that

that Men who contend warmly for a Liberty of Judgement as the unalienable Property of every Individual, should account the Exercise of it as an Inroad, and as dangerous and unsufferable only in that Community which the Word of God denominates *his Temple*, and in which *We are taught that He by the Spirit dwelleth for the Purpose of it's Guidance and Government*. It is freely confessed that the Claim of Ecclesiastical Power hath been in former Times abused, and is still perverted and stretched beyond it's Bounds in some Parts of Christendom; and through the Depravity of human Nature will, like all Things, be ever liable to Abuse. But have We experienced no evil Consequences from *despising the Church of God*? and may not the Increase of the sceptical and licentious Opinions and Practices of the present Age, and particularly the Assaulting Religion *through the Sides of the Church*, be too reasonably regarded as one of the Consequences of the contrary Extreme of Irreverence to just and regular Authority? and as filling up the Measure of that unbridled Independency and Resistance of all Spiritual Government, by which, among other Characters, *St. Peter*, and *St. Jude* in like manner, not without an express Respect and an implied Comparison

of

of it to the Disobedience of some part of *the Church in Heaven*, (i. e. the Angels,) have described those ungodly Men against whom they are cautioning the Catholick Church, when they tell us that such Persons *despised Dominion or Government, and spake evil of Dignities, being presumptuous and self-willed?* (1 Pet. ii. 10. Jude 6, 8.) Wherefore let us desire to preserve the just Medium, and none of us *use our Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness*, but *laying aside all Vain Glory, and Envy, and Strife, and Divisions, humble ourselves as little Children*, and apply ourselves sincerely to the Study of the Holy Scriptures, submitting ourselves *not in Word and in Tongue only, but in Deed and in Truth* to whatsoever hath the Sanction of this Authority, and being disposed to receive and admit whatsoever may be proved thereby as well as what is expressly read therein. And let us seriously reflect that with regard to Errors in Religion which are secret to Ourselves and undiscerned by Us, We may be not altogether blameless. For We are accountable to Him that made us for the Exercise of the Faculties He hath bestowed upon us. *He that judgeth us is the Lord*, to whom the Use and Application of our intellectual Powers is open and visible; and *in the Day, when He shall judge the Se-*

crets of Men by Christ Jesus, He will make manifest the Counsels of the Hearts, and then shall every Man have his due Praise or Condemnation from God, according to the Measure in which He hath been led by the Spirit, or hath resisted his holy Teaching.

To conclude: Since by an Unity in Faith as well as by other particular Virtues of the Christian Character, We may know Whether We *have the Mind of Christ* and are indeed his Disciples, or, in the Words connected with my Text, *are the Temple of God in which his Spirit dwells*, let us desire the *sincere Milk of the Word* that We may grow thereby; and also, according to the Advice of One who had the Spirit of God, *mark Them who cause Divisions and Offences contrary to the Doctrine which We have learned, and avoid them, as Men who serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Bellies, and by good (soothing) Words and fair Speeches deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* And let us in nothing be terrified or shaken in Mind by the Sleight and cunning Craftiness of either Hereticks or Infidels, covert or open Adversaries; nor give place by Submission to them, no not for an Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel may continue with Us. Let us remember how We have received and heard, and, joining ourselves with the Names which have
not

not defiled themselves and the Church of God by corrupt Principles, be watchful to strengthen the Things which remain, that are ready to die. Thus standing fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel, We shall not be accounted Babes in Christ, (as St. Paul in the Exhortation to which my Text belongs, describes some of the Corinthians whose Divisions He saith proved them to be yet carnal) but seeking the Truth in Love, shall grow up unto Him in all Things who is our Head, until we come, under the Guidance of his Spirit, in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy, To the only Wise God our Saviour be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power now and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

¶ The Reader is requested to amend the first Note in the 171st Page by the following Enlargement, which was too late for the Press; after the Words *Knowledge of the Truth*, reading, Their Condition is also here expressed in the very Terms of our Lord's Denunciation in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke against the Blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, namely, that *their last State is worse than the first*. (Compare *Matth. xii. 43, 44, 45. Luk xi. 24, 25, 26.* with

1 Peter

1 Peter ii. 20.) Moreover there is an evident Similarity in the *Cast and Manner* of summing up these Passages, both in the Gospels and in the Epistle of St. Peter, which suggests that this Apostle actually had a respect to that Sort of Men against whom his Lord had pronounced the irreversible Woe; the only Difference being that in the former the Apostacy is expressed in a *parabolical*, and in the latter in a *proverbial* Form. All which very remarkable and striking Particulars, added to the foregoing Considerations, I presume to think amount to nothing less than Demonstration that the same Kind of Persons are meant in each of these Texts, and fully justify the Arrangement and Application of them all to the Support of the main Principle and Argument of this and the preceding Discourse. A Principle and Argument so momentous in itself, and which hath appeared to have a most sure Foundation in Holy Scripture, might, if duly thought upon, tend very forcibly, and, if any Consideration can prevail so far, *effectually also* to check and to overpower the Increase of Infidelity. FAXIT DEUS.

The Reader is requested to correct the following Errata, which have happened through the Author's Distance from the Press.

In the DISCOURSES on LUKE xxiii. 39, 40.

page 7. line 1 read Soldiers. l. 15. for *απειδίζω* read *απειδιζω*.

p. 9. l. 19. of the Notes, for *Πτωχες* read *Πτωχες*, and put a Comma after *Πτωχες*.

p. 11. l. 9. of the Note, read and *with αμαρτωλούς*. l. 10. read reasonably.

p. 12. l. 12 for *απειδιζε* read *απειδιζε*.

p. 16. l. 21. and 28. for *απειδιζω* read *απειδιζω*.

p. 22. l. 22. after *απειδιζω* dele Comma, and read, is applied in these Passages

In the DISCOURSES on 1 CORINTH. iii. 18.

p. 101. l. 7. read in contradistinction.

p. 107. lines 5, 6. insert a Line which was overlooked by the Compositor at the Press, and instead of *preserved* read secured from making Shipwreck of Faith through the Delusions of private Judgement.

p. 128. l. 23. read or a certain.

p. 139. l. 4. read descanted.

p. 149. l. 13. for *Gold* read *Christ*.

p. 156. l. 7. of the Note dele Comma after Pharisees and also the Word *as*.

p. 171. l. 6. of the Note read *Epistle*.

