

Clave, Jean

Five
Letters
Concerning the
Inspiration
Of The
Holy Scriptures
Translated out of
French

Printed in the year 1690

Le Clerc (3)

Advertisement:
BY THE
TRANSLATOR,
TO THE
READER.

FOR the better understanding of these five Letters, it seems necessary in a few words to explain the Occasion and Subject of them. They are not, in French, one distinct Volume, as they are here made in English; but a part of two larger Volumes written in an Epistolary Form. The First entituled, (1) The Thoughts or Reflections of some Divines in Holland, upon Father Simon's Critical History of the Old Testament. The Second, (2) A Defence of (1) Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du vieux Testament, Composee par le P. Richard Simon. (2) Defense des Sentimens, &c. contre la Responſe du Prieur de Bolleville.

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those Thoughts, in Answer to the Prior of Bolleville; who is supposed to be also the same Mr. Simon, disguised under a borrowed Name.

The general Design that Mr. Simon drives at in the Critical History of the Old Testament, as well as in that of the New (which are now both of them published in English) is to represent the many Difficulties that are amongst the Learned concerning the Text of the Scriptures, and thereby to infer the necessity of receiving the Roman Doctrine of Oral Tradition.

This Design raised him many Antagonists amongst the Protestants beyond the Seas, who have opposed him in their Writings, each according to his different Genius or Principles. The Book first above mentioned was one of the earliest of that kind; and it's Anonymous Author appears second to none, either in Critical Learning, or Solid Judgment. But it is not necessary to my purpose in this place to insist upon his particular differences with Mr. Simon in Points of Criticism. This only in general, is needful to be observed; That though on the one side he sufficiently overthrows the pretended necessity of Oral Tradition; and on the other side, ingenuously

uniously acknowledges all the Difficulties that are amongst the Learned about the Text of the Scriptures; yet he does not thereupon leave the Judgment of his Reader in suspense about so weighty a matter; but propounds a middle way, which he conceives proper to settle in Mens Minds a just esteem of the Scriptures, upon a solid Foundation.

The Scheme or System of this middle way, he says, he received from his Friend Mr. N. and therefore he gives it not in his own, but in his Friend's words. It is comprized in the Eleventh and Twelfth Letters of his foresaid Book. And because That is a distinct Subject of it self, and of more consequence to the generality of Christians, than those nice Disputes of Criticism, with which he is obliged, in following Mr. Simon, to fill up the rest of that Volume, I have therefore thought fit to translate those two Letters into English. They are the two First of these Five; and are the Ground and Occasion of the rest.

The publishing of that Volume of Letters produced an Answer from Mr. Simon, or the Prior of Bolleville, as he calls himself; and further gave opportunity to the Author to learn from several hands, what-

soever was objected most materially by others against the fore-mentioned Scheme, which he had published in his Friend's words. This afforded him occasion, in replying to the Prior of Bolleville, to insert a further explanation and defence of that Scheme, from the hand of the Author; as also to justify himself for having published it; and in the last place to remove the great Popular Objection arising from a Jealousy, lest that System of Mr. N's should prejudice the Foundation of the Christian Religion. I say, it prompted him to answer that Objection, by giving a solid Demonstration of the Truth of our Religion, without interressing it in this Controversy. This is done in the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Letters of his Second Book, Entitled, A Defence, &c. And they are the three last of these following Five.

I have translated them all, that the Reader may at once have a full view, both of Mr. N's Opinions concerning the Holy Scriptures, in the fore-mentioned System; of the Objections that have been made against it; of the Answers he gives to those Objections; and of the Use that may be made of all, in settling the Christian Religion upon a Basis not to be shaken
by

by the Difficulties about the Scripture, which the Learned are forced to acknowledge to be insuperable.

This is all that I think needful to premonish the Reader upon this Subject. Only if in the perusal of the two first of these Letters, any one should be apt to condemn me for publishing things of this vice concernment in our Language, I intreat him to suspend his Censure, till he have read the rest; and as he goes along, to apply unto me the Author's Apology. Our Case is the same, and, I think, he has said all that is needful upon it. In a word, We live in an Age of so much Light, that it is not only now (as at all times) unbecoming the Dignity of such Sacred Truths, as the Christian Religion teaches us, to build them upon unsound Principles, or defend them by Sophistical Arguments; but it is also vain to attempt it, because impossible to execute. The Doctrine of Implicit Faith has lost its Vogue. Every Man will judge for himself, in matters that concern himself so nearly as these do. And nothing is now admitted for Truth, that is not built upon the Foundation of Solid Reason. Let not therefore any sim-

ple-hearted pious Persons be scandalized at these Disquisitions. They are not calculated for their Use. But they are absolutely needful for many others, who are more Curious, and less Religious. And that they may be in some measure useful to the Propagation and Advancement of True Religion amongst such, is the strong Hope, and hearty Desire of the Translator.

THE

THE
FIRST LETTER.

YOU are desirous, Sir, that I should inform you more particularly about the thoughts of Mr. N. concerning the Inspiration of the *Sacred Writers*; and you ask me if our Friends do not suspect him to be tainted with *Deism*? He that gave me the Essay, which I send you, told me nothing of his other Opinions, nor of his Manner of Life: And for his Thoughts concerning that Divine Inspiration, which the Sacred Penmen received from God, it is conceived that from thence he cannot be concluded to be a *Deist*. It is presumed on the contrary, without entering into the Examination of what he says, that he believes by this Method he better answers the Objections, which the *Deists* and *Atheists* have used to make against the Style of Holy Scriptures: And it appears

appears by this Essay, that he is far from being of their Opinions.

We ought not always to measure, or judge of the extent of any Man's Thoughts, in reference to Religion, by the manner of his explaining or defending them; as if all those who do not defend well their Religion, were Men of ill Design, that only seemingly defend, in order to destroy it. 'Tis said that the impious *Vannini* designed to shew there is no God, in making as if he would prove there is one. But it does not follow from thence, that all others do the same; who defend, or oppose, weakly any Opinion. Otherwise we must believe many Writers both *Catholicks* and *Protestants*, who injudiciously oppose the Opinions of their Adversaries, and as ill defend their own, to be guilty of ill Design. If a Man would make an exact Catalogue of all the Catholick Authors, who have made impertinent Answers to the Protestants, and have used as impertinent Objections against them, it would amount to several Volumes in Folio; and the number of Protestant Authors, who have succeeded no better, would be little less. Nevertheless, I do not believe there is any Body so unjust, as to

to pretend, That the generality of those Authors, on both sides, have been Cheats, who maintained what they did not Believe, or opposed what they did.

You Sir, have too much knowledge of the Frame and Constitution of Man's Mind, to be ignorant, that it is capable of believing in good earnest the most ridiculous things in the World; and, which is yet more astonishing, of giving its Assent at the same time to two things directly opposite. If you should, on purpose, invent the most ridiculous Religion imaginable, there would be People found in *Asia*, whose Opinions would not appear more rational. You have read Mr. *Bernier's* Travels, and the History of the *Brahmins*. What do you think of the Heathens of the great *Mogul's* Country, and of those famous *Indian* Philosophers? Do you think there is none among them, that believes the monstrous Principles of their *Theology*? For my part I am persuaded there are very few that see the absurdity of it. You will say perhaps, That those Nations are under a blindness, which is next to down-right Foolishness; and that the *Europeans* are not

not to be judged of by *Indians*. But are there not, in your Opinion, some even among the Christians, who believe things absurd, and against all sort of appearance? The Protestants at least do pass that censure upon many of the Roman Catholic Doctrines, as *Transubstantiation, the Infallibility of the Pope, or Council, &c.* And the Catholicks are not wanting to make like reproaches to Protestants.

The Catholicks believe, That many Units make more than a single one; and do so much believe it, that he would pass for a Fool amongst them, as well as amongst other Christians, that would undertake to deny it; and nevertheless they believe that a Million of Humane Bodies, separate from one another, make but One. This is a visible Contradiction: Yet you know this is their Opinion concerning the Body of Christ. There are some that assuredly believe, That *God is not the Author of Sin, &c.* Who at the same time assert, That he created Man with a Design to let him fall into Sin; as a means to make his Justice Eminent, in punishing the greatest part; and his Mercy, in pardoning some few. It is evident, that to say God ordered Sin should be, on purpose

purpose to accomplish thereby his Ends, is to make him the Author of it. But this is the frailty of Man's Mind; he sees not these Contradictions, because he has been so long accustomed to shut his Eyes, when they are presented to him.

A Man may then not only defend an ill Opinion that he believes, but also believe things absurd, and even contrary to one another, without being aware. And that's the Reason our Friends suspect not Mr. N. to be a *Deist*, though some may think his Opinions favour those that are so called. But that you may be able to judge, I send you here an abridgment of what he says; which one of my Friends imparted to me a while ago.

There are, says Mr. N. three sorts of things in Holy Writ, *Prophecies, Histories, and Doctrines*, which are not ascribed to particular Revelation.

To begin with the First; God made himself known to the Prophets after several manners; but it seems as if they might be reduced to these three. They *had Visions* by Day or by Night; they *heard Voices*; or they were *inwardly Inspired*. It is not our business here to examine

examine these things in themselves. We only enquire after what manner they have written that which they learnt by these Visions, by these Voices, or by these Inspirations.

1. Of Prophecies.

Prophecies have been written by God's express Command; by the Prophets themselves, or by others. For we cannot tell whether the Prophets themselves have always Written, or Dictated them; or whether their Disciples have Collected and Written them as exactly as their memory would serve. However it be, we cannot doubt but God made known to the Prophets that which we find in their Books, and that we ought to believe St. Peter, when he says, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Pet. I. 21.

To tell us that which appeared to them in *Visions*, whether it be they themselves that writ it, or others that heard them tell it; there needed nothing but a good memory. A Man has no need of inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen, especially when the impression it made upon him was strong; as commonly hap-

happen'd to those to whom God sent any Vision. Hence it is observed, that every Prophet has his particular Stile; by which it appears that they related what they had seen, as they used to relate other things. Their Stile was the same when they spake by the Order of God, with that which they us'd in their ordinary Discourse.

The same Judgment is to be made concerning the recital of the words they heard. There needed no more but a good Memory to retain them. But we cannot be Assured that they have always recited exactly the very words they heard, and not sometimes thought it sufficient only to tell us the sense. When God told them the Name of some Person, it was necessary they should retain the Syllables of that Name; as when God ordered *Isaiah* to foretel that *Cyrus* should give the Jews liberty to return into *Palestine*, it behoved *Isaiah* to remember those two Syllables, *Co-rus*. But there is no likelihood, that in the rest of his Discourse *Isaiah* has related word for word what he heard. The diversity of Stile does moreover prove, that the Prophets expressed after their own manner the sense of

of what they heard. There is, for example, much difference between the Stiles of *Isaiah* and *Amos*. *Isaiah's* manner of writing is high and lofty. On the contrary, that of *Amos* is low and vulgar; and we find in it divers popular Expressions, and many Proverbs; which sufficiently testify that this Prophet, who was a Shepherd, expressed after his own way what God had said to him. This is the Opinion of *St. Jerom*, in the Preface of his Commentary on this Prophet:

* *Amos Prophetæ fuit imperitus Sermonibus, sed non Scientia: Idem enim qui per omnes Prophetas in eo Spiritus Sanctus loquebatur.*

† *Diximus illum artis suæ usum Sermonibus: & quia Pastor gregum nihil terribilius Leone cognoverat, iram Domini Leonibus comparat.*

* *The Prophet Amos, saith he, was skilled in Knowledge, not in Language; for the same Holy Spirit spoke in him that spoke by all the Prophets.* This Doctrine attributes clearly the expression to the Prophets, and the thing it self to the Holy Spirit; which appears also by the Remark he makes on Chap. III. saying, *† We told you that he uses the Terms of his own Profession: and because a Shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a Lion; he compares the Anger of God to Lions.* *St. Jerom* should have said, according to the common Opinion, that God made use, in speaking to *Amos*, of popular terms, and suitable to his profession, whereas he attributes plainly to

to the Prophet the choice of the Terms in which the Prophecy is expressed.

* *That words were dictated by God to the Prophets, (says a late Learned Critick) as it cannot be denied to have been done sometimes, so it does not seem to have been done always: And hence it is, that according to the variety of the Times, and the Speakers, the Phrase of the Prophets is also different.*

But it is commonly alledged, that the Prophets recite the same words they heard; Because they introduce God himself, speaking, *Thus saith the Lord, &c.* That is no Proof. For it is the custom, both of the Hebrews and Greeks, to bring in always those, whose Sense they relate, as speaking in their own Persons; though in doing so, they tie not themselves to their words. I will give you a plain Example thereof. It is the different manner in which the Decalogue is set down in *Exodus* and in *Deuteronomy*; although God is said to speak personally in both places. God says in *Exodus*, *Remember the Sabbath day, &c.* In *Deuteronomy*, *Keep the Sabbath-day, &c.* It is in *Exodus*, *To keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, &c.* In *Deuteronomy*, *To keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six*

* *Ut verba à Deo Prophetis dictata sint, sicuti internum evenisse non est negandum, ita non videtur perpetuum. Atque hinc factum est ut pro temporum atque loquentium varietate etiam Sermo Prophetarum differret.*
Grot. in Mat.
I. 22.

days shalt thou labour, &c. It is in *Exodus*, Nor thy Cattel, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, Nor thine Ox, nor thine Ass, nor any of thy Cattel, &c. And this Commandment ends thus, *That thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, may rest as well as thou; And remember that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, thro' a mighty Hand, and a stretched-out-Arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day.* In *Exodus*, the reason of keeping the Sabbath, is taken from the Creation of the World in Six Days, without any mention of Slaves, or of the slavery of Egypt. There are some other Differences in that which follows, but not considerable. However it appears by this, that either *Moses* in *Deuteronomy*, or the Author of the Book of *Exodus*, did not tie themselves scrupulously to exact words, as the Jews now a-days do; altho both these Authors bring in God speaking personally. *Grotius* has hereupon

* Sciendum est autem quæ in Exodo hoc loco habentur verba per Angelum Dei nomine prolata, quæ vero sunt Deuter. V. esse Mosis eadem memoriter referentis, & qui-

made this judicious Remark. * *It is to be observed, says he, that the Words set down in this place in Exodus, were pronounced by an Angel in the Name of God; but those which are in Deuteronomy,*

onomy, are the words of Moses repeating the same things; and that with so great liberty, that sometimes he transposes words; changes some for others of the same signification; omits some as sufficiently known by those gone before; and adds others by way of Interpretation. The like liberty of changing words is obvious to a careful Reader in other places of Sacred Writ, as Gen. XVII. 4. compared with 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. compar'd with 43. Exod. XI. 4. compar'd with XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11, &c. compar'd with Deut. IX. 27, &c. Now this shews, That we should not catch at words in Holy Writ, as some of the Jews do, who fancy that those words in Exodus, and those in Deuteronomy were pronounc'd in one and the same moment of time. They fancy also that where there is transposition, and changing the order of what was said first, what last; that the last importing the same sense were also said first. There are in the Holy Histories

quidem ea libertate, ut voces transponat interdum, quasdam cum idem significantibus commutat, omittat quasdam facis nota ex prioribus, addat alia interpretamenti vice. Par mutandi verba libertas & aliis in locis Sacre Scripturæ non indiligenti ejus lectori apparet. Ut Gen. XVII. 4. collato 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. collato 43. Exod. XI. 4. collato XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11. & seq. collato Deut. IX. 27. & seq. Pertinet autem hæc observatio eò ne in Sacris Literis finis VOCULARUM AUCUPES, ut Judæi quidam, qui & illa quæ in Exodo & quæ in Deuteronomio sunt verba pariter, uno eodemq; puncto temporis prolata, simulq; ubi transpositio est inverso ordine, quæ prius fuerant dicta & posterius, posteriora eundem sensum continentia prius etiam dicta somniant. Satis multa sunt in sacris Historiis miracula, ut nova extra necessitatem, nulloq; ului comminisci nihil sit opus.

so many Miracles, that we ought not to invent new ones without necessity, and such as are of no use.

If you require yet another convincing Proof, that this manner of speaking personally, does not denote that they are the proper Words of him that is introduc'd speaking after this manner, you have no more to do but to look into the Gospels, where the Evangelists always make our Saviour to speak personally, and yet recite not the same words that he made use of. For, beside that Christ spoke *Syriac* or *Chaldee*, there is oft great difference between their Recitals. The Holy Spirit never tied it self up to words, as many of our Divines do now a-days. He only prompted the Holy Pen-men to give us the true sense of the Words that God made use of to make the Prophets understand his Will; and it is only in respect to the sense, and to the things, that the Apostles assure us that they were inspired from God.

The third sort of *Prophecy*, or manner by which God made known his Will, was by inward Inspiration, without Vision, and without Voice. Here-
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of two different sorts may be conceiv'd. For either God might inspire *Prophecies* or *Predictions* word for word, as the Prophets should pronounce them: As when there was occasion to tell some Name, unknown before to the Prophet: Or he might inspire only the sense, which they might express afterwards in their own way: As most commonly it happen'd; the first Occasion being very rare. It seems to me, that when any one does apprehend a sense distinctly, it is not difficult for him to express it faithfully. And we ought to suppose, that the Prophets full of the thoughts wherewith God inspir'd them, had a very clear and distinct *Idea* thereof: Which will be easily understood, if we consider, that the things wherewith God inspir'd them were easy to be conceiv'd, and proportion'd to the understanding of all the World; at least as to the literal sense. It happened also sometimes, that without inspiring either Words or Sense, God drew from the Mouth of some Persons, Prophecies which those who spoke them understood otherwise, and did not think them to be Prophecies. He cast them into certain Circumstances, and involv'd

them in certain Events, which made them say things that were true Predictions, without their knowing them to be so. Such was *Caiaphas's* Prediction, when he says, *That it was better that one Man should die for the People, than that the whole Nation should perish.* Now he said not that of himself, says *St. John*, but being *High Priest* that *Tear*, he prophesied. To speak properly, God inspir'd him not those words, but the Nature of the Business they were about in the *Sanhedrim* drew them from him. They were afraid that *Jesus* would draw all the People to him, and enterprize something against the Roman Authority, which would not then fail to send a puissant Army into *Palestine*, and totally waste it. *Caiaphas* thereupon urges a very common Politic Maxim, *That it were better to destroy one Man, though he were innocent, than to expose the whole State to utter Desolation.* In *Caiaphas's* sense there is nothing of Prophetic or Inspir'd. But in the Gospel-sense, that which *Caiaphas* said, signifi'd more than he intended, and contained a true Prophecy. It's very likely that more Predictions of this nature may be found in the Old Testament.

For

For Example: *David* says of himself and of his Enemies divers things, without thinking of prophesying, which contain nevertheless Predictions of that which ought to happen to Christ and his Enemies. He says *Psal. xli. 10.* *He that ate of my Bread hath lift up his Heel against me:* He meant surely some of those who were risen against him in *Asolom's* Conspiracy, as *Achitophel* or some other, and he speaks plainly of a thing happened to himself. It is this very thing that inspires him, if one may so say, these words; which betoken what should befall *Jesus Christ* by the Treachery of one of his Disciples, as appears by *John xiii. 18.* The Author of the *lxiixth*, and *cixth Psalms*, whether it were *David*, or some other, did not probably think of fore-telling what should one day befall a Disciple of the *Messiah*, when he curs'd his Enemies: And yet *St. Peter* in the *Acts* applies some words of these Psalms to *Judas*. There needs no great sharp-sightedness to see that the Author pretended not to speak of *Judas*, and that he was not immediately inspir'd by the good and merciful Spirit of God, when he said, *Set thou a wicked Man over him, and let Sa-*

Acts i. 20.

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tan stand at his Right-hand : When he shall be judged let him be condemned, and let his Prayer become Sin : Let his days be few, and let another take his Office : Let his Children be Fatherless, and his Wife a Widow : Let his Children continually be Vagabonds and beg ; let them seek their Bread also out of their desolate places : Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger spoil his Labour : Let there be none to extend Mercy unto him ; neither let there be any to favour his Fatherless Children : Let his Posterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out : Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembered with the Lord ; and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out, &c. It is plain that these are the words of a Man full of excessive Choler; and of an extream desire to be revenged. Now the Law of *Moses* permitted not, any more than the Gospel, to wish ill, or do it, to Children, in revenge of the Injury received from their Parents. Yet some famous Divines have put in the Title of this Psalm, *That David, As a TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST, being driven on by a singular Zeal, prays that Vengeance may be executed on his Enemies.* And where do they find that Jesus Christ

Christ does curse his Enemies at that rate? Have they forgotten the words that proceeded from his dying Mouth, in favour of the wickedest Race that ever was? Those that crucified him, were they not the greatest Enemies he had, and the most obstinate Adversaries of the Gospel? And, far from making the Imprecations against them that they deserved, did not he pray to his Father to forgive them? Has he not ordered us to imitate him, and to pray for those that persecute us? I cannot understand how it can be said, that *David*, as a *Type of Jesus Christ*, made such horrible Imprecations against his Enemies.

I confess, I understand not Christian Religion, if it permit the pronouncing such Curses, and the wishing to be revenged after so cruel a manner, as does the Author of this Psalm, and those of divers others, in which we find such like Imprecations; As that of *Psal.cxxxvii.* *O Daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed ; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us : Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little Ones against the Stones !* God forbid that we should desire to dash out the Brains of
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Infidel's Children ! Yet nevertheless we see that all these Psalms are indifferently sung in Protestant Churches, without taking notice that they are not all equally inspir'd. And I remember that asking a Divine, how we could sing Psalms full of such Imprecations ? He answered me slightly, that it was lawful to use them against the Enemies of the Church, and that for his part he made that Application to them, when he sung these Psalms. Thus you see what the Jewish Opinion of the Inspiration of words, and of the Divinity of each Verse of the Scripture produces.

We may conceive another sort of *Prophecies*, which consisted not in foretelling things to come, but in explaining the Scripture, and in composing readily Hymns to the Honour of God. There are some Examples of these Hymns in the New Testament, as that of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, and some others. It seems as if there went only Piety and Zeal to the composing them. At least it is very conceivable, that a pious, zealous Man may easily now a days praise God in that manner, without any Preparation. A good part of the Psalms seems to have been thus compos'd, as also di-

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vers other Songs which are in the Old Testament. The Psalms where the Verses, or the Pauses, begin with the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, seem to have been compos'd at more leisure. For this Regularity shews that there was Meditation and Pains used, as is in Acrosticks. See *Psal. cxix.* and the *Lamentations of Jeremy*. So we see too, that in this sort of Works, the Holy Writers do not speak in the Name of God, nor begin their Discourse with, *Thus saith the Lord*. Yet we may say that the Authors of these pious Songs were full of the Holy Spirit, when they compos'd them; that is to say, it was a Spirit of Piety that carry'd them to take pains in those Compositions; and in that sense we may say that they were inspir'd by God, though not so immediately as Predictions. The Spirit of God is often taken for the Spirit of Holiness, that is to say, for a disposition of Spirit conformable to the Commandments of God; as many Learned Men have observed.

I will now remark briefly in what manner the Sacred Histories have been written : And then, in treating of Doctrines, I will speak of that sort of

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Prophecy that consists in explaining the Holy Scripture.

II. Of the Histories in the Holy Scripture.

It is certain that those who took pains in the Histories of the Old and New Testament, were pious Persons; who had not writ those Histories, but out of a Principle of Piety. It was not to satisfy our Curiosity that they undertook those Works; but to show us the Care that the Providence of God hath always taken of good People, and the Punishments it inflicts upon the wicked; to give us Examples of Piety and Virtue; and lastly, to inform us of certain matters of Fact, upon which our Faith is founded, and of the Precepts which God had given to Jews and Christians, by the Ministry of his Prophets, Apostles, Angels themselves, and even of his own Son. We ought also to believe that they have given us the Truth of the History to the best of their knowledge, without adding or subtracting any thing out of design to deceive us. And as they were very well informed of the principal matters of Fact which they relate, having themselves seen them, or taken them out of good Records, we may be confident that for the

the main of the History they tell us nothing that is not exactly true. These Qualifications alone are sufficient to oblige us to give Credit to them. An Historian that is honest, and well inform'd of that which he relates, is worthy of Credit: And if you add thereto, that he has also suffer'd Death in maintaining the Truth of his History, as the Apostles did, who were put to death for maintaining that they had seen and heard, that which the Gospel tells us of Jesus Christ; then not only that History will be worthy of Credit, but they who shall refuse to believe it, can pass for no other than Fools or obstinate Persons. In this manner we may be fully assur'd of the Truth of the History of the New Testament; that is to say, That there was a Jesus who did divers Miracles, who was rais'd from the Dead, & ascended up into Heaven, and who taught the Doctrine which we find in the Gospels. And this Jesus having born witness to the History of the Jews, we cannot doubt its truth, at least as to the principal Matters.

This can not be call'd in question, without absolutely renouncing Christianity. But People believe commonly two things

things which seem to me groundless ; unless they ground them upon Jewish Tradition, a Principle, as is well known, extremely uncertain. They believe, first, that the sacred Historians were inspir'd with the Things themselves : And next, that they were inspir'd also with the Terms in which they have express'd them. In a word, that the holy History was dictated word for word by the holy Spirit, and that the Authors, whose Names it bears, were no other than Secretaries of that Spirit, who writ exactly as it dictated.

As to what concerns the Inspiration of Historical Matters of Fact, I observe, First, That they suppose it without bringing any positive Proof, and that consequently a Man may with good reason reject their Supposition. They say only that if it were not so, we could not be perfectly certain of the truth of the History. But, beside that a Consequence cannot undeniably prove a Fact ; and that it may happen that one cannot disprove a Consequence, although that which is pretended to be prov'd thereby be not true ; I affirm that it is false, that we cannot be perfectly certain of the main substance of a
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History unless we suppose it inspir'd. We are, for Example, perfectly certain that *Julius Caesar* was kill'd in the Senate by a Conspiracy, whereof *Brutus* and *Cassius* were the Chiefs ; without believing that they who have inform'd us hereof were inspir'd. There are such like matters in the Histories of all Nations, which we cannot doubt of, without being guilty of Folly and Opiniatrety ; and yet without supposing that these Histories were writ by Divine Inspiration.

In the second place, this Opinion supposes without necessity a Miracle, of which the Scripture it self says nothing. To relate faithfully a matter of Fact, which a Man has seen and well observed, requires no Inspiration. The Apostles had no need of Inspiration to tell what they had seen, and what they had heard Christ say. There needs nothing for that but Memory and Honesty. Neither had those Authors who writ only the things that came to pass before their time, as the Author of the Books of *Chronicles*, any more need of Inspiration for copying of good Records. And as for those who made the Records, there was no more requisite,

quisite, than that they should be well inform'd of what they set down, either by their Eyes, or by their Ears, or by faithful Witnesses. It will be said, perhaps, that according to this Opinion, the Faith which we build upon the Scripture will be no other than a Faith purely *human*, because it will be grounded only upon Human Testimonies. To this I answer, That neither do we know, any more than by a *Human Faith*, that the Book which we call the Gospel of St. *Matthew* is truly his. It is nothing but the uniform Consent of Christians, since the beginning of Christianity to this day, that makes us believe it; which in truth is no more than a Testimony purely *Human*. We do not believe it because we are assur'd of it by an Oracle from Heaven, which has told us that this Book is truly that Apostle's; but on the same account that we believe that the *Eneid* is truly *Virgil's*, and the *Iliad* *Homer's*. But that which they here call *Human Faith* is of as great certainty, as the Demonstrations of Geometry. And even *Divine Faith* it self, as they call it, is built upon this Certainty. For, in truth, we do not believe in Jesus Christ, but be-
cause

cause we are perswaded that the History we have of him is true. And how do we know that this History is true? Because Eye-witnesses have written it, and have suffer'd Death to maintain the truth of their Testimonies. And how are we certain that these were Eye-witnesses, and that they suffer'd Death rather than deny what they said? By History; that is to say, by the Testimony of Men, who affirm it to us constantly from the time of the Establishment of the Christian Religion to the Age we live in. So that *Human Faith* is found to be the ground of *Divine Faith*. But we need not fear that this Foundation is not solid enough. For without ceasing to be a Man, and reasoning no more than a Brute, it cannot be disputed; as has been made appear by many Learned Men, who have written of the Truth of Christian Religion.

In the third place; The common Opinion is contrary to the Testimony even of the Sacred Writers. St. *Luke* begins his Gospel after this manner. *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in Order a Declaration of those things, which are most surely believed*
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among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the Word: It seemed good to me also, having had perfect Understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. You may observe in these words a Confirmation of what I have been saying, and a full Proof that St. Luke learn'd not that which he told us by Inspiration, but by Information from those who knew it exactly. Now if you allow St. Luke to have so faithfully related to us the Life and Discourses of Jesus (without having been particularly inspir'd) that we ought to receive what he tells us with an entire belief in his Fidelity; you ought not to make any difficulty to grant the same concerning the other Historians of the Scripture. If any of them ought to be inspir'd, certainly they were the Evangelists. And if you will have another Example of a History written without Inspiration, you have but to read the Books of Kings, and of the Chronicles, being Extracts out of publick Registers, and out of particular Wri-

Writings of divers Prophets, to whom the Authors at every turn refer the Reader.

Lastly, It is very plain that the Historians of the Scripture were not inspir'd; by the Contradictions that are found in several Circumstances of their Histories. The Evangelists agree perfectly among themselves in what concerns the main of the History of Jesus Christ, but there are some Circumstances wherein they disagree; a clear proof that every Particular was not inspir'd. For although the Circumstances wherein they differ are things of small Consequence, yet if the holy Spirit had dictated all to them, as is pretended, they would perfectly agree in every thing; these Circumstances being as well known to God as the main of the History. For Example; St. Matthew says, *That Judas, repenting that he had delivered our Lord to the Jews, threw the Mony into the Temple; that going away he hang'd himself; and that the Priests, having gathered up the Mony, bought therewith a Field.* St. Luke in the Acts brings in Peter saying, *That Judas, after having purchased a Field with the Reward of Iniquity, falling headlong, burst asunder in the midst; in-*

ſomuch that his Bowels gushed out. Here is a manifeſt Contradiſtion, which the Learned in vain endeavour to reconcile. And there are many other ſuch like.

But this, you will ſay, leſſens very much the Authority of the *Evangelists*. For if they could be deceiv'd in any thing, who will ſecure us that they were not deceiv'd in every thing? I anſwer

to that in the words of *Grotius*;

* Imo hoc ipſum Scriptores illos ab omni doli ſuſpicionē liberare debet; cum ſoleant illi qui falſa teſtantur, de compaſto omnia ita narrare, ut ne in ſpeciem quidem quicquam diverſum appareat: Quod ſi ex levi aliquā diſcrepantiā, etiam quæ conciliari nequiret, totis libris fides decederet, jam nulli libro, præſertim Hiſtoriarum, credendum eſſet; cum tamen Polybio & Halicarnaſſenſi, & Livio & Plutarcho, in quibus talia deprehenduntur, ſua apud nos de rerum ſumma conſtet autoritas.

* *Even this it ſelf ought to free theſe Writers from all Suſpicion of Deceit. For thoſe who teſtify Falſhoods, uſe ſo to agree their Stories, that there may not ſo much as ſeem to be any difference. But if becauſe of any ſmall Diſagreement, although it could not be reconcil'd, whole Books ſhould loſe their Credit, then no Book, eſpecially of Hiſtory, would deſerve to be believed; whereas the Authority of Polibius, and Halicarnaſſenſis, and Livy, and Plutarch, in whom ſuch things are found, as to the main ſtands firm among us.* St. Chryſoſtom alſo in his firſt Homily on St. Matthew, very plainly

plainly aſſures us, that God permitted the Apoſtles to fall into theſe little Contrarieties; that we might ſee that they were not agreed to feign a Hiſtory at Pleaſure; and that we might more readily believe them in the main of the Hiſtory. When a Man has ſeen moſt of the Things which he relates, in thoſe he can hardly be deceiv'd. But he may be eaſily deceiv'd in ſome Circumſtances of Things which he has not ſeen.

We might yet add a fifth Proof, which *Grotius* affords us, in his Notes on that part of his Treatiſe of the *Verity of the Chriſtian Religion*, which I lately cited. It is, that the *Evangelists*, in ſetting down a certain time, do not determine it exactly; becauſe they did not know it ſo precisely that they could ſet down the number of Days or Months. See Luke I. 56. III. 23. John II. 6. VI. 10, 19. XIX. 14. You find in thoſe places, *About a certain Time*; or, *About a certain Number*: Which ſhews evidently, that the Hiſtory was not dictated immediately by the Holy Spirit, who knew exactly the Number and the Time that was in queſtion.

It is clear then, in my Judgment, that the Things were not Inspir'd ; nor by consequence the Words ; which are less considerable than the Things. It is not certain Terms that are the Rule of our Faith ; but a certain Sense. And it is little matter what words we make use of, provided we go not astray from the Doctrine which God has reveal'd. Those who read the Originals, are in no better way of being sav'd, than those that can read only the Translations. For there is no Translation so false, but that taken in gross, it expresses clearly enough that which is necessary to Salvation. Otherwise it would be necessary that all Christians had learn'd *Hebrew* and *Greek*, which is altogether impossible ; and we should exclude from Salvation, almost all those who have made profession of the Christian Religion in our Western Parts, from the Time of the Apostles, to the Age we live in.

That Providence also which has preserved us these Holy Books, to lead us in the way to Salvation, so many Ages after the death of those that writ them, has preserv'd inviolably nothing but the Sense. It has suffer'd Men to

put

put in Synonymous Words one for another ; and not hinder'd the slipping in of a great many Varieties, little considerable as to the Sense, but remarkable as to the Words and Order. There is in *St. Matthew*, for Example, more than a thousand divers Readings in less than eleven hundred Verses ; but whereof there is not perhaps fifty, that can make any change in the Sense ; and that change too is but in things of little importance to piety. If God had thought it necessary, for the Good of his Church, to inspire into the Sacred Historians the terms which they ought to use, he would undoubtedly have taken more care to preserve them. It is plain therefore that he design'd principally to preserve the Sense.

Thus then neither the Words, nor the things, have been inspir'd into those who have given us the Sacred History ; altho in the main that History is very true in the principal Facts. It may be, that in certain Circumstances, little considerable, there may be some Fault ; as appears sufficiently by the contradictory Passages. It is true, that some have strain'd themselves to reconcile those Passages, as I have already observ'd ; but it is after so violent

lent and constrain'd a fashion; and there are such divers Opinions about these Reconciliations; that if we examine the thing never so little, without prejudice, we shall find that the Learned trouble themselves to no purpose; and that they would do much better to confess ingenuously, that there are some Contradictions in things of small importance.

Nay further, I know some that believe we ought not to receive all the Jewish Histories, without distinction, for true Histories. They pretend we ought to except the Book of *Esther*. And it is true, that if *Assuerus*, of whom the Book of *Esther* speaks, be *Ochus* that reign'd after *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, this Book would have been written at such a time as there was no Prophet in *Israel*. But altho Mr. *Cappel* pretend that *Achassuerus* is the same with *Ochus*, his conjecture is not unquestionable. They pretend also, that this History has all the Characters of a History made at pleasure. I shall not examine that at present. But however it be, it is no Heresy to reject a Book of the Jewish Canon; as neither is it to reject one of our own. At least, the Pro-

testants

testants have not call'd a *Lutheran* an *Heretick*, for having said that the Epistle of *St. James* is an * *Epistle of Straw*; no more than they have many of the Learned, for not receiving the Second Epistle of *St. Peter*, which a famous Critic styles, † *A Fiction of some ancient Christian misemploying his leisure-Time*. The Jewish *Sanhedrim* may easily have received into their Canon Books that had no Divine Authority.

To come now to the Doctrines which are in the Holy Scriptures, and not there attributed to a particular Revelation; I will begin with examining those which are in the Writings of the Apostles, after which I will pass to those of the Old Testament.

It is commonly believed, that the Apostles; as well as the Prophets, were inspir'd both as to Words and Things. Yet with this difference, that the Prophets were not always inspir'd, but only when God gave them order to speak to the People in his Name. Whereas the Apostles were always inspir'd, without being raviht into Extasies, as the Prophets were before their prophesying. This Opinion is founded upon the Promise

that

* *Straminea Epistola.*

† *Commentum veteris Christiani otio suo abutentis. Jof. Scaliger.*

III.
Of the Doctr. of
the Scriptures,
and Inspiration
of the Apostles.

that Christ made his Apostles to send them the holy Spirit, which he performed on the Day of *Pentecost*. The words of Christ are, *John XVI. 13. When he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will guide you into all Truth.* He says also elsewhere to his Apostles; *When they bring you into 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,* Luk. XII. 11. These are two the most formal Passages that can be quoted in this Matter. It is requisite that we examine them with some attention, to see if they prove that which they are produc'd for; viz. 'That the Apostles 'were honour'd with a continual presence of the Holy Ghost, who dictated to them all that they said in matter of Religion; inasmuch that all their words ought to be considered as 'Oracles.

To begin with the latter; I observe first, That he does not promise a perpetual Inspiration, but only upon certain Occasions; viz. when the Apostles should be brought before the Tribunals of Judges. So that if there were nothing

nothing else in it, this Passage would not at all favour the common Opinion. But there is more in it: for it wholly destroys it. If Jesus Christ had resolv'd to give his Apostles the Holy Spirit to inspire them perpetually, he would not have told them singly, that they should not trouble themselves for what they had to say before the Judges, because then the Spirit should speak in them. But he would have said that they need not fear that at any time they should want words, because the holy Spirit should accompany them without ceasing, as well before the Powers of the World, as when they should speak to the People. If a Man had a Design to supply another with Money for all his Expences; would he say to him, Do not trouble your self to get Money for the Journies you are to take, for you shall then be supplied? He would rather say to him, doubtless, that he should not fear to want Money, because he should be suppli'd constantly for all his Occasions. A Man promises not for a particular Occasion, that which he intends to give alike at all Times. And when a Man makes a particular Promise, it is a plain sign that he intends to perform it but upon certain Occasions. In

In the second place ; As I acknowledge that the Apostles may have had Prophetick Inspirations on certain Occasions, and that in effect they have had them ; so I confess that I find my self tempted to believe, that by these words, *The Holy Ghost shall teach you in that hour what ye ought to say* : Or, as St. Matthew has expressed it, *It is not ye that speak, it is the Spirit of your Heavenly Father that speaks in you* ; I am, I say, tempted to believe, that by these words Christ meant only to say this ; viz. The Spirit of Courage and Holiness, which the Gospel produces in your Hearts, will teach ye what ye ought to say. That is to say, That the Apostles had no more to do, but to believe in the Gospel, to be assur'd that the Disposition of Spirit which that Heavenly Doctrine would give them, would never let them want words ; not even when they were to defend themselves before the Tribunals of the greatest Powers. That which inclines me to this Explication of Christ's words, is, that in comparing this Promise with the Event, it seems not to have been performed in any other sense than that which I have now observ'd ; and that neither ought it to be inter-

interpreted so strictly, as if on these Occasions a Word might not slip from the Apostles, that were not conformable to the Spirit of the Gospel.

St. Luke tells us, *Acts XXIII.* that St. Paul having been brought before the Sanhedrim, began to speak after this manner ; *Men and Brethren, I have liv'd in all good Conscience before God until this day.* Here is nothing yet that one might not say without Inspiration ; as neither is there any thing but what is conformable to the Gospel. But what follows is a sign of Passion, wherewith neither the Spirit of Prophecy, nor the patient Spirit of the Gospel inspired St. Paul. At that word, says St. Luke, *Ananias the High Priest commanded them that stood by, to smite him on the Mouth.* The Apostle, provok'd by this Unjustice, answers him angrily, *God shall smite thee, thou whited Wall.* For sittest thou to judge me according to the Law, and commandest thou me to be smitten contrary to the Law ? And they that stood by, says St. Luke, said to Paul, *Revilest thou God's High Priest ?* Then said Paul, *I wist not Brethren that he was the High Priest : For it is written, Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Ruler of thy*

thy People. It is plain, me-thinks, that if the Spirit of Prophecy had inspir'd St. Paul with the beginning of this Discourse; it did not so neither with the Answer he made the High Priest; nor with the Excuse he made use of afterward when they told him he was the High Priest that he spoke to. He gave Sentence against himself by his Answer, supposing that he had known him who order'd him to be smitten. And as for the Excuse, it is plain it is not very good; because the Gospel allows not to revile any Man; whether he be a Magistrate, or a private Man. Jesus Christ, says St. Peter, *has suffered for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his steps; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Neither do I believe that the Spirit of Prophecy inspir'd St. Paul with what he said afterward: At least there is no Body but could have said as much, without Inspiration. Now St. Paul knowing, says the Historian, *that the one part were Sadduces, and the other Pharisees, cried out in the Council, Men and Brethren, I am a Pharisee, the Son of a Pharisee: of the Hope and Resurrection of the Dead, I am called*

called in question. This expression also of St. Luke, (*Paul knowing*) makes it evident that his Speech was an Effect of his Prudence, rather than of Prophetic Inspiration.

I am not the first that has made such-like Observations. St. Jerom in his Dialogue against the Pelagians, Lib. 3. brings in Atticus, who bears the part of an Orthodox Doctor, speaking of St. Paul; * *Do you think St. Paul, at that time when he writ, (The Cloak which I left at Troas, when thou comest bring with thee, and the Books, but especially the Parchments) did think of the Heavenly Mysteries, and not of those things which are useful to Humane Life, and necessary to the Body, &c? The Apostle is struck by an Officer, and he falls foul upon the High Priest that commanded him to be smitten: God shall smite thee thou whited Wall. Where is that patience of our Saviour, who as a Lamb led to the Slaughter open'd not his Mouth, but answered mildly to him that struck him?*

Putasne Apostolum eo tempore quo scribebat; *Lacernam sive penulam, quam reliqui Troade veniens asser, ac libros & maxime membranas; de cœlestibus cogitasse mysteriis & non de his quæ in usu communis vitæ vel corpori necessaria sunt, &c? Cœditur Apostolus à Ministro, & contra Pontificem qui cedere imperaverat sententiam dirigit: Percutiet te Deus Paries dealbate. Ubi est illa patientia Salvatoris qui quasi agnus ductus ad victimam non aperuit os suum, sed clementer loquitur verberanti? Si malè loquutus sum argue de malo, sin autem benè quid me cedis? Non Apostolo detrahimus, sed gloriam domini prædicamus, qui in carne passus carnis injuriam superat & fragilitatem. Ut taceam illud quod commemorat; Alexander Erarius multa mihi mala ostendit: reddet illi Dominus in die illa Justus Judex.*

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If I have spoken Ill, convince me of the ill; but if Well, why do you strike me? *We do not detract from the Apostle, but we declare the Glory of our Lord; who suffering in the Flesh, overcame the difficulties and weaknesses of the Flesh. Not to mention what he says in another place. Alexander the Copper-smith did me much Evil; the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will reward him in that day.* It is true, St. Jerom elsewhere disapproves a part of that which here he makes his Orthodox Doctor speak; but it is plain, at least, that one might speak it without being guilty of Heresy.

Lastly; When we examine the Discourses which we have of Christ's Disciples before divers Judges, we may easily perceive that they speak with much Piety and Courage; but it seems not that they say any thing which one might not as well say without Inspiration. If we read the Histories of those that have been put to death for Religion in the last Ages, we shall find many that were not Prophets, making excellent Discourses at their Trials, without being prepar'd before-hand. St. Stephen was full of the Gospel-Spirit, when he made the Harangue we read

Acts

Acts VII. It seems nevertheless, that he therein mix'd divers Circumstances of History, which were nothing to the purpose of the matter he spoke about; and which neither can tolerably be reconcil'd with the History of the Old Testament. And indeed very learned Men have been of Opinion, that St. Stephen's Memory fail'd him. Mr. Cap-pel in his *Spicilegium* on *Vers. 16.* says: * *It is certain that in this place we should read* ὁ τῆς Ἀβραάμ, *and understand* ἐκ-γονῆς, *that it might not be said Abraham, but his Grandchild Jacob bought this Monument. Or we may say, that Stephen, by the fault of his Memory, confounded two Facts that were somewhat alike, to wit, the Purchase made by Abraham, whereof Gen. XXIII. with that made by Jacob, Gen. XXXIII. 19.*

However, it is no ways incongruous, that by the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, we should understand the Spirit of Holiness and Constancy, which the Gospel gives; or such a disposition of Mind, as is an Effect of our Faith. We know it is a manner of speaking common in the Old and New Testament; and that the *Hebrews* call the *Spirit of Jealousy*, the *Spirit of Stupidity*, 19.

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* Certum est hoc loco legendū esse ὁ τῆς Ἀβραάμ, subaudiendumq; ἐκγονῆς, ut hic dicatur non ipse Abraham, sed ejus nepos Jacob emisisse monumentum illud; vel dicendum est Stephanum lapsū MNH-MONIKO duo similia facta confudisse, emotionem nempe ab Abrahamo factam de qua Gen. c. XXIII. cum eā quæ à Jacobo facta est, de quā Gen. XXXIII.

the

the *Spirit of Fear*, the *Spirit of Courage*, the *Spirit of Meekness*, &c. the different dispositions of Mind, that render a Man Jealous, Stupid, Fearful, Courageous, Meek, &c. The Criticks have observ'd this long ago.

But I must needs desire you once again to take notice, that when I say the Disciples of Christ had not Prophetic Inspirations, for answering before the Tribunal of Judges, to the Accusations brought against them; I do not mean thereby that it never so fell out; but only that ordinarily they spoke without particular Inspiration. I conceive indeed, that if one of them had appeared before a Judge, whose Language he naturally understood not, it would have been necessary that God should have dictated to him the proper words he was to make use of. And I doubt not but God has often done even that, in favour of such of the Apostles as have preach'd the Gospel to barbarous Nations beyond the Limits of the Roman Empire, and perhaps too sometimes amongst the *Romans* and *Greeks*.

However it be, it seems to me that if what I have been saying be consider'd, it must be granted that the Passages of
St.

St. Luke and St. Matthew, where Christ promises his Spirit to his Disciples, are not strong enough to render the common Opinion indisputable.

This, Sir, is about half the Writing which was given me concerning the thoughts of Mr. N. on this Subject. It is too long to make an end of transcribing it at present. But you shall have the rest by the next Post: upon condition you will promise me to peruse it carefully, and give me your sense of it. It were extremely to be wished, that some able and judicious Person would undertake to handle this Matter thorowly, in opposition to our Author, but without Heat and Passion. This Opinion is maintain'd by so many Proofs, and Arguments that seem so strong; that tho I know it may be render'd very odious, and that very malicious Consequences may be drawn from it; yet I must confess I do not know by what Principles it can be overthrown. And that which gives this Author yet more advantage, is, That this Matter has been so little handled, that all the Writings upon the Scripture to this day afford us scarce any light therein. A Man must fetch all out of his own Stock, to answer
D 2 him;

him. And it is no small trouble to have one's Mind continually exercised in clearing up the Difficulties of a Subject so little known, and giving clear Principles in so obscure a Matter.

I would be glad, Sir, that there were any in your Province, or elsewhere, that would undertake to clear it: for I know none of my Friends here that will engage in it. If you could prevail with some learned and moderate Divine to take that task in hand, without railing as Divines too often do, when they know not how to answer their Antagonist, you would infinitely oblige those who have read this little Writing.

I am, &c.

T H E

T H E
SECOND LETTER.

I Am not surpriz'd, Sir, at your desire to see the latter part of that Writing, whereof I sent you the former by last Post, before your are willing to give me your Judgment on it. A matter so important and so delicate requires to be considered with much Attentioness. We must lay aside then once again the Examination of the critical History, to resume it next Post. For I cannot transcribe the rest of the Writing of Mr. N. and entertain you at the same time upon any other Subject. Mr.—— whom you mention, is well qualified to instruct his Flock in matters of Piety, but has not, I doubt, Learning sufficient, nor Parts strong enough to master the Difficulties that attend the answering directly, and by positive Arguments, a Writing which some other very able Divines dare not

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meddle

meddle with. It were better, in my Judgment, not to answer at all than to answer ill ; and to seek only to defame an Author whom one cannot confute. I should be the more troubled to see that done, by how much I understand that the Author is a very pious Man, and one who assuredly believes not the evil Consequences, which some Men, (too ready to judg of their Neighbours) may draw from his Notions. I fear that he you speak of would content himself in gathering together a great number of those odious Consequences, and would think that he had thereby sufficiently refuted the Opinion, without considering, that tho a Man cannot disingage a Doctrine from the absurd Consequences that by some may be link'd to it, it does not therefore follow that the Doctrine is false. It should first be made appear that the Arguments brought for an Opinion are not solid ; and after that one may come to the Consequences. Otherwise while the Arguments that prove an Opinion subsist in full force, all the Consequences that may be deriv'd from it cannot overthrow it. Nevertheless if you believe him capable to acquit himself of this

this undertaking, you may perswade him to it when you think fit. But put him in Mind at the same time, that it is the part of an honest Man, and of one that would bestow his Pains to some good purpose, to do it with all the Moderation and Meekness imaginable. St. Jerom commends *Nepotien*, * *That he used to* * *Quod so-*
bear willingly, answer modestly, allow Truth, *leret libenter*
not sharply confute Error, and teach rather *audire, respon-*
than conquer whom he disputed with. *dere vercun-*
And *dè, recta susci-*
it were to be wished that our Divines *perc, prava non*
now adays would make it their business *acriter confu-*
to deserve so good an Elogy ; whereas it *tare, disputan-*
seems that they strive only to attain to *tem contra se*
the Name of great Railers, and value not *magis docere*
Peoples having an ill Opinion of their *quam vincere,*
Manners, provided that they pass for
Men of Parts. I speak not this as if I
suspected that Mr. ——— resembles one
of those Divines I find fault with ; but
because I believe a Man cannot be too
much caution'd against so general a
Defect.

But these Moralities would carry me too far, if I should give my self the liberty to pursue them. It is better that I keep my word with you, and give you the following part of that Writing. And here it is.

Continuation of
the Writing of
Mr. N. concern-
ing the Inspirati-
on of the Apostles.

Let us now examine that Passage of *St. John*, *When the Spirit of Truth shall come, he will lead you into all Truth*. Interpreters observe that we must not understand by *All Truths*, any others than those which the Apostles were ignorant of, and which it was needful for them to know, that they might be able to acquit themselves as they ought to do of their Charge. They receiv'd not the holy Spirit to learn, for Example, that there was a God; nor to be instructed in the Mathematicks. They knew already this first Truth, and of the other they had no need.

The generality of Interpreters believe that these words denote a perpetual Assistance of the holy Spirit, that made the Apostles absolutely infallible. To know whether they are in the right or no, we must examine the Accomplishment of the Promise; and if it appear that it agrees not with this Explanation of our Saviour's words, we must seek another sense, and try to discover wherein the Infallibility of the Apostles consists.

We find a Story *Acts* xv. whereby it appears manifestly that the Apostles did not pass in their own time for Persons, whose every word was an Oracle,
as

as they are now reputed to have done. Some Jews converted to the Christian Religion, not being able to shake off their ancient Opinion concerning Ceremonies, would have had the *Gentiles* circumcis'd. *St. Paul*, and *St. Barnabas* were against this: but their Authority was not sufficient to put to silence the Judaizing Christians. Altho *St. Paul* was as much an Apostle, as those whom our Lord had chosen while he was on Earth, yet they would not believe him. The Church at *Jerusalem* must be consulted.

Further also, the Apostles and Elders of the Church, being assembl'd to examine and determine this Affair, dispute a great while before they agree upon it; and it was not till after they had heard *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, *St. Barnabas*, and *St. James*, that the Assembly came to a Resolution. If they had been fill'd with the Spirit of Infallibility, such as is conceiv'd now adays, they would have been all at first of one Mind; and there would have needed no more to be done, but to charge one of them to give out the Oracle in the Name of the whole Assembly.

There

There happen'd likewise, before that, another thing related by St. *Luke*, *Acts* x. which makes it also very evident, that the Holy Ghost which the Apostles receiv'd the day of *Pentecost*, had not taught them all they ought to know, (so far was it from rendring them at first dash infallible) and that they were not then consider'd as Persons out of danger of falling into Error, as they have been since accounted. St. *Peter* needed a Vision, as appears by the Story of *Cornelius* the *Centurion*, to learn that he ought not to scruple preaching the Gospel to the *Gentiles*; although Christ had order'd his Apostles before his ascending into Heaven, to preach the Gospel unto all Creatures; whereby he clearly enough denoted the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*.

St. *Peter* after having obey'd the express Order which he receiv'd from God, to preach the Gospel to *Cornelius*, was no sooner returned to *Jernsalem*, but the faithful Ones of the Circumcision, not dreaming that his Apostleship render'd him infallible, dispute with him; and tell him, after a manner that shows that the Infallibility which we now attribute to him, was to them unknown,

known, *Thou wentest unto Men uncircumcis'd, and didst eat with them.*

Many Years, as it seems, after that, *Peter* being at *Antioch*, had not the Courage to maintain openly, that the Jews might eat with the *Gentiles* without scruple. For before that certain Persons came from *James*, he did eat with the *Gentiles*: but when they were come he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the Circumcision: And the other *Jews* dissembled likewise with him, in so much that St. *Paul* observing, that they walked not uprightly, was obliged to tell *Peter* before them all, If thou being a Jew livest after the manner of *Gentiles*, and not as do the *Jews*, why compellest thou the *Gentiles* to live as do the *Jews*? It is said that St. *Peter* was guilty of a fault only in his Conduct, and not in his Doctrine; that he believ'd and maintain'd the same with St. *Paul*, but that on this occasion he dissembled his Opinion; and that he did not otherways constrain the *Gentiles* to live as the *Jews*, but in abstaining to eat with them. The *Gentiles*, say they, seeing that St. *Peter* did not eat with them because they were uncircumcis'd, did, by reason of this his Conduct, believe themselves oblig'd to

to be circumcis'd, and consequently to observe the other Ceremonies of the Law. They believ'd that it was a Sin to continue uncircumcis'd, because *St. Peter* forbore to live familiarly with them on that account; and on the contrary that it was a Duty to observe the Circumcision. So that it was by his Conduct only that *St. Peter* forc'd them to live as *Jews*. And indeed it is true that by efficaciously engaging one to do a thing, after what manner soever it be, we are said to force one to do it. See *Gen.* xix.

3. *Luke* xxiv. 19.

I believe really that this is the best Explanation. But it proves clearly that the Metaphysical Infallibility which is attributed to the Apostles is not of Apostolick Tradition. For, in truth, to dissemble a true Doctrine when they ought to preach it, and to ingage People in an Error by their Conduct, is visibly a human Weakness, and which becomes not those who are look'd upon as the simple Instruments of the holy Spirit speaking by their Mouths. *St. Peter's* Conduct gave the *Gentiles* to understand, as well as if he had told it them, that they must observe the Circumcision; and to give them
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to understand it by forbearing to eat with them, was almost the same thing as to tell it them by word of Mouth. Nay more; it is not unlikely that *St. Peter* believed that this Dissimulation was lawful, as well as *St. Barnabas*, and the other *Jews* who had followed his Example; otherwise it is not credible that so pious Men, who were the first Ministers of the Gospel, would have done it. And so we must confess that they were guilty of some weakness even in Doctrine, although they recanted it soon, nor was it of great importance.

There is also a great difference observable in the manner of Christ's speaking (*He that had received the Spirit without measure*) and that in which the Apostles express themselves; whereas according to the common Opinion it ought to be the same. If the same Spirit had render'd them infallible, they had right to declare to the World the Doctrine of Salvation with the same Power, and to speak as authoritatively as Jesus Christ. But we see the contrary in their Writings. Christ spoke as one having Authority. *You have heard it was said of old, &c. But I say unto you,*

you, &c. The Apostles, on the contrary, declare that they say nothing of themselves, and refer all to the Prophets, and to Jesus Christ: *Acts* xxvi. 22. *1 Cor.* xi. 23.

And that which is yet more considerable is, that they distinguish manifestly that which they say themselves from that which Christ had said. *And unto the married, I command, yet not I, but the Lord, &c. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord, &c.* So St. Paul speaks; *1 Cor.* vii. 10, 12. which he would not have done, had he been aware that his Auditors had believ'd his words as infallible as the words of Christ.

Methinks these are convincing Proofs that the Apostles had not a perpetual Inspiration, which might give their words an indisputable Authority. I do not deny but they had many immediate Inspirations, and divers Heavenly Visions; as appears by the *Acts*, by the *Revelations*, and by divers other places of Scripture; Nay, I am so fully perswaded they had, that I think him no good Christian who doubts of it. But the Question here is concerning an uniform, constant and ordinary Inspiration

ration, as it is commonly explained in the Divinity-Schools.

It may be you will say there are divers Arguments for this sort of Inspiration as strong as those I have brought to shew the contrary. The Apostles began their Letter *Acts* xv. after this manner, *It has seem'd good to the Holy Ghost and to us.* By which it appears, say some, that they were fill'd with the Spirit of Infallibility, which dictated to them what they ought to say. I desire first, that those who say so, reconcile this Supposition with the Dispute that was among the Apostles, before they came to this Conclusion. In the second place: It is ~~not likely~~^{apparent} that if the Holy Ghost had possess'd them in such a manner, that they had been only simple Instruments by which He express'd his Will, they ~~would~~ not have plac'd themselves in equal Rank with ~~the~~ Him; but ~~would~~ have said simply, It has appear'd good to the Holy Ghost, who speaks by us. What Prophet ever said, it seem'd good to God and to me? In the third place; Suppose there be here, as the Critics say, a Figure by which is express'd one and the same thing by two words; and that this manner of speak-

speaking amounts to no more but this, *It has seemed good to us who are full of the Holy Ghost*; The perpetual Inspiration about which I am now arguing cannot be hence concluded. The Apostles and all the Church of *Jerusalem* were animated by the Spirit of the Gospel, without being continually full of the Spirit of Prophecy. If it were otherwise, we should be forced to say that the whole Church of *Jerusalem*, not only the Apostles, but also the Elders of the Church, and all those who were assembled, were perpetually accompanied with a Spirit of Infallibility; which nobody ever yet said, nor is it at all likely. In the fourth place; The Conclusion of the Letter they write, seems extremely weak for the Conclusion of a positive Law. FROM WHICH YOU SHALL DO WELL TO KEEP YOURSELVES. A Prophet under the Old Testament would have said, *From which keep your selves*; for so saith the Lord, whose Commandments you cannot slight without your own Destruction, &c.

Some may also here object the Spirit of *Miracles* and *Tongues*, which the Apostles received the day of *Pentecost*. But the Effusion of that miraculous Spirit did not necessarily render all those that

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receiv'd it infallible in Doctrine. Otherwise all the Christians of that time had been infallible. The Church of *Corinth* had receiv'd the Holy Ghost, as appears by the Epistles St. *Paul* directs to it; and so should not have needed that Apostle's Instructions, because it had a great number of infallible Persons within it self: But it appears, on the contrary, that it needed his Instructions, not only to correct its Vices, but also to resolve its Doubts, and even to rectify its Errors.

Thus then the Spirit of Miracles not being accompanied with Infallibility, it cannot be concluded, because the Apostles receiv'd that Spirit the day of *Pentecost*, that they became as Gods; and that they were out of all danger of ever falling into the least Error. But what signify then these words; *When the Spirit of Truth shall come, he will lead you into all Truth*? This Spirit of Truth is it not the miraculous Spirit which the Apostles receiv'd?

I have already observ'd that these words cannot be understood rigorously, as if the Apostles had known all Sciences. I must add further, that there is something extremely figurative in them; as ap-

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pears by the following words ; For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak ; and he shall shew ye things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you. What Opinion soever a Man may be of concerning the Holy Spirit, it is plain that these words cannot be taken properly, as if the Holy Spirit had heard from God, or Jesus Christ, that with which he ought to inspire the Apostles.

The most simple sense, and most conformable to the accomplishment of this Promise, which can be given to these words, is, to my thinking, this. I should explain many things to you more clearly than I have done, but you are not yet in condition to receive them as you should. When you shall have received the Spirit of Miracles, he will teach you the rest that you ought to know ; either by Visions, or by making you call to mind that which I have told you ; so that he will make you apprehend the sense, and will teach you what you ought to do afterwards. To speak properly,

properly, he will tell you nothing new ; he will but recal into your memory, to make you better understand it, the Doctrine of my Father ; which is the same that I have taught you ; and which I may also call my Doctrine, because my Father has charg'd me to preach it, as the only Doctor of his Church.

The Holy Spirit led the Apostles into all Truths ; and took that which was Christ's, without ever speaking of himself ; in making them call to mind that which they had forgotten ; and in making them understand on divers occasions, or even by extraordinary Revelations, that which Christ had said to them, but which they then understood not. This is plainly that which Christ teaches us in these words ; *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you ALL THINGS, AND BRING ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE, WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU, John XIV. 25.* These last words apparently explain the foregoing, *He shall teach you all Things.*

In effect, there is nothing in the Doctrine of the Apostles, which Christ
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had not told them ; and in leaving them, he gave them no other order for the preaching of the Gospel, but to *teach all People to observe all those things which he had commanded them.* And the Apostles observe in several places, that it was not till after they had received the Holy Spirit, that they remember'd, and understood divers things which Christ had told them when he was here below. *These things understood not the Disciples at the first, says St. Joh. XII. 16. but when Jesus was enter'd into his Glory, then remember'd they that these things were written of him.* See the same Evangelist, II. 22. and *Acts XI. 16.*

This is, in my Opinion, the sense of Christ's words ; at least I find nothing among the Interpreters, that answers so well to the Event ; which thorowly convinces me that Christ must have meant some such thing. For when all's done, whatsoever may be said, the Promise ought to be understood by its correspondency with the Accomplishment, and there is no better Interpreter of Prophecies than their execution.

This being so, the Infallibility of the Apostles, according to my judgment, consisted in this. They knew clearly the

the general Principles of the Jewish Religion, which had been taught them from their Cradle ; they had heard Christ often tell what the Gospel added to Judaism ; or if you will, Christ had explain'd to them more clearly the Will of God, and had shown them the Errors of the *Pharisees* ; He had instructed them concerning the *Messiah*, and had made appear to them by many Proofs, that himself was *HE* ; God had rais'd him from the Dead, and they had convers'd with him after his Resurrection ; and in the last place, they had seen him ascend into Heaven, from whence he assur'd them he would come one Day to judg the Quick and the Dead. They preach'd faithfully that which they had heard, that which they had seen with their Eyes, that which they had observ'd with attention, and that which they had touch'd with their Hands. They could declare, without any mistake, what they had seen ; they could preach what they had heard. For the Doctrine of Jesus Christ was compris'd in a few Articles, plain enough to be understood, and consequently easy to be remembered. Thus they related infallibly what they had seen and heard ;

and therein it is that their Infallibility consisted. Perhaps also the Spirit of Miracles which Christ sent them, strengthened their Memories, and open'd their Minds after a manner we comprehend not. But it is certain, as I have made it appear, that this Spirit directed them not in so miraculous a manner, as to make it necessary for us to regard all they said or writ with the same respect as the words of Jesus Christ, the only Master, and the only infallible Doctor that ever was amongst Men. He was the only Mystical Ark, in which *the Godhead dwelt bodily*, from whence proceeded nothing but Oracles.

Some may ask, perhaps, Whether it might not so happen that the Apostles might abandon the Truth of the Gospel, and preach a false Doctrine; and if it might be so, how we can be assur'd that they were not Deceivers? I confess, that though it was very unlikely, that after having receiv'd so many Illuminations and Graces, they should fall into Apostacy; yet it was not absolutely impossible. But in that case God would not have approv'd by Miracles the Doctrine they taught; and thereby it is that we may know they were no Seducers.

Seducers. There crept in, during their Time, many false Prophets among the Christians; but they were presently discover'd, because they could not maintain by Miracles, a Doctrine contrary to that of the Apostles, which was confirm'd by an infinity of Wonders. God made appear, by those Prodigies, that the Apostles declar'd nothing but what was conformable to his Will, nor any thing that could be hurtful to Piety; for it is impossible that God would favour a Doctrine which should turn Men from Holiness. But we must not believe neither, as I have already observ'd, that because God wrought Miracles in favour of any Person, it therefore follows that all things pronounced by that Person, were immediately inspir'd, and ought to be receiv'd as the infallible Decisions of him that never errs. Provided that Person maintained the Substance of the Gospel, and said nothing but what conduced to Piety, God would not cease to bear Witness to his Doctrine, although all his Reasonings were not Demonstrations. God would not that this Mark of his Approbation should be interpreted, as if he had thereby declared that he would

have all the Words of those that had miraculous Gifts receiv'd as Oracles. To be fully convinc'd hereof we need but read the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*.

I must nevertheless ingenuously confess, that there is mention made in this Epistle of some miraculous Gifts, which seem to have been pure Inspirations; and which ought to make the Speakers attended unto, as if they were the simple Interpreters of the Holy Spirit. *The Spirit*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. VII. 8. *gives to one the word of Wisdom, to another the word of Knowledge*. It seems as if he meant thereby the Gift of prophesying; that is to say, of instructing others in Piety; of which he says many things in the XIVth Chapter of the same Epistle. This seems contrary to what I have been saying concerning the Inspiration of the Apostles, and I confess I cannot see how, according to my Notion, this difficulty can be clearly solv'd. I might say that this Gift of Prophecy was perhaps no other than a Disposition of Mind, which God infus'd sometimes into those on whom he bestow'd it, by which they became fit to instruct; although he inspir'd

spir'd them not extraordinarily with that which they were to say; which is so much the more likely, by how much this Gift was preserv'd and increas'd by Study and Reading; as appears by those words of St. Paul to *Timothy*. First Epist. Chap. IV. 13, &c. *Until I come, give thy self to Reading, to Exhortation, to Instruction: Neglect not the Grace which is in thee, which was given thee by Prophecy, through the Imposition of the Presbytery: Meditate on these things; be always employed, to the end thy Improvement may be known of all Men*. Now it is plain that the Gifts which are owing to an actual and immediate Inspiration of the holy Spirit, such as curing Diseases, &c. could not be increas'd by Application of Mind, as not depending upon Man in any sort. The most assiduous Study cannot contribute any thing to prophetick, or immediate Revelations.

This Conjecture seems probable enough. And indeed I see no other way of explaining what St. Paul says to *Timothy*. But without determining any thing concerning the Gift of Prophecy, it appears plainly by what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. XIV. that it consisted not in an imme-

immediate Revelation of the holy Spirit; that forced the Prophets to speak. He there gives them this Advice; *Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let another judg; but if any thing be revealed to one of those that sits by, let the first hold his Peace: for ye may all prophesy one by one, to the end that all may learn, and all may be comforted: And the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets.* The Prophets whom the holy Spirit had inspir'd immediately with what they ought to say, had no need of this Advice. Nay it had even been ridiculous. Because the holy Spirit inspiring them with what they had to say, would have inspired them likewise as to the occasion and the place, and would not have put many Persons on speaking at one time in the same place, nor so as to interrupt others who spake by his Inspiration. Moreover St. Paul would have the Prophets judg one another, and that the Spirits of the Prophets be subject to the Prophets; which cannot be understood of Prophets immediately inspir'd, who are subject to none but God, and who are to give account to none but him. The Prophets of the Old Testament spoke as long as God inspir'd them; after which

which they held their Peace, without needing any Advertisement; because they easily perceiv'd when the Inspiration ceas'd.

It seems to me that we may now conclude, that there never was any body but our Saviour, who had a constant and perpetual Inspiration, and all whose words we ought to receive as Oracles. As he alone amongst Men was incapable of sinning, so it was he alone whom God endow'd with an absolute Infallibility. The same Light which perpetually enlighten'd his Mind, regulated also the Motions of his Affections: otherwise it would be difficult to conceive how he could chuse but be subject to Error, if he had been subject to Sin. There is so great a Correspondence between the Mind and the Affections, that it is not almost possible there should be any Irregularity in the one, without a disorder in the other.

But that you may not believe I am the first Author of this Opinion, and that it is a desire to appear singular, or an Affectation of Novelty that has engag'd me in this Notion, I must also let you see that some

some great Men have been of the same Mind before me. St. *Jerom* makes this Observation upon the fifth Chapter of the Prophet *Micah*, in speaking of this Passage; *And thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, &c.* which St. *Matthew* cites otherwise than it is either in the He-

* *Sunt qui* brew or Septuagint. * *There are*, says he, *that affirm there is the like Error in almost all the Testimonies that are taken out of the Old Testament; that either the Order is chang'd, or the Words, and that sometimes the Sense it self differs; the Apostles or Evangelists not transcribing the Testimonies out of the Book, but trusting to their Memory which sometimes fail'd them.* It is true, St. *Jerom* says not that he approves this Opinion, but he makes it appear elsewhere that he is not very far from it. In his Letter to *Pammachius* (*de optimo genere interpretandi*) of the best way of interpreting; He gathers together many Examples of the New Testament, by which he shews that the Apostles tie themselves more to the Sense than to the Words; and maintains, with good reason, that we should not play the Criticks on them for it,

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nor even for the places where they have mistaken Names. After having compar'd the Quotation *Matth. XXVII. 9.* with the Original, he adds; † *One may accuse the Apostle of falsity in that he agrees neither with the Hebrew nor with the Septuagint; and which is more, that he is mistaken in the Name, putting Jeremy for Zachary.* He seems indeed elsewhere to disapprove that Opinion; but it is usual with him to accommodate himself to the common Opinion, and yet not omit to give his own, without being concern'd whether he contradicted himself or no. When he speaks as others do, you must not conclude presently that he is of the same Opinion with them, because it may be he speaks so by way of Condescension; whereas when he says the contrary, it seems rather that he speaks his own Thoughts. You need but read what he says of the Dissimulation which he attributes to St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* (in his Commentary upon the second Chapter of the Epistle to the *Galatians*, and in his Answer to St. *Austin*) to see that he believ'd that St. *Paul* by a Prudence purely human (which he

† Accusent Apostolum falsitatis quod nec cum Hebraico, nec cum Septuaginta congruat Translatori- bus, & quod his majus est, ERRET IN NOMINE, pro Zacharia quippe Jeremiam posuit.

calls

calls a *Dispensation*) made shew of believing that St. Peter was in the wrong; inasmuch that when St. Paul says that St. Peter was to be reprov'd, because he walked not uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel; It was not that he believ'd so, but only to hinder the converted *Gentiles* from imitating that Apostle. I say not that St. Jerom was herein in the right; but at least it hereby appears that he believ'd not that the Apostles were mov'd by a perpetual Inspiration to write what they did. We may joyn with St. Jerom, Origen, (from whom he had this Opinion concerning the Dispensation that he attributes to these two Apostles) and divers *Greek Fathers*, who also followed Origen; as St. Jerom writing to St. Austin observes, in the Apology he makes for this part of his Commentary.

Thus you see that the most able Interpreters of Scripture, that Christian Antiquity has had, have been of the same Opinion with me. I may also say that the most Learned Criticks of these last Ages have believ'd the same thing, since Erasmus and

and Grotius have publickly maintain'd it; those two great Men, who are beyond dispute in the first Rank amongst the Moderns that have concern'd themselves in writing on the Bible. (*Quorum se peccatore tota Vetustas Condidit, & major collectis viribus exit.*)

Erasmus upon the second Chapter of St. Matthew says thus, * St. Jerom abhors the Imputation of Falshood to the Apostles, not that of slips of Memory. Nor is the Authority of the Scripture forthwith questionable because they differ in Words or Sense, as long as the main of the Matter treated of, and that whereon our Salvation depends, is clear. For as that Divine Spirit, that govern'd the Mind of the Apostles, suffered them to be ignorant of some things, to make Mistakes, and to err (either in Judgment or Affection) without any damage to the Gospel; nay it improves that failing to the help of our Faith; so it is not unlikely that it so influenced the Faculty of their Memory that

* Falsitatis crimen a-bominatur Hieronimus in Evangelistis; id per-iculis audemus, me-moriae lapsum non itelli. Neq; enim continua forte vacillet totius Scripturæ autoritas, sicubi varient vel in verbis vel in sensu, modo summa constet earum rerum de quib. agitur, & unde cardo pendet nostræ salutis. Ut enim Spiritus ille Divinus, mentium Apostolicarum moderator, passus est suos ignorare quædam, & labi, errareq; alicubi, iudicio sine affectu, non solum nullo incommodo Evangelii, sed hunc etiam ipsius errorem vertit in adjumentum nostræ Fidei; ita fieri potuit ut sic temperarit organum Apostolicæ memoriæ ut

etiamſi quid humano more fugiſſet, id non ſolum non deroget fidei Divinæ Scripturæ, verum etiam fidem arroget apud eos, qui alicui de composito ſcriptum calumniari poterant. Quod genus ſit, ſi nomen pro nomine ſit poſitum, id quod alicubi factum ſateretur Hieronimus, aut ſi quid non ſuo narretur ordine, &c. Solus Chriſtus dictus eſt veritas, unus ille caruit omni errore.

* Neq; verò neceſſe eſt, opinor, quicquid fuit in Apoſtoliſ proſtribuere miraculo. Homines erant, quædam ignorabant, in nonnullis errabant. † Paſſus eſt errare ſuos Chriſtus etiam poſt acceptum Paracletum; at non uſq; ad fidei periculum:

*that though ſomething after the manner of Men might ſcape them, yet that ſhould not only not derogate from the Credit of the Holy Scripture, but might even gain Credit to it, with thoſe who otherwiſe might be apt to ſlander it as written by Confederacy. Of this ſort is that of putting one Name for another, which Jerom confeſſes to be ſomewhere done; or of relating things out of order, &c. Chriſt only is ſtiled the Truth, He alone was free from all Error. He ſays alſo upon Acts X. * Neither do I think it neceſſary to attribute every thing that was in the Apoſtles to a Miracle. They were Men, ſome things they were ignorant of, in ſome they were miſtaken. He maintains likewiſe the ſame Opinion at large in his Epiſtles, (lib. 2. Ep. 6.) againſt Eckius, who had blaſm'd him in a Letter he had written to him; and he thus concludes all that matter, † Chriſt ſuffer'd his own to err, even after they had receiv'd the Comforter; but without danger of Apoſtatizing from the Fundamentals of the Chriſtian Faith; even as at this day we confeſs the Church may err without that danger. And to*

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conclude; how do you know, whether Chriſt would not that this compleat Praise ſhould be kept only for himſelf, who ſtiles himſelf alone the Truth? As he alone was without Spot or Blemiſh of Sin, according to the Opinion of the Antients, ſo perhaps he only was beyond all exception true.

hanc laudem omnib. modis abſolutam ſibi ſervari voluit Chriſtus, qui ſe unum Veritatem dixit? Ut unus ille abſq; nævo Innocens, juxta veterum opinionem, ita fortassis unus citra omnem exceptionem verax.

Nothing could be ſaid more formally upon this Subject. But Grotius who ſpeaks not ſo plainly, is not wanting for all that to explain himſelf ſufficiently; giving us to underſtand that all that the Apoſtles ſaid was not, in his Opinion, immediately inſpir'd. * Paul, ſays he in his Appendix to his Commentary concerning Anti-Chriſt, in two places, 1 Theſſ. IV. 14. and 2 Cor. XV. 22. ſpeaking of the Reſurrection, divides thoſe that are to riſe again into two kinds; Thoſe who are already dead, and thoſe who ſhall be alive at that time: But of this laſt number he makes himſelf one, uſing this Pronoun We: And in that to the Corinthians, We that ſhall be alive; as much as to ſay, he made account that the Reſurrection would happen within the time of his Life;

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lum: Quem admodum & hodie ſatemur Eccleſiam labi poſſe citra diſcrimen tamen Pietatis ac Fidei. Deniq; qui ſcis an

* Paulus dubius in locis 1 Theſſ. IV. 14. & 2 Cor. XV. 22. de Reſurrectione agens, reſurrecturos in duo dividit genera, in eos qui præmortui erant, & in eos qui vivent eo tempore; his autem ſe accenſet, utens pronomine

ſuæ

inquit, & in illa ad Corinthios, inquit, di-
 cōtes, nimirum quod ex-
 istimaret ad id usq; tempus
 fieri posse ut resurrectio ac-
 cideret intra il-
 lud spatium quo ipse erat
 victurus; loquens hac in re non ἀρρητικῶς, sed συζητικῶς, ut
 de itinere per Hispaniam: Rom. XV. 28. & alibi sæpe. Sicut
 Prophetæ, ita & Apostoli non de omnib. habuere Revelationem:
 In quib. Revelationem non habent, aut nondum accepere, de iis
 loquuntur συζητικῶς quomodo homines cæteri. Exempla ha-
 bemus, 1 Sam. XVI. 6. 2 Sam. VII. 3.

Episc. Instit. Theol. lib. 4. Sect. 1. S. 4. p. 232. The ablest Divine among the Armini-
 ans was also of this Opinion, as you may
 see by consulting the place in the Mar-
 gent; but to ease you of seek-
 ing it, if you are not at leisure,
 or want convenience, I will
 transcribe some of the words.

† Nihil verat ut conce-
 damus Spiritum Dei san-
 ctum reliquisse Scriptores
 sacrorum librorum hu-
 manæ conditioni, & fra-
 gilitati suæ, in narrandis
 istis quæ ad circumstan-
 tiam facti pertinebant,
 ad quæ sufficiebat sensata
 notitia & memoria, quan-
 quam ea lapsi erat ob-
 noxia.

† It is not absurd to grant (says
 he) that the holy Spirit may have
 left the Writers of the sacred Books
 to the common Condition of Man-
 kind, and to their own Frailty, in
 relating those things that belonged
 to the Circumstance of a Fact, for
 which

which a due Knowledge and Memory was suffi-
 cient; even altho that was subject to fail-
 ing. He says also a little lower;

* It is better, and would perhaps
 cause less Scandal, to acknowledge
 freely and willingly a light fail-
 ing of Memory (that so we may
 not seem to favour things wrested
 and absurd) rather than to make
 use of absurd Interpretations in ex-
 cuse of lighter failings. Otherwise
 the suspicion of a failing is not
 only not avoided, but it is increas-
 ed; and because the Fault is not
 acknowledged, it seems as if Truth
 were not in good earnest sought by
 us, but that Obstinacy were for
 some reason or other made use of;
 which ought to be look'd upon
 as the greatest Reproach ima-
 ginable to Professors of the Chri-
 stian Religion. He shows after-
 wards, That it follows not, be-
 cause the Apostles might be deceived in
 things of small importance; that there-
 fore they could fall into any considera-
 ble Error for want of Memory. And
 the principal Reason he gives is, For
 that the Fundamental Doctrines de-
 pend not on a Circumstance, which

* Satiùs enim potiusq;
 est, & calumnia minus
 obnoxium forte esset li-
 beraliter lubenterq; le-
 vem lapsum memoriæ
 agnoscere, ne manifestè
 absurdis & contortis fa-
 vere videamur, quam
 absurdâ nimis interpre-
 tatione uti ad lapsum
 leviorum excusationem;
 alioquin suspicio lapsus
 non modo non tollitur,
 sed augetur; & quia cul-
 pa non agnoscitur, non
 bonâ fide veritas à nobis
 quæri sed pertinacia pro
 qualibet causâ indui vi-
 detur; quod non potest,
 ac non debet videri Chri-
 stianæ Religionis Pro-
 fessorib. esse quam pro-
 brossimum.

they could forget ; nor have they any thing in them obscure, or hard to be retain'd ; *Which is so true,* says he, *that I make no difficulty to affirm, That if any one says there is a Sense in the Scripture necessary to Salvation, which appears at first contrary to Reason, we ought thereby to judg he attributes to the Scripture a Sense it has not. And this is what I believe, and am convinc'd of by reading the sacred Books.*

I confess that the most part of Divines now a days are of a contrary Opinion. But as I pretend not to oblige any body to approve my Judgment by the Authority of those I have quoted, so neither do I hold my self obliged to submit to the Authority of a crowd of Learned Men, who do but say the same thing one after another, without ever examining or bringing Reasons for it.

We must however observe here two things of very great importance, which are not ordinarily reflected on : The first is, That in one Controversy which we have with the Roman Church, our Divines do all agree, that we ought not to have so much regard to Words as Things ; for, upon supposition that in the Apocryphal Books there is nothing

thing contrary to Piety, they say that the Controversy about them is not considerable. Now if there be no danger in believing Expressions to be divine that have nothing in them but human, when the Doctrines therein contain'd are not contrary to the reveal'd Truth ; What danger can there be in believing that any Truths which we acknowledge to be Divine, are express'd in Terms not divinely inspir'd ? The same reason that makes us believe there is no danger in the one, perswades us also there is none in the other. It is because we are not sav'd by the Words, but by the Things.

The other thing observable is, that we receive amongst the Canonical Books of the New Testament, Writings whose Authors are not well known ; which we could not do, if we thought it necessary, in receiving a Book as Canonical, to be assur'd that every Word was inspir'd ; since to be assur'd thereof we sought to have evident Proofs that it was a Man inspir'd by God who was the Author of that Book. For Example, it is not known who writ the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, whether it were an Apostle, or some Disciple of the Apostles ; so that we cannot

know whether the words of that Epistle were inspir'd or not. But for all that, it is receiv'd; because it is certain it was written in the Apostles time, and because it contains nothing that is not perfectly conformable to their Doctrine. Thus it is generally thought of little importance, whether the words be divinely inspir'd or no, provided the things they express be true. So that one may say, that in truth Divines are generally very favourable to the Opinion I maintain, although themselves are not aware of it.

I do not think it necessary to insist much, in proving that God has not always dictated to the Apostles the very words that they used; since it is evident that he did not always dictate to them the things. Not that I make any doubt but he has often reveal'd to them the things, and even inspir'd them with the very words, as in the Prophecies where there was need to remember divers Names, and when they spoke strange Languages. Tho it may nevertheless be suppos'd, that (as to what concerns the Gift of Tongues) God dispos'd at once the Brains of them that receiv'd it, in such a manner that they could without trouble joyn certain Sounds to certain Ideas; just as they would have done if they had

had been us'd to it from their Infancy; and that afterwards he left them at liberty to make use of those new Languages according as they should think fit. And thus those that learn'd by Inspiration the Language of the *Medes*, for Example, had their Brains dispos'd in the same manner as they would have had if they had learn'd that Language from their Infancy, and could make use of it as easily as their Mother-Tongue. At least it is evident that some who had receiv'd this miraculous Gift did sometimes abuse it; which they would not have done, if they never had spoken those Languages but by present immediate Inspiration. See 1 *Cor.* XIV.

But without determining that Point, I believe, with *Erasmus*, that the Apostles learn'd not the Greek they us'd by Inspiration; because if it were so, they would have spoke it like the Native Grecians; whereas they mix'd with it a world of Hebraisms, as the *French* that speak Latin do Gallicisms. See *Erasmus* upon *Acts* X.

Not that I believe, neither, that they had learn'd the Greek Language by the Commerce they had with the Greeks during the Functions of their Charge, as

Erasmus thought probable: it is more likely they had learn'd it from their Infancy. For *St. Paul* who was born in *Cilicia*, where they spoke nothing but Greek, undoubtedly had learn'd it young; but he corrupted it afterwards by his long dwelling in *Judea*; where besides the Greek, they spake a broken Chaldee, whose Dialect mixing with the Greek render'd it obscure and difficult, such as is the Stile of that Apostle.

The others that were born in *Judea* had learn'd it also from their Infancy, as it was commonly there spoken; that is to say, extreamly corrupted by the ancient Language of the Country, which was still spoken there, as appears by divers places of the New Testament. This the same *Erasmus* has well ob-

serv'd in the places already cited: * *When I excuse the Apostles*, says he in his Letter to *Eckius*, who learn'd their Greek not out of *Demosthenes* his Orations, but out of the Discourse of the common People, I deny not their Gift of Tongues; nor does it thence follow that they might not learn Greek by common Con-

* Dum excuso Apostolos, qui Græcitatem suam non ex orationibus *Demosthenis*, sed ex vulgi colloquio didicerint, non nego donum linguarum; neq; tamen inde sequitur eos non potuisse Græcè discere ex vulgi colloquio: Certè Syriace didicerant ex vulgi col-

Converse. Assuredly they learn'd the Syriac by common Converse. Why might they not in like manner learn the Greek? For (by means of *Alexander the Great*, and the Roman Empire) *Ægypt*, and the greater part of *Syria*, and all the lesser Asia, nay almost all the East, as *Jerom* says, spoke Greek. And I cannot think that the holy Spirit made them to forget what they had formerly learn'd. The Greek Language then was spoken in *Judea*, together with the ancient Language vvhich the Jews brought from *Babylon*, that is to say the Chaldean; but corrupted in process of time, as the French and Flemish are spoke together now adays in *Flanders*. And as the French they now speak in *Flanders* is full of the Flemish Dialect, and of Terms unknown in *France*, so the Greek of *Judea* was heretofore full of Chaldaisms, and of barbarous ways of speaking, which undoubtedly grated the Grecian's Ears.

The History of the Acts of the Apostles, that tells us in several places that Hebrew or Chaldean was spoken in *Judea*, tells us also that they us'd another Language, which could be no other than Greek. *St. Luke* observes *Acts XXII.* that *St. Paul* haranguing the Jews

colloquio; quidni potuerunt & Græcè? quandoquidem ob *Alexandrum Victorem*, & *Romanum Imperium*, *Ægyptus* ac *Syria* maxima pars, totaq; minor Asia, imò totus fere Oriens, ut loquitur *Hieronymus*, Græcè loqueretur. Neq; enim arbitror Spiritum illum oblivione oblitterasse quod antea didicerunt.

Jews, began to speak to them in Hebrew, and that when they understood him speak to them in the Hebrew Language, they hearken'd to him with the greater silence; which gives us to understand that he might have spoke to the People in another Language; for otherwise there had been no ground to observe that they listn'd more attentively, when they perceiv'd he spake Hebrew; seeing that in speaking any other Language but Hebrew they could not have understood him. It appears then that Greek was spoken in *Judea*, and it is likely *Pilat* spoke Greek to our Lord, and that our Lord answer'd him in the same. The People only prefer'd the Language of the Country before the Greek; which was not so ancient, and which they had not learn'd but by force, because of the Kings of *Syria* that tyranniz'd over them; and so they spoke it not exactly.

It is true, there were *Jews* that spoke Greek very purely; but they were such as were born in Countries where only Greek was spoken, as *Philo*; or they had acquir'd a habit of speaking good Greek by reading or studying, as *Josephus*. So at this day there are *Walloons* that speak French very well, (altho the generality

rality of that People speak it extremely ill) because they have taken much pains to correct in themselves the Faults which others commit, they have apply'd themselves to reading, or they have travell'd in *France*. These *Jews* born in the Countries where nothing but Greek was spoken, understood not the ancient Hebrew, nor the Hebrew then spoken in *Judea*. They made use in their Synagogues of the Version of the *Septuagint*, and because they spoke nothing but Greek, they were call'd the *Hellenist Jews*. *Salmasius* in his Book of the *Hellenist Tongue*, against *Heinsius*, shows that these *Jews* spoke very good Greek; and that it is very absurd in some Learned Men to imagine there was an *Hellenist Tongue*; as if the Hebrews that knew not their own Language, had a particular one different from that of the places where they dwelt; and that this Language was that of the *Septuagint* and of the New Testament. If a Name were to be given to this corrupted Greek, it should rather be call'd *Hebraistic*; because it is full of *Hebraisms*, or *Chaldaisms*. But as the Language of the *Walloons*, or of some of the Provinces of *France*, cannot pass for a particular Language, being

being nothing but a corrupted *French*, so neither ought the barbarous Greek of *Judea* to pass for a Language by it self, different from the Greek Language.

It is no wonder then if the Apostles, who had liv'd a good part of their Lives in *Judea*, or who were born there, and had not apply'd themselves to learn perfectly the Greek Tongue, nor to speak it in purity, use it so improperly in their Writings. *St. Paul* himself, born in a Town that spoke nothing but Greek, had so corrupted his Speech by his long dwelling in *Judea*, that he confesses, *he was ignorant in the Language*, 2 Cor. XI. 16. as sufficiently appears by all his Epistles, the Greek whereof is very different from that of *Josephus*. And therefore the Greek Fathers have complain'd of the obscurity of his Stile, of the barbarous Phrases that are therein, and of apparent Confusion in the order of his Discourses; and those who very readily understood *Plato* and *Demosthenes*, were oblig'd, as *Erasmus* judiciously observes, to take great pains to understand *St. Paul*. We need but compare his Stile with that of some Greek Author, to find that this Apostle apply'd

ply'd himself not much to the Greek Eloquence.

It is plain then that the holy Spirit inspir'd not the Apostles with the Expressions they were to use. If it had been so, *St. Paul* could not have said, *he was ignorant in the Language*. He should have said, that the holy Spirit inspir'd him with a Language such as was that of the People. And all the Greek Fathers would have blasphemed against the holy Spirit, when they observ'd the little Eloquence of *St. Paul*: for according to this Supposition, that would not have proceeded from *St. Paul*, but from the holy Spirit. If any one doubt of this, he need but read *Erasmus*, in the places I have cited. It is true, that a famous Protestant Divine has undertaken to confute him, in his Annotations upon the 10th Chapter of the *Acts*; but he does nothing but declame, as he is us'd to do, against an Author more learned and more judicious than himself, without bringing any solid Reason.

We must now speak a word of some Books of the Old Testament, that contain neither History nor Prophecy; such are the Books of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the Song of *Solomon*, and *Job*; which last
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is apparently a Dramatic Piece, where of nothing but the Subject is true ; as are the Tragedies of the Greek Poets.

There is no Proof that what is contained in the *Proverbs* was inspir'd to *Solomon* by God, after a Prophetic manner. They are Moral Sentences, which a good Man might well pronounce, without Inspiration ; as are those contain'd in *Ecclesiasticks*. There are very many of them that are but vulgar Proverbs, which carry indeed a good Sense, but have nothing in them of Divine. There are a great many Directions about Oeconomy, which Women and Country-People every-where know without Revelation. See Chap. XXIV. 27. and XXVII. 23. and the Description of a vertuous Woman at the latter end of the Book. The Name of Prophet is very liberally bestow'd on *Agur* the Son of *Jakeh*, for some Moralities that are found under his Name : *Prov.* XXX. Whereas I dare be bold to say better things might have been said without the Spirit of Prophecy. Three things, says he, for Example, are too marvellous for me, and even four which I know not ; *The way of an Eagle in the Air, The way of a Serpent on a Rock,*
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The way of a Ship in the midst of the Sea, and the way of a Man with a Maid. One must have a mean Opinion of the Spirit of Prophecy, to believe that it dictated such things as these. And indeed neither does the Author pretend to that Eminency ; but says modestly concerning himself, *That he is more brutish than any Man, and has not the Understanding of a Man.*

But there is particularly one Precept of good Husbandry, that is often repeated, which our Merchants now a-days know, as well as the *Israelites* that liv'd in *Solomon's* time. It is that which expressly forbids them to be Surety for any body, Chap. VI. 1. XVII. 18. XX. 16. XXII. 26. XXVII. 13. It is true by the Rules of good Husbandry a Man should never be Surety, but there happens oftentimes Cases wherein Charity ought to be preferr'd before good Husbandry ; as appears by the Parable of the *Samaritan*, who became Surety for the Expence of the Jew, that was found hurt on the Road. There is, methinks, no great need that God should send Prophets to teach Men good Husbandry ; on the contrary it was very necessary that Christ should preach Liberty.
Some

Some Learned Men have believ'd that *Ecclesiastes* is a Dialogue; where a pious Man disputes with an impious one who is of the Opinion of the *Sadduces*. And in effect there are things directly oppos'd one to another, which it cannot be suppos'd the same Person speaks. The *Epicurean Conclusion* (*To eat, drink and be merry, because a Man has nothing else*) which is up and down in many places of this Book, is altogether contrary to that Conclusion at the end of the Work; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments, &c.* But it is extremely difficult to distinguish the Persons, or to find out exactly in the Name of what Person the Author speaks in every Passage. However it be, there appears in it nothing of Prophetic; and there is little likelihood that the Spirit of God would set out, with so great strength, the Arguments of *Sadduces*, or perhaps of worse Men, to answer them but in two or three words. Read the beginning of the ninth Chapter, and make Reflection on these words: *The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a Reward; for the Memory of them is forgotten. Also their Love and their*

Hatred

Hatred, and their Envy is now perish'd; neither have they any more a Portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun. Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart; for God now accepteth thy Works.

Grotius is of Opinion that this Book was not writ by *Solomon* himself, but that it is a Work compos'd under his Name, by one that had been in *Caldea*; because there are divers *Caldean* words in it. If this Conjecture be true, as is not impossible, then this Book will be nothing but a Piece of Wit and Fancy, compos'd by some of those that had been in the Captivity. And I know one who has studied much the Criticks of the holy Scripture, that suspects the Author of this Book to have been of the Opinion that the *Sadduces* were of afterwards, about the Immortality of the Soul and the World to come. It seems to him that this Author says nothing which a true *Sadduce* might not say. But for my part, I think it best to determine nothing herein.

It is commonly believ'd that the Song of *Solomon* is a Mysterious Book, describing the mutual Love between Christ and his Church. But there is

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no proof of it neither in the Old nor New Testament, nor in the Book it self. All that can be said is, that the Jews explain this Book allegorically of God, of *Moses*, and of the Jewish Church. But a Man need but read their Allegories, to see that they are the Visions of *Rabbins*, having no Foundation but in the fanciful Extravagance of their Brains; which frame of Mind our Divines have so much inherited from them, that they give themselves wholly up to find Mysteries in every thing. Nay it must be confess'd that some of them have in that out-done the *Rabbins*; and that there is nothing so Chimerical in the Chaldee Paraphrast, as in the Commentaries of those who pretend this Book ought to be explained by *Revelations*; and that in it are to be found all the Wars about Religion of this past Age, in *Germany*, the *Interim*, the League of *Smalcald*, the Peace of *Passau*, &c.

There being then no Proof of the Mysteries that are pretended to be in this Book; if we judg by the Book it self, we shall find it to be an Idyle, or Eglogue, where *Solomon* brings himself in as a Shepherd, and one of his Wives (perhaps *Pharaoh's* Daughter, as the Learned think)

think) as a Shepherdess; That the Stile is the same with that of the Pastoral Poems of the Greeks and Latins, saving that it is more rough and dithyrambic, according to the Genius of the Hebrew Poetry. You may compare the Similitudes *Solomon* makes use of in the fourth Chapter with those *Ovid* uses in the Pastoral Song he makes *Polyphemus* sing, in the XIIIth Book of his *Metamorphosis*.

The Book of *Job* is also a piece that has nothing in it of Prophetic. The Critics, who have any thing of a nice Judgment, agree that it is a sort of Tragi-Comedy. It is likely there was such an one as *Job* (since the Prophet *Ezekiel* speaks of him) and that he met with great Afflictions, which afforded Subject to some Jew of the Captivity to exercise his Wit upon. There are in this Book, as well as in *Ecclesiastes*, many Chaldean words, which show that it was compos'd either in *Chaldea*, or after the return from the Captivity. Divines agree that God inspir'd not *Job's* Friends with what the Author makes them say; and this Book being written in Verse, seems to be a Work of Meditation, wherein the Author would make his Parts appear. Neither

Job, nor his Friends could talk in that manner, *extempore*. The design of the work is to show, that Providence oft-times afflicts good People, not to punish them for any particular Sin, as if they had deserv'd those Afflictions more than others, but simply to try them, and give them occasion to exercise their Vertue. This is without doubt a Truth, but there is no need of being a Prophet to know it. And on the other side there is one very remarkable Fault in this Book. The Author brings in *Job* complaining Chap. III. with Bitterness, and extream Impatience, unworthy, not only of a pious Man, who had the knowledge of the true God, but even of a Pagan that had any Wisdom. *Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night wherein it was said, a Man-Child is born, &c.* This manner of cursing the day of his Birth with so much Passion becomes not a pious Man, such as *Job*, to what extremity soever he might be reduc'd. It is to be guilty of great *Indecorum*, to put into a good Man's Mouth so passionate words; as well as those that are in Chap. X. *I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. Becomes it thee to oppress?*

oppress? &c. After such Expressions as these, which are very like Blasphemies, God finds, says the Author, *that his Servant Job has spoke the thing that is right before him*, and is angry with his Friends for believing that *Job* was afflicted for his Sins.

It appears, methinks, hereby clearly enough, that there was no Inspiration in this Book, no more than in the three foregoing. Not but that these Books are useful, and may be read with Profit and Edification, as well as Antiquity read those which we at present call *Apochrypha*. Nay it may be allow'd that they which compos'd them had the Spirit of God; that is to say, were full of Piety; and that they writ them with a prospect of leading those that should read them into the ways of Piety.

But it may be objected, that these Books being in the Jews Canon ought to be acknowledg'd for divinely inspir'd, rather than the *Apocryphas* that never were in it. I answer to that; First, That no clear Reason is brought to convince us, that those who made the Canon, or Catalogue of their Books, were infallible, or had any Inspiration, whereby to distinguish inspir'd Books from those

which were not. This Collection is commonly attributed to *Esdra*s and the great *Sanhedrim* of his Time, amongst whom they say were *Zacchary*, *Haggai* and *Malachy*. But many learned Men believe not this Story, because no proof is brought for it, except a very uncertain Jewish Tradition. There is much more likelihood that this Collection which we have is the remainder of the ancient Books of the Jews, which divers particular Men at first gathered together, and of which afterwards public use was made in the Synagogues; whereas in the time of *Nehemiah* (as appears by the Book that bears his Name) they read publicly only the Book of the Law.

In the second place, if you will stand to the Jews Canon, it is plainly on my side. They divide the Scripture into three parts; of which the first contains the Books of the Law; the second the Books they call the Prophets; and the third contain others which they call *Chetoubim*, or simply *Writings*; that is to say, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs*, *Job*, *Daniel*, *Esdra*s, *Nehemiah*, the *Chronicles*, and those which they call the five little Books, the Song of *Solomon*, *Ruth*, the *Lamentations*,

tations, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Esther*. They believ'd that these Books (which they call'd *Chetoubim*) were not inspir'd as the other; and therefore they made them a separate part of Scripture, distinct from the two former which they believed to be inspir'd. This Division is very ancient, having been in use in the time of our Lord, *Luke XXIV. 44.* and *Josephus* owns it in his first Book against *Appion*; which makes me believe that this Opinion of the Jews is grounded upon the Judgment, that those who collected the Books of their Canon made of them. It is certain *Daniel* is truly a Prophet, as well as *Isaiah*; but it is likely they have rank'd his Book among the *Chetoubim*, only because it was brought out of *Caldea* after the Collection was made; and perhaps because, being written in *Chaldean*, it was in part translated into Hebrew by some others, as some of the Learned have conjectur'd. For the other Writings which make up this Division of the Scripture, being but Histories, or Books of Morality, or Songs, they had reason to determine that there was nothing of Prophetic in them; at least not of the same kind of Prophecy with that of *Isaiah*, and others who are properly call'd Prophets. It is true

indeed there are some Predictions in the Book of *Psalms*, but they are not of that sort of Predictions that proceed from Inspiration or Revelation, as were those of *Isaiah*. *David* never says, *Thus saith the Lord*; nor is it said in his History that in his time he passed for a Prophet. It only happen'd that in speaking of his own Person, he spoke things that agreed not so much to himself as to the *Messiah*, of whom he was (unknown to himself) the Type. But I have already handl'd this sort of Prophecy.

It may be said perhaps, that Christ has acknowledg'd for divinely inspir'd all the Books of the Old Testament, and that for that reason alone, all Christians ought to be of that belief. But there is not any Passage in the Gospel, where Christ tells us that all the Books of the Old Testament were inspir'd by God, both as to the Words and Things. He approves them only in gross, without descending to particulars, and examining every Book by it self. It was sufficient that there were divers Prophecies in the Old Testament, the Authority whereof was receiv'd among the Jews, that pointed at him. Our Saviour never undertook to make a Critical

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Treatise upon the sacred Books, nor to clear the Historical Differences in them. His design was not to make us able Critics, but good Men; and to bring us to render to God the Obedience due to him. He omitted nothing that might instruct us in our Duty, but he never troubled himself to correct certain Errors of small importance, which might be among the Jews.

And if we must take all the words of Christ, when he speaks of the Scripture, in a strict sense; as if he acknowledg'd the Books he cites to be all inspir'd even to the least syllable, and the others on the contrary to be excluded out of the number of the sacred Books; we must reject many of those that are commonly reputed inspir'd. Neither he nor his Apostles ever cite the Works of *Solomon*, or the Book of *Job*; except that St. *James* praises the Patience of *Job*, which, to speak properly, is not to cite the Book but the History. And if we must conclude from thence that all these Books have been wrongfully put into the Jews Canon, the common Opinion would be found contrary to the Authority of Christ and of his Apostles.

These

These Books then that we have spoken of are not necessarily to be accounted Divine for being in the Canon, or Catalogue of the Books of the Jews; which Jesus Christ never call'd in question: And there is no reason to interpret the word Canonical as if it signified inspir'd of God. The Jews put in their Collection all the Fragments they had remaining of their ancient Books; they left out none, because they had no others. It was all their Library, the rest having been lost in the Captivity, or before, or after; for the Story sets not down the time of that fatal loss. They pretended not at first that this Collection consisted of no other but what was divinely inspir'd. But in process of time, as there were therein many Writings that were truly Prophetic, and as these were the only Books that had escap'd the general Loss which had involv'd the rest, they began to be look'd on with more respect than they had been at first; and at length it came to be believ'd that all these Books, that were in the ancient Catalogue, were truly divine. And whereas before that time, Men apply'd themselves to the Observation of what was most considerable in

in the Law, without making many Commentaries; from thence forwards they grew nice about the words; would take every thing in a strict sense; and by seeking for Mysteries where there were none, they abandon'd the most essential part of the Jewish Religion. They made the knowledg of Religion to consist in the study of a thousand vain Subtilties, and Piety to consist in the scrupulous Observations of Ceremonial Laws, according as the Doctors interpreted them. This the *Pharisees* did in our Lord's Time, and it is also that which the Divines among the Christians, both Ancient and Modern, have imitated since the Death of the Apostles. In their time Men apply'd themselves to learn their Doctrine, without subtilizing about their Expressions; and this they did upon the assurance they had that those holy Men taught faithfully what they had learn'd from Christ. Since then, it has been the practice to dispute about their Words, and to strain to the utmost divers of their Expressions, which were not over exact; from whence many Factions have been begot amongst Christians, who have fall'n foul one upon another about

bout the meaning of some such particular Expressions of the Apostles, and have neglected at the same time to obey the Precepts of Jesus Christ; that is to say, they have abandon'd the inward Substance of Religion, to busy themselves about the Outside. Men have thought it an Honour to be stil'd that which they call zealous Orthodox, to be firmly link'd to a certain Party, to load others with Calumnies, and to damn by an absolute Authority the rest of Mankind; but have taken no care to demonstrate the sincerity and fervor of their Piety, by an exact Observation of the Gospel Morals; which has come to pass by reason that Orthodoxy agrees very well with our Passions, whereas the severe Morals of the Gospel are incompatible with our way of living.

Thus much by the by, to let you see that this great Zeal which Men have for the Letter of the Scripture, is but a Cloak they make use of, to hide the little esteem they have for the Religion it self of Jesus Christ; which consists not in Criticisms, or Controversies, but in keeping God's Commandments.

But

But it will be ask'd then, What Authority we allow the Holy Scripture, and what use is to be made of it according to these Principles? To answer hereto, I begin with the New Testament, which is the principal Foundation of our Faith. In the first place then, Jesus Christ in whom were hidden all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, and whom God has expressly commanded us *To hear*, was absolutely infallible. We must believe without questioning it whatever he says; because he says it, and because God hath testified that he speaks nothing but Truth.

In the second place, since we have nothing writ by Christ himself, we ought to believe what his Apostles have said concerning his Life and Doctrine; because God has given Testimony to them by the Miracles he inabl'd them to do; and because they seal'd the Truth of their Deposition with their Blood. They tell us what they had seen and heard, so that it was impossible they should be deceiv'd in the substance of the History and Doctrine. It may be that in some Circumstance of small importance they do not relate things exactly

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as they happen'd, and that therein they do not agree together. But they all agree in the Historical Facts whereon the Faith we have in Jesus Christ, is grounded; his Birth of a Virgin, his Miracles, his Death, his Resurrection, and his Ascension into Heaven; though there may be some difference among them in some Circumstance, which is nothing to the substance of the History. It is not necessary for the Foundation of our Faith, as I have already observ'd, that they should agree exactly in all things to the least tittle; and the trouble the Learned have given themselves to reconcile these sort of Contradictions is of no use. It were better to own ingenuously that there are some, than to strain the sense of their Writings, to make them agree one with another; which instead of converting Libertins, does but excite their Railery and confirms them in their Impiety. As to what concerns the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, there is not the least Contradiction among the Evangelists; although it be express'd in different Terms, and they relate it on divers occasions. We must ob-

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serve therefore that they relate only the Sense, and keep not exactly the same order that Christ kept in preaching it; so neither ought we to insist rigorously upon their Expressions, as if they made use of some words rather than others, to insinuate certain Niceties which are ordinarily attributed to them, without any probable ground; nor ought we to lay such stress upon the order they make use of in their Writings, as to colour thereby certain Inferences, which are not otherwise obvious in the Sense of our Saviour's words. If a Man observe never so little, he will find that they use every where popular Expressions; that they have not aim'd at any Elegancy in their Stile; and that they have been very far from speaking with such Exactness, as Philosophers or Geometricians use in their Writings. We ought not then to insist too much, as commonly Men do, upon the manner of their expressing the Doctrine of Christ. We should only endeavour to understand the Genius of the Language they use, and to stick to the substance of things essential; which are express'd in so many places, and after so many ways, that it is not difficult to frame
to

to our selves an Idea thereof, clear enough to instruct us perfectly in our Duty.

In the third place, as for the Epistles of the New Testament, they do not only afford us the same Considerations with those we have last mention'd, in respect of their Stile, but there are also two things further to be observ'd and distinguish'd in them. We find there the same Doctrines we have in the Evangelists, and those the Apostles assure us often they learn'd from Christ. But there are others things, which the Apostles speak of their own heads, or which they draw by divers Consequences from the Old Testament. The first of these are to be believ'd on the same account as the Gospels; that is to say, because of the Authority of Jesus Christ, who preach'd them to the Jews. The second are to be receiv'd, because they contain nothing but what is very conformable to the Doctrine of Christ, or what is founded upon right Reason. The Apostles will not have us believe them upon their own word. They distinguish in that their Authority from the Authority of Christ. See 1 Cor. VII. 10, 12, 25. But as they apply'd themselves

selves carefully to mind Doctrines tending to Edification (which are few in number) and never engag'd in too nice inquiries; they have told us nothing that is not conformable to the Spirit of the Gospel (with which they were fill'd) and which right Reason will not easily admit. It is to be observ'd, that having no extraordinary Inspiration for writing their Epistles, they insert in them divers things that concern their Designs, or their particular Affairs; where we ought by no means to seek for or expect any thing mysterious. Such are the Salutations found at the end of their Epistles; the Order St. Paul gives Timothy to take Mark along with him in his return, to bring the Cloak he had left at Troas with Carpus, the Books, and above all the Parchments; the Counsel he gives him to drink a little Wine for his Stomachs sake, and because of his Weaknesses; and other such like things. See St. Jerom's Preface to his Commentary upon the Epistle to Philemon.

In the fourth place, there are divers Prophecies scatter'd in these Epistles; and the *Apocalypse* is wholly Prophetic. Now we ought to give Credit to these Re-

velations ; because it is God that imparted them immediately to the Apostles. And it is easy to distinguish them from other things, which the Apostles give out only as their own Conjectures ; of which you have some Examples in the words of *Grotius*, which I cited concerning the Inspiration of the Pen-Men of the New Testament.

Thus then, according to my *Hypothesis*, the Authority of the Scripture continues in full force. For you see I maintain that we are oblig'd to believe the Substance of the History of the New Testament ; and generally all the Doctrines of Jesus Christ ; all that was inspir'd to the Apostles ; and also whatsoever they have said of themselves, so far as it is conformable to our Saviour's Doctrine, and to right Reason. It is plain that nothing farther is necessarily to be believ'd, in order to our Salvation. And it seems also evident to me, that those new Opinions, brought into the Christian Religion since the Death of the Apostles, which I have here refuted, being altogether imaginary and ungrounded, instead of bringing any advantage to the Christian Religion, are really very prejudicial to

to it. An Inspiration is attributed to the Apostles to which they never pretended, and whereof there is not the least mark left in their Writings. Hereupon it happens that very many Persons who have strength enough of Understanding to deny Assent to a thing for which there is no good proof brought (though preach'd with never so much Gravity) ; It happens, I say, that these Persons reject all the Christian Religion ; because they do not distinguish true Christianity from those Dreams of fanciful Divines.

It is easy to guess, after this, what we ought to think of the Authority of the Books of the Old Testament. The Prophecies that are in it ought to be believ'd, because Christ has authoriz'd them. The substance of the History ought also to be believed for the same reason ; notwithstanding any uncertainty there may be in some inconsiderable Circumstances ; as it appears there is still some uncertainty, by divers Contradictions which the Divines with all their Subtilty have not been able to reconcile, after puzzling about it above three thousand Years. The Doctrines that are in it ought also to be receiv'd, so

far as they are conformable to those of the Gospel; or, if you will, let us say that the true meaning of the Law is to be learn'd from Christ. No Conclusion is to be drawn from those Books that appear to be only pieces of Wit and Fancy, or wherein nothing but Human is to be found, such as the Song of *Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, &c. Lastly, we ought not to strain too far the Sense of particular Expressions, as do the Jews; Because, if we except a very few places, the Expressions are the same with those which the sacred Writers were wont to make use of in explaining their other Thoughts; that is to say, they have worded both the Jewish History, and the Revelations they had from Heaven, after their own ordinary manner of expressing themselves.

These, Sir, are the Thoughts of Mr. N. concerning the Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men. I am told he draws from these Principles three Consequences. The first is, That by admitting this *Hypothesis* we may terminate many great Disputes among Christians, which have risen from the false Subtilty of Divines interpreting too mysteriously the Expressions of the holy Scripture,

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as if every syllable had been dictated by God. The second is, that whereas by sticking too close to the Letter of the Scripture, the Essence of Religion comes to be neglected; as if God required no more of us at present but to believe that the holy Scripture is divinely inspir'd; instead, I say, of this Practice, it will be found necessary to apply our selves wholly to the obeying Christ's Precepts, which is the only thing God indispensably requires from us. The third Consequence is, that hereby at one blow will be solv'd an infinite number of Difficulties, which Libertines are wont to alledg against the holy Scripture, and which it is not possible to solve by the ordinary Principles. Their Mouths will be stopp'd, says Mr. N. and it will no longer avail them to object against Christians the Contradictions which are found in the Scriptures; the lowness of the Style of the sacred Writers; the little Order observ'd to be in many of their Discourses; and whatsoever else they have been us'd to say against our Divines, who have in vain puzzled themselves to answer them. By imposing nothing upon these Men as necessary to be believ'd, but the Truth

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of what is most essential in the Histories of the Old and New Testament, and the Divinity of our Saviour's Doctrine, (in which there is nothing that is not conformable to right Reason) they will be brought (says he) to acknowledge that Christian Religion is really descended from Heaven; and will be easily inclin'd to embrace that which hitherto they have obstinately rejected, because it was grounded on Suppositions repugnant to that Light of Reason by which they are guided.

I shall not undertake, Sir, to examine these Consequences, nor the Principles from whence they are drawn. I promis'd you only a bare account of the Thoughts of Mr. N. And I hope you will use means that some Divine, vers'd in these matters, may satisfy us, both upon this Subject, better than I myself am able to do. I am, &c.

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THIRD LETTER.

YOU have seen, Sir, to how little purpose it is that Mr. *Simon* endeavours to defend his particular Opinions, as well as those which are common to him with all other Roman-Catholic Doctors. You shall see now that he is no happier in going about to play the Critic on two Letters, in which he was not concern'd. It appears evidently that nothing but the itch he hath of carping at other Mens Writings has made him undertake to examine those Letters. For he embraces the greatest part of the Opinions which the Author there maintains. And I doubt not but those who have judg'd the Opinions of Mr. N. too bold, will be as much scandaliz'd at those of the pious *Prior of Bolleville*.

That incomparable Critic maintains at first dash, as boldly as if he were

assur'd of it by Revelation, that he that is call'd Mr. *N.* is *Noel Aubert de Versé*; which I have told you already is nothing but a Dream of Mr. *Simon's*; who thinks he may lawfully say any thing that comes in his Head, and believes that by boldly affirming it he shall make his Reader be of his Mind. That is a Secret of his Rhetoric, which he puts in practice as soon as ever he finds himself puzzl'd, or when he imagines he may thereby worst his Antagonist. But by ill fortune he has us'd it so long, that his Art being plainly discover'd, can no more deceive any body. By saying whatever came in his Mind, although in truth he did not believe it, he has so grossly contradicted himself, that he has now lost all Credit with Men of Worth. I need therefore return no other answer to the beginning of our Author's XIIIth Chap. than by saying, that I am sorry his Choler does so much blind him, as to make him affirm a Falshood as boldly as the clearest Truth. I pray God, as I have often done, to cure him of a Passion that discomposes him in so deplorable a manner; and which may in time render him incapable of serving the Public, as he might do, if he considered

a little more on what he thinks fit to publish.

I will not spend my Labour singly upon his Remarks; for I write not this to satisfy him. In the ill Humour he is, nothing is so fit to settle his Mind as Time. I will therefore but touch on them as I go along, when the nature of what I have to say leads me to it.

Neither is it my design to defend the Opinions of Mr. *N.* concerning the Inspiration of the sacred Writers. Tho I said it was hard to answer his Proofs fully, I said not that I was convinc'd. On the contrary, I propos'd them to the Learned, that I might provoke them to examine the matter carefully, and might draw from their Observations some further Light than my own Meditations could furnish me with.

But as Mens Intentions are not interpreted always so favourably as they ought to be, I find my self oblig'd (that I may satisfy the Scruples of some pious Persons, and repel the Calumnies of some Divines who have more Zeal than Knowledg) to answer four sorts of Reflections that are made upon the Treatise concerning Inspiration.

I. Some Learned Men, who approve the Opinions of Mr. N. conceive nevertheless that they ought not to have been publish'd; because in their Judgments it is not fit that all Truths should indifferently be communicated to all People. There are, say they, certain things, which though good in themselves, may easily be apply'd to ill uses; and it is better that the Public should be depriv'd of the advantage it might draw from the knowledg of such Truths, than be visibly expos'd to the danger of abusing them so lamentably as it would be apt to do.

II. Others, who are of the same Mind, in approving the Opinions of Mr. N. believe that since he was willing those his Thoughts should be publish'd, he ought to have express'd them more distinctly; and above all to have propos'd in the first place, the State of the Question between him and the generality of Divines. These Gentlemen think that if he had done as they say, he had prevented a great many Calumnies which are groundd upon nothing but the Obscurity that is observ'd to be in some places of his Writing.

III. Some

III. Some of those who look upon the Opinion of Mr. N. as false Doctrine, cannot indure that I should have said, *It appears not by what Principle it can be overthrown.* They say that nothing is more easy. And to let you see they are in the right, they make divers Answers to the Arguments of Mr. N. and propose some Objections, which they believe sufficient to refute all he has said.

IV. Lastly, the most hot, and the least reasonable of these Objectors affirm, that the Opinions of our Friend lead directly to Deism; and stick not to accuse him of favouring that abominable Opinion.

You see, Sir, to what Heads I am oblig'd to make Answer, being of Opinion (as I am) that it was convenient to publish that Writing concerning Inspiration. To begin with the first: I acknowledg, Sir, that what they say is true. I grant that all sorts of Truths are not fit to be spoken at all times, and on all occasions. It is undoubtedly a very ill thing to publish any Truth not necessary to be known, how certain soever it may be, when we are assur'd,

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that those who shall read or understand it will infallibly be so scandaliz'd at it, that the knowledg thereof will produce more hurt than good. On such occasions, Christian Prudence indispensably obliges us to the contrary. The Question is not then, Whether the Maxim of these Gentlemen be true or not. In that we are agreed. But my Opinion was, that this Writing of Mr. N. would do infinitely more good than hurt; and I dare yet maintain, that in the Times wherein we live, it is very fit that such Matters as these be thoroughly examin'd, without concealing from the Public any of the Difficulties that attend them.

You know, Sir, that most of the Sciences being arriv'd in this our Age to a greater degree of Perfection than formerly; though from thence it might be expected, that such Improvements should have render'd Christians so much the more wise and more judicious; yet on the contrary, Libertinism and Impiety have prevail'd more scandalously than ever. The Libertines of former Ages profess'd their Opinions only in some extravagant Sallies of Wit, or Debauchery; and oppos'd the Christian Religion

only by some insipid Railleries, which could have no weight with any Persons of sound Judgment and unbiass'd Affections. But the Libertines of our Times make use of their Philosophy and Criticism, to overthrow the most sacred and most solid Doctrines of our Religion. Divers impious Books have been publish'd not only in *Latin*, but also in *French*, in *English*, and in *Dutch*; which many unlearned Persons read with much greediness. Abundance of People are fond of *Spinoza's* Opinions; because they have read his Books in *French*, in *English*, and in *Dutch*, though they never study'd Philosophy nor Criticism. We are in Times wherein every body pretends to depth of Learning, freedom of Thought, and strength of Judgment; and this Reputation is easily acquir'd by reading those Books. But that which renders this yet more deplorable, is that it is not a Disease of Youth, that Men grow out of as they advance in Years. They whose Minds are once tainted with these unhappy Opinions do very seldom get quit of them.

This is undoubtedly a great Mischief, and to which those who are any ways

ways able to bring Remedy are oblig'd to do it. It has been endeavour'd to overthrow the Authority of the holy Scriptures, by making appear that the Style of the sacred Writers was not inspir'd, and that they did not receive every thing they said from immediate Inspiration. And in effect it has happen'd that many People have hereupon believ'd, that the Authority of the Scripture was intirely ruin'd; And imagining that the Reasons brought by *Spinoza* to prove this Opinion were unanswerable, they have fall'n into Deism or into Atheism.

What Remedy, Sir, for this? For my part, I confess, I see but one of these three. Either a way must be found to burn all the Copies of these impious Books, that have corrupted so many Men, and to blot out of Mens Memory the Arguments of these Libertines; or else there must solid Demonstration be made of the Falsity of the Arguments they make use of to maintain their Opinions; Or, lastly, in granting to them that the sacred Pen-Men were not inspir'd, neither as to the Style, nor as to those things which they might know otherwise than by Revelation, it must be yet demonstrated that the Authority of the

the Scriptures ought not for all that to be esteem'd less considerable.

It is plain that the first of these three is absolutely impossible; and that, tho an Inquisition should now be settl'd in *France*, in *England*, and in *Holland*, it would already be too late. There is then no other means left to cure this Libertinism that is spread so wide, but one of the two last propos'd Remedies. For my part I could wish with all my Heart that some body would try the second; and would make it evident that God has inspir'd the sacred Authors, not only with the matter they have spoken about, but also with the very Expressions. But since no body has yet done, nor that I know undertaken to do it, why should it be ill taken that Mr. *N.* has made use of the third method, or that I have publish'd his Writing?

It is true, there are some who believe that it were better to hold ones peace in a matter so delicate, than to run the hazard of giving scandal to others, by contradicting the Opinions which they think most reasonable. This indeed would be very well, if Libertines also forbore writing, or if no body read their Books;

Books. But since it is otherwise, such silence is not at all seasonable. If any weak Minds take Offence without Reason at what is offer'd, there are an hundred others that may be brought off from their Inclination to Libertinism, by the same Reasons which those are offended at. If indeed we ought always to be afraid of saying any thing that is not generally approv'd, we should quickly be oblig'd not only to keep silence, but also to suppress many things which are both useful and necessary to Salvation. There is no Doctrine in the Gospel, how holy soever, which some Sect of Christians has not perverted and misused. Nay the same is yet done daily.

All the difficulty then lies in knowing, whether the treating concerning this Question of the Inspiration of the Authors of the Bible will occasion more Good or Hurt? In it self the Thing is good, even by the Concession of those that argue against it; and there is nothing but the weakness of some Mens Minds that can render it dangerous. Thus then the Good or Evil of this Disquisition depends wholly upon the Event; which therefore these Gentlemen ought to suffer us to expect, before

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we acknowledg that we have done ill in publishing this Writing of Mr. N.

We must add to this, that Mr. N. is not the first that has spoken, as he does, of the Inspiration of the sacred Writers. We see many Proofs of it in his Dissertation. And besides the places which he has cited out of some Books of *Grotius*, there are others infinitely more strong and more express in those against *Rivet*.

Now after having thus answer'd those that would have had this Writing suppress'd, it is necessary to give some satisfaction to those also who complain that the Author has not express'd his Opinion with sufficient clearness. I have therefore desir'd Mr. N. to explain it to me himself, if it were possible in few words, and more distinctly; in order to remove those injurious Suspicions that may have risen from any Obscurity in his Writing, concerning his Faith and his Piety. And these are the Heads to which he has reduc'd his Opinion, and wherein he agrees with us.

In the first place, says he, "I believe that no Prophet, either of the Old or New Testament, has said any thing

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"thing in the Name of God, or as
 "by his order, which God had not
 "effectually order'd him to say; nor
 "has undertaken to foretel any thing,
 "which God had not indeed truly re-
 "veal'd to him; and that this cannot
 "be doubted of without great Impiety.
 "I have said it expressly in many places
 "of my Treatise.

In the second place, "I believe, that
 "there is no matter of Fact, of any im-
 "portance, related in the History of
 "the Old or New Testament, which
 "in effect is not true. And that tho
 "there may be some slight Circumstan-
 "ces, wherein some of the Historians
 "were mistaken; yet we ought never-
 "theless to look upon that History in
 "general as the truest and most holy
 "History that ever was publish'd a-
 "mongst Men. I am perswaded that
 "those who writ it were very well
 "inform'd of all they relate, and that
 "they had not the least intention to
 "deceive us; insomuch that it was im-
 "possible they should fall into any con-
 "siderable Error; as neither can we
 "do, in believing what they have said.
 "And, that there may be no Equivo-
 "cation; By a matter of importance

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"I mean all the Commandments that
 "the sacred Historians assure us were
 "given to the Jews by God; all the
 "Miracles that are found in the Histo-
 "ry of the Scripture; all the principal
 "Events in that History; and generally
 "all the matters of Fact on which our
 "Faith is grounded.

"In the third place, I believe, with
 "all Christians, that all the Do-
 "ctrines propos'd by the Authors of
 "the Scriptures to Jews and Christians
 "to be believ'd, are really and truly
 "Divine Doctrines, although it may
 "be suppos'd that they did not imme-
 "diately learn them from Heaven; I
 "am as much perswaded as any Man,
 "that there is no sort of reasoning
 "made use of in the dogmatical places
 "of the holy Scripture (where the
 "Prophets and Apostles instruct us
 "concerning the Promises or the Will
 "of God) that can lead us into Error,
 "or into the belief of any thing that
 "is false, or contrary to Piety.

"I believe in the fourth place, That
 "Jesus Christ was absolutely infallible,
 "as well as free from all Sin, because
 "of the Godhead that was always u-
 "nited to him, and which perpetually

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“ inspir’d him : infomuch that all that
 “ he taught is as certain as if God
 “ himself had pronounc’d it. I have
 “ explain’d this clearly in my Writing.

“ In the last place, I believe that God
 “ has often dictated to the Prophets
 “ and to the Apostles the very words
 “ which they should use. Of this I
 “ have also given some Examples.

“ In these things I agree with all
 “ Christian Divines. And I believe fur-
 “ ther, as well as they, that these five
 “ Heads of our Belief may be undenia-
 “ bly prov’d against Libertines and
 “ Atheists, by the Authority of Jesus
 “ Christ and his Apostles ; to whom
 “ God has born Testimony by an infi-
 “ nite number of Miracles, which are
 “ more clearly demonstrable to have
 “ been really done, than any Fact what-
 “ soever of all ancient History. For
 “ Example, it may be prov’d by posi-
 “ tive Testimonies of Matters of Fact,
 “ that Jesus Christ did really rise again
 “ from the Dead, and that the Apo-
 “ stles had the Gift of Miracles, more
 “ clearly than it can be prov’d that
 “ ever there was a Roman Emperor
 “ call’d *Trajan*.

“ If

“ If any one conceive that this kind
 “ of Evidence is not sufficient to con-
 “ vince us of the Truth of these Facts,
 “ or that the Resurrection of Jesus
 “ Christ, and the Miracles of his Apo-
 “ stles, do not sufficiently prove (with-
 “ out any thing further) that they were
 “ not Deceivers ; I confess I understand
 “ not what further Proofs can be given
 “ of these things ; unless God should
 “ raise in our days a Prophet that should
 “ do the same Miracles over again be-
 “ fore our Eyes. It may be there are
 “ some who believe that the holy Spi-
 “ rit gives them inward assurance of
 “ the Truth of the Gospel, and who
 “ imagine that this inward Testimony
 “ is a more convincing Proof than all
 “ those I have spoken of. But as there
 “ are not many that have this Belief,
 “ and as those that have it cannot
 “ make use of that pretended inward
 “ Testimony to convince another, who
 “ does not himself feel it ; we may,
 “ without troubling our selves further
 “ with them, leave them to enjoy that
 “ Chimerical Satisfaction which their
 “ meer Imagination affords them.

“ The Authority of the holy Scrip-
 “ tures being thus settl’d, I will now

" shew you wherein it seems to me that
 " the generality of Divines are de-
 " ceiv'd, and in what I am not of their
 " Opinion.

" They affirm that all that is in
 " the sacred Books, Histories, Prophe-
 " cies, &c. has been immediately in-
 " spir'd both as to the Matter and
 " Words: That all the Books in the
 " Jews Catalogue ought to be reckon'd
 " amongst the inspir'd Books: That
 " when the Apostles preach'd the Gos-
 " pel, they were so inspir'd that they
 " could not be deceiv'd, not even in a
 " thing of no consequence at all; and
 " that they knew at the very first,
 " without any exercise either of Rea-
 " son or Memory, what they were to
 " say.

" On the contrary my Opinion is,
 " That it is only in Prophecies, and
 " some other places, as in the Sermons
 " of Jesus Christ, and where God
 " himself is introduc'd speaking, that
 " the Matter or Things have been
 " immediately reveal'd to those who
 " spoke them: That the Stile, for the
 " most part, was left to the liberty of
 " those who spoke or writ: That there
 " are some Books that are not inspir'd,
 " neither

" neither as to the Matter nor Words;
 " as *Job, Ecclesiastes, &c.* That there
 " are some Passages, which Passion di-
 " ctated to those that writ them, as
 " many Curses in the *Psalms*: That
 " the sacred Historians might commit,
 " and have actually committed some
 " light Faults, which are of no moment:
 " That the Apostles in preaching the
 " Gospel, or in writing their Works,
 " were not ordinarily inspir'd, neither
 " as to the Matter, nor the Words; but
 " that they had recourse to their Me-
 " mory and Judgment, in declaring
 " what Jesus Christ had taught them,
 " or framing Arguments, or drawing
 " Consequences from thence: That
 " the Apostles while they liv'd were
 " only look'd upon as faithful Witnesses
 " of what they had seen and heard,
 " and as Persons well instructed in the
 " Christian Religion, whereof no part
 " was unknown to them, or conceal'd
 " by them from their Disciples; but not
 " as Men that preach'd and taught by
 " perpetual Inspiration. I believe in-
 " deed that they were not deceiv'd in
 " any Point of Doctrine, and that it
 " was very unlikely they should be so;
 " because Christian Religion is easy,
 " and

“ and compris’d in a few Articles: That
 “ they pretended not to enter into deep
 “ Argumentations, and to draw Conse-
 “ quences remote from their Principles:
 “ and that they never undertook to treat
 “ of nice and controversial Matters, as is
 “ plain by reading of their Writings: Or,
 “ if it happen’d sometimes that they
 “ were mistaken in any thing, as it
 “ seems to have happen’d to *St. Peter* and
 “ to *St. Barnabas*, it has been in things
 “ of small consequence, and they soon
 “ perceiv’d their Error, as did these
 “ two Apostles. This sort of Infalli-
 “ bility is easy to be conceiv’d; if it
 “ be consider’d that a Man of Sense and
 “ Integrity, who is well instructed in
 “ his Religion, and who does not much
 “ enter into Argumentations and draw-
 “ ing of Inferences, can hardly err, so
 “ long as he continues in that Temper,
 “ and observes that Conduct.

“ This is the Sum of what I have
 “ said in my Writing concerning the
 “ Inspiration of the sacred Pen-Men;
 “ and it is herein precisely that I dif-
 “ fer from the common Opinion of
 “ Divines. You see how much these
 “ Principles are contrary to those of
 “ the Deists, who reject all sort of In-
 “ spira-

“ spiration, and who look upon the
 “ holy Scripture as a Work full of Fal-
 “ sities, and wherein there is nothing
 “ but what is purely human. The Di-
 “ vines that have accus’d me of Deism
 “ on account of this Writing, certain-
 “ ly either never took the pains to
 “ read it, or did not understand it;
 “ for I cannot believe that they would
 “ accuse me of so detestable an Opinion
 “ out of pure Malice, and against their
 “ own Consciences. They were un-
 “ doubtedly in some measure mis-led by
 “ a false Zeal, that render’d them little
 “ attentive to what they read, or made
 “ them suspect that the Author had not
 “ discover’d all that he had in his Mind.
 “ It is an ill Custom that some peevish
 “ and ill-natur’d Persons have, to judg
 “ of other Mens Opinions rather by
 “ the Suspicions which their own de-
 “ prav’d Imaginations suggest to them,
 “ than by those Mens Expressions and
 “ Actions; which are the only Evi-
 “ dence that ought to be regarded on
 “ these occasions. A Man ought to be
 “ judged by what he says, and not by
 “ what he says not, nor by what is
 “ injuriously imputed to him without
 “ any Proof. And if this ought al-
 “ ways

" ways to be the Rule of our Carriage
 " one towards another, there is more
 " particular Reason that it should be so
 " when a Man protests (as I do at pre-
 " sent) that he is not of any other
 " Opinion than what he expressly sets
 " down; and that he disowns the ill
 " Consequences which are pretended
 " to be drawn from his Discourses, and
 " which to him seem not to be deduci-
 " ble from them.

By this Explanation of Mr. A's Prin-
 ciples, which I receiv'd from himself,
 you may see, Sir, that he is very far
 from those impious Opinions which
 some too hot-headed Divines have
 charg'd him with. Candid and equi-
 table Readers had no need of this Ex-
 planation, in which I see nothing but
 what is plainly enough set down in
 his first Writing. But as Equity is a
 Vertue seldom practis'd in Theological
 Controversies, he thought it necessary
 to give these further Explications, to
 those who persisted still in suspecting
 him to believe things which he abhors.
 We shall see hereafter if any ill Con-
 sequence can be drawn from his Op-
 inion.

But

But before I come to that, I will
 transcribe here what he further adds
 to that which you have already seen.
 " In reading, says he, the Prior of
 " *Bolleville's* Answer to the Thoughts
 " of some *Holland* Divines, I observ'd
 " that Mr. *Simon* accuses me of having
 " taken part of what I have said out
 " *Grotius* his Book, call'd *Votum pro Pace*
 " *Ecclesiasticâ*. I should be well pleas'd
 " that my Reader believ'd it. I could
 " not then be accus'd, as I am by some,
 " of Innovation. It is true, I have
 " read that Book; but it being long ago,
 " that Passage of *Grotius* was not in my
 " Mind; otherwise I should not have
 " fail'd to have cited it, as I have cited
 " others of the same Author that are
 " less express. I think it therefore not
 " amiss to take advantage of this Ad-
 " vertisement, and now to set down
 " that Passage, together with another
 " taken out of his Defence of the *Vow*
 " *for Peace*, titl'd, *Discussio Apologetica*
 " *Rivetiani*.

" *Grotius* had said in a Work where-
 " in he defends his Observations upon
 " the Consultation of *Cassander* against
 " *Rivet*, that this last Divine was very
 " much deceiv'd in believing that all the
 " Books

Animadv. in
 Animadv. Ri-
 vet. p. 647.

" Books of the Old Testament, that are in
 " the Hebrew Canon, were dictated by the
 " Holy Ghost ; that Esdras in the Opinion
 " of all the Jews was not a Prophet, nor
 " had the holy Spirit ; that his Books, and
 " the Collection he made of the more an-
 " cient Books, had been approv'd by the
 " great Synagogue, in which indeed there
 " were some Prophets ; although the Jews
 " hold that there was a doubt concerning
 " the Book of Ecclesiastes, &c. Rivet
 " liked not this Opinion of Grotius, and
 " indeavoured to prove the contrary,
 " by Scripture, and by some Jewish Au-
 " thors. Grotius replied to him in these

Pdg. 672.

* Verè dixi non omnes libros qui sunt in Hebræo Canone dictatos à Spiritu Sancto ; Scriptos esse cum pio animi motu non nego ; & hoc est quod judicavit Synagoga magna, cujus judicio in hac re stant Hebræi. Sed à Spiritu Sancto dictari historias nihil fuit opus : satis fuit scriptorem memoriâ valere circa res spectatas, aut diligentia in describendis veterum Commentariis. Vox quoque Spiritus Sancti am-

" terms, in his Vow for Peace.
 " * I said indeed that the Books
 " in the Hebrew Canon were not
 " all dictated by the holy Spirit ;
 " But I do not deny that they
 " were written with a pious inten-
 " tion of Mind. And this was
 " the Determination of the great
 " Synagogue, whose Judgment in
 " this matter the Jews submit to.
 " For there was no need that the
 " Histories should be dictated by
 " the holy Spirit. It was sufficient
 " that the Writer had a good
 " Memory, for the things he had

" seen

" seen ; or that he were careful in
 " transcribing the ancient Records.
 " The word Holy Spirit is also
 " ambiguous ; for either it signi-
 " fies, as I have taken it, a certain
 " divine Inspiration which both
 " the ordinary Prophets had, and
 " sometimes David and Daniel ;
 " or it signifies a pious Motion
 " or Faculty stirring a Man up to
 " utter useful Precepts relating to
 " Human Life, or Political or
 " Civil Matters. Thus Maimo-
 " nides interprets the word Holy
 " Spirit, where he treats of those
 " Historical and Moral Writings.
 " If Luke had written by the
 " dictating of the Holy Spirit, he
 " would have fetch'd his Autho-
 " rity from thence, as the Pro-
 " phets do, rather than from Witnesses,
 " whose Credit he follows, &c.

" * Rivet was mightily scandalized, or * Apologet. §.
 " at least seem'd to be so, at an answer 118, & 119.
 " so contradictory to the common O-
 " pinions. But || Grotius explain'd himself || p. 722.
 " yet more clearly and strongly in his Re-
 " futation of Rivet's Apology.

" † Grotius, says he, himself,
 " willingly acknowledges, that the
 " Pro-

ambigua est ; nam aut significat, quomodo ego accepi, afflatum divinum qualem habuere tum Prophetæ ordinarii, tum interdum David & Daniel ; aut significat pium motum, sive facultatem impellentem ad loquendum salutaria vivendi præcepta, vel res politicas & civiles, quomodo vocem Spiritus Sancti, interpretatur Maimonides, ubi de Scriptis illis aut Historicis aut Morali- bus agit. Si Lucas divino afflatu dictante sua scripsisset, inde potius sibi sumpsisset auctoritatem, ut Prophetæ faciunt, quam à testibus quorum fidem est secutus, &c.

† Afflatu Dei locutos quæ locuti sunt, scripsisse quæ scribere iussi sunt

sunt Prophetas toto animo approbat. Grotius: idem iudicat de Apocalypsi & Apostolorum prædictionibus. Christi dicta omnia quin sint Dei dicta dubitari nefas. De Scriptis Historicis & Moralibus Hebræorum sententiis aliud putat. Sane est quod pio animo scripta sint, & optimâ fide, & de rebus summis, &c. Neq; Esdras, Neq; Lucas Prophetæ fuere, sed viri graves, prudentes, qui nec fallere vellent, nec falli se finerent. Dixitne Lucas, Factum est ad Lucam verbum Domini, & dixit ei Dominus scribe, ut solent Prophetæ? Nihil tale. Quid ergo? Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem, quæ nobis completa sunt, verum. Dicit se non præcepto sed aliorum exemplo adductum ut scriberet. Sicut tradiderunt nobis qui ab initio ipsi viderunt, & ministri fuere Sermonis, nempe Maria Mater Domini, cognati Jesus alii, Apostoli, Discipuli Septuaginta, Sancti &

*“ Prophets, who were commanded
“ by God to write or speak, did
“ write and spoke by Inspiration
“ from him : His Opinion is also
“ the same as to the Apocalypse,
“ and the Predictions made by the
“ Apostles : He esteems it the
“ highest Impiety to make any
“ doubt that all that was said by
“ Jesus Christ was said by God
“ himself. Concerning the Hi-
“ storical Writings, and the Mo-
“ ral Sentences of the Hebrews,
“ he is of another Opinion : He
“ thinks it sufficient to believe
“ that they were written out of a
“ pious Intention, and with great
“ Ingenuity, and concerning mat-
“ ters of highest importance, &c.
“ Neither Esdras nor Luke were
“ Prophets ; but grave and pru-
“ dent Men, who neither were
“ minded to deceive, nor would
“ suffer themselves to be deceived.
“ Did Luke say, The Word of
“ the Lord came to Luke, and
“ the Lord said to him, write,
“ as the Prophets us’d to say?
“ Nothing like it. What then?
“ For as much as many have
“ taken*

*“ taken in hand to set forth in order a
“ Declaration of those things which
“ are most surely believed among us :
“ (He says not that by Command, but by
“ the Example of others, he was induced
“ to write) : Even as they delivered them
“ to us, who from the beginning were
“ Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the
“ Word ; (viz. Mary the Mother of our
“ Lord, other of his Kinsmen, the Apo-
“ stles, the seventy Disciples, and the Saints
“ that had been rais’d again by Jesus, ma-
“ ny Witnesses of his Resurrection :) It
“ seemed good to me also, having had
“ perfect understanding of all things
“ from the very first, &c. Understanding,
“ how acquir’d ? From Eye-witnesses, not
“ by Revelation. To write, not things di-
“ stated, but in order. The Prophets then
“ had another sort of Impulse than Luke ;
“ whose good Design nevertheless may be
“ ascrib’d to the Holy Spirit.*

*“ After the Death of Grotius there
“ came out a third Answer of Rivet’s,
“ wherein he strives to defend the com-
“ mon Opinion against his famous An-
“ tagonist. It appears plainly by the
“ manner of his answering, that he be-
“ liev’d that the Holy Spirit had dicta-
“ ted the Scripture word for word ;
“ and*

& resuscitati à Jesu, testes Resurrectionis complures. Visum est mihi ascuto omnia à principio, &c. Quomodo assecuto? ex ipsis testibus non ex Revelatione. Scribere non dictata sed diligenter ex ordine. Longè ergo aliter acti Prophetæ, aliter Lucas: cuius tamen pium consilium Spiritui Sancto potest adscribi.

Grotianæ discuss. διάλυσις, Sect. 14. §. 3. 4.

" and this Opinion is known to be the
 " common Opinion of Protestants ;
 " who on all occasions call the sacred
 " Writers, *Amanuenses of the holy Spirit*.
 " Nay even Catholick Authors, *Gregory*
 " *de Valence*, *Bellarmin*, *Tolet*, and *Estius*,
 " cited by *Rivet*, seem to have been of
 " the same Opinion. *Cornelius à Lapide*,
 " whom Mr. *Simon* cites, holds the same
 " concerning the Law and the Prophets ;
 " though he confesses it was not ne-
 " cessary that God should dictate the
 " words, when it was only matter of
 " History, or of Moral Precepts, which
 " might be known otherways. So that
 " it may be reasonably suppos'd that
 " the greatest part of Christian Divines
 " now adays are of the Opinion of
 " verbal Inspiration, if we may so call
 " it ; since there are very few that say
 " the contrary ; and those who do, say
 " it only of some Books, as *Cornelius à*
 " *Lapide*.

" Every body knows that not only
 " in Sermons, but also in Divinity-
 " Lectures, upon any part of Scrip-
 " ture, some Men strangely wire-draw
 " the Words of the Scripture ; and
 " seek after Reasons why the holy Spi-
 " rit, as they speak, makes use of one
 " Ex-

" Expressions rather than another. The
 " same thing they do also in Commenta-
 " ries : Which would be altogether ab-
 " surd if my Supposition were admitted,
 " that the Stile of the Scriptures is for
 " the most part human and even careless
 " enough. But this is because they
 " commonly take the Opinion of the
 " Jews for granted ; who have a Pro-
 " verb or general Maxim concerning the
 " Books of the Law (in which they be-
 " lieve all to be inspir'd, even to a sin-
 " gle Letter) that *there is not a Letter*
 " *in the Law, whereon there depends not*
 " *great Mountains*.

" I am very glad, however, that
 " Mr. *Simon* declares himself openly of
 " the same Opinion with me, concerning
 " the Stile of the sacred Writers. I
 " wish all Protestants would do the
 " same. We should then soon be free
 " from many Disputes that are ground-
 " ed upon nothing but Grammatical
 " Subtilties. We should then perceive,
 " that we ought not rigorously to in-
 " sist upon a great many Expressions in
 " the utmost extent of their Significa-
 " tion, as if the sacred Pen-Men had
 " spoken with the same Exactness, as
 " do Geometricians. We should then

“ understand that no Doctrines, which
 “ we esteem important, ought to be
 “ grounded barely upon certain manners
 “ of speaking; which we cannot be sure
 “ were exact; because the sacred Wri-
 “ ters, not affecting exactness of Stile,
 “ may have used that manner of Expres-
 “ sion without any design. Such is the
 “ Doctrine of the antecedent Imputation
 “ of the Sin of *Adam*, which is found-
 “ ed upon the Comparison *St. Paul*
 “ makes (Chap. V. of the Epistle to the
 “ *Romans*) between the Grace that came
 “ by Jesus Christ, and the Sin that en-
 “ tred into the World by *Adam*. Men
 “ stretch this Comparison with too
 “ much Rigor, not considering that
 “ *St. Paul*’s Stile is the Stile of one
 “ that observes little Exactness in his
 “ Expressions, although in the main his
 “ Arguments are admirable; and that
 “ the laying too great stress upon the
 “ turn of his Phrases may expose us to
 “ the hazard of falling into gross Error.
 “ The general Design that he proposes
 “ to himself ought only to be stuck to;
 “ without insisting particularly upon
 “ every term, and every distinct Pe-
 “ riod; which taken separately and
 “ strictly, may oft-times prove contrary
 “ to

“ to what he drives at. Those who
 “ are a little conversant in the Disputes
 “ amongst Protestants, will easily see
 “ the importance of this Remark.

“ The ingenuous Acknowledgment
 “ of what there is of Human in the
 “ sacred Writings, would render the
 “ Truth of our Religion more conspi-
 “ cuous to the Eyes of the incredu-
 “ lous; whereas it is hid from them, by
 “ clothing it in certain Notions which
 “ common Sense makes them reject,
 “ and from among which they are not
 “ able to pick out the Heavenly Truths.
 “ Men fancy that for the Establishment
 “ of Religion it is requisite to maintain
 “ every thing, or any thing, that (if
 “ true) would be an invincible Proof
 “ of it. They cast therefore about in
 “ their own Minds for such Foundations
 “ as they conceive would make it most
 “ stable. With this their Brain be-
 “ comes so heated, that in the end
 “ they rashly assert that these are the
 “ real Foundations of Religion; and
 “ that if these be taken away, Religion
 “ will fall to the ground and be de-
 “ stroy’d. Thus some Romish Doctors
 “ have fancy’d that Men, for the most
 “ part, not being capable to examine

"Religion themselves, it was necessary
 "that God should settle a way where-
 "by they might find it, without Ex-
 "amination; viz. by the way of Au-
 "thority. And from thence they have
 "concluded, That to deny there is an
 "Authority in the World to which
 "People ought intirely to submit, is
 "to overthrow Religion. But to these
 "Gentlemen it is answer'd, That it is
 "absurd in them to fancy that God
 "will not preserve the true Religion
 "amongst Men, unless it be in the way
 "that they have imagin'd. The same
 "may be answer'd to our Protestant
 "Divines, who believe the Inspiration
 "of every word; viz. that they are de-
 "ceived in believing that the Truth of
 "Christian Religion is founded upon
 "that Opinion. We ought not to
 "reckon every thing among the Prin-
 "ciples of our Religion, that unto us
 "seems proper to strengthen it; nor to
 "trouble our selves in examining af-
 "ter what manner we would have esta-
 "blish'd it, had the thing depended up-
 "on us; or in asserting how God ought
 "to have done it. But we ought to
 "consider things in themselves as they
 "really are, and learn what has been
 "the

"the Will of God, by what he has
 "done; not conclude that he has
 "done this or the other thing, because
 "we fancy he ought to have will'd
 "it. Libertines who see that to
 "uphold the Truth of Christian Re-
 "ligion, Men bring long Metaphysi-
 "cal Arguments (which often prove
 "nothing, but that, according to the
 "Suppositions they have thought fit
 "to make, it ought to be so) be-
 "lieve presently that Christian Re-
 "ligion has no better Foundation,
 "and so reject it; as much perhaps
 "through the fault of those Divines
 "who argue in that manner, as their
 "own. But if things were repre-
 "sented to them as they are in them-
 "selves, without going about to force
 "them to allow that which is not
 "prov'd, they would submit to our
 "Reasons; and we should not need to
 "teach them any thing but what Re-
 "ligion enjoins them, after having con-
 "vinc'd them of its Truth.

This is, Sir, what Mr. N. has writ
 to me, upon the desire that was inti-
 mated of his giving some further

Explication of his Thoughts. I hope it will be found sufficient to convince those who may have mistaken his Sense, and who on that account have charg'd him with Opinions which he never had, that he is very far from being guilty of what he is so uncharitably accus'd of. I will send you, by the next, the Answers which he makes to divers Objections that have been propos'd to him.

THE

THE
FOURTH LETTER.

I Believe, Sir, there is no Condition in the World more deplorable, than theirs that publish any thing in Print ; if it be so that they are bound to satisfy all those that censure them. Some Persons have taken it ill that it should be said, It was hard to confute the Opinions of Mr. N. They hold it very easy, and that there needs no great Ability to do it. But they either undertake it not ; Or if they make any Objection, they shew that they understand nothing of the matter ; as the Prior of *Bolleville*, who seems to understand neither what Mr. N. has said, nor what himself objects. Others confess that it is a very difficult matter ; and pretend that therefore a Man ought not to trouble himself with it ; nor raise Scruples in weak Heads which

the strongest would find it a difficulty to remove. To satisfy the first, it would be requisite to show, that the Objections propos'd are not strong enough to refute Mr. N's Opinions : And that is the very thing that will infallibly offend the others, who would have nothing said on that Subject. If the Advice of these last be taken, the first will undoubtedly say that we were much in the wrong, to say that it was very hard to confute an Opinion, which they have easily overthrown. They will be apt even to say that it is not without design that we have made use of weak Arguments, and their crazy Fancies will set no bounds to their Suspicions ; according to the Custom of too many Divines, who glory in a shew of diving into other Mens Thoughts. What is to be done in this case ? One of the two must unavoidably be displeas'd.

I will not then be afraid, Sir, to communicate to you the Answers of Mr. N. to some Objections. Such as have not read the Explanations which I sent you a while ago, with sufficient Attention, may perhaps by our Friend's Answers better apprehend his true meaning.

Objection

Objection 1.

To say that the Prophets have often express'd themselves in their Prophecies, after the same manner that they were wont to do on other occasions, and that they were not constantly inspir'd by God with all their Expressions, is to lessen the Authority of the Prophecies. Page 15.

Answer.

" They that make this Objection
 " could not say any thing that can give
 " more advantage to the Profane. For
 " it is as clear as day, that the Stile of
 " the Prophets varies according to the
 " diversity of their Genius ; as has been
 " observ'd, and as is agreed by the
 " most able Interpreters. Mr. *Simon*
 " proves it himself, *Pag. 123.* of his
 " Answer, and makes appear that what
 " the Prophets said was not the less
 " God's Word. But I cannot forbear
 " to observe that our Divines are even
 " more scrupulous than the Jews. For
 " these believe the Inspiration of Words
 " only in the *Pentateuch* ; whereas they
 " believe it throughout all the Old Te-
 " stament. * *The Prophecy of Moses,* * *Prophetia*
 " says *Manasseth Ben. Israel,* after many *Mosis per omnia*
 " other

nīa tanto dignior praestanti-
orq; fuit cate-
rorum omnium
Prophetarum
Prophetiā;
quod his quo
tempore Pro-
phetiam acci-
piebant, tan-
tummodo sen-
sus, five res
Prophetiā
comprehensa
revelabatur:
istam autem
rem seu sen-
sum propriis
suis verbis po-
pulo enarra-
bant. Atq; cā
de causā usur-
pabant hanc
loquendi for-
mulam: Et lo-
quutus Domi-
nus mihi: qua-
si dicerent, ea
que dicimus,
licet verbis no-
stris exprima-
mus, sensum
tamen habent
quem a Deo ipso accepimus. † Scabrum salebrorum ac diffi-
patum.

“ other Rabbins, was in every respect
“ more honourable, and more excellent, than
“ the Prophecies of all the other Prophets.
“ For to them, whensoever they receiv'd
“ the Prophecy, the Sense only, or the Sub-
“ stance of the matter to be foretold was
“ reveal'd; but they declar'd to the People
“ this Thing or Matter in their own words.
“ And for that Reason they made use of
“ this form of speaking; And the Lord said
“ unto me; As if they would say, these
“ things which we say to you, although we
“ express them in our words, contain the
“ Sense which we have receiv'd from
“ God, &c. Many Christian Divines
“ have said the same things of all the
“ Prophets in general; as Mr. Huet in
“ his Demonstration; who plainly affirms,
“ that the things are to be attributed to
“ the holy Spirit, but the Words and the
“ Language to the Prophets. He says
“ also elsewhere, that Prophetic Extasy
“ does ordinarily produce a † hard, rough
“ and broken Stile. Many others have
“ held the same thing, without being
“ thought guilty of Heterodoxy.

Objecti-

Objection 2.

It has been said, that David says ma- Page 23.
ny things of himself, and of his Enemies,
not thinking to prophesy; which con-
tain notwithstanding Predictions of
what was to happen to Jesus Christ
and his Enemies; as what he says Psal.
XLI. 10. LXIX. 26. CIX. 8. places which
Christ and his Apostles apply to Judas.
Nevertheless St. Peter, after citing some
words of Psal. XVI. where David speaks
of himself in the first Person, Thou
wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor suffer
thy Holy One to see Corruption, &c. adds;
that this cannot be understood of Da-
vid, since he was dead and rotten many
Years ago; but that as he was a Prophet,
and knew that God had sworn with an
Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins
he would raise up Christ to sit upon his
Throne; he seeing this before-hand, spake of
the Resurrection of Christ, when he said,
that his Soul, &c. by which it appears
that David, speaking in the first Per-
son, knew nevertheless that he spoke
not concerning himself.

Answer.

“ I did not say, that David never
“ prophesied, in speaking of himself as
“ of

“ of a Type of the *Messiah* ; or that
 “ he understood not that in the properest and highest sense of his Words
 “ he spake concerning the *Messiah*,
 “ though what he said had also some
 “ relation to himself. I make no question but there are in the *Psalms* divers Prophecies of this nature. It is plain, *David* could not say of himself, unless in a very Metaphorical Sense, that *God would not leave his Soul in Hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see Corruption*, although the rest of the *Psalms* may be suitable enough to him.

Objection 3.

The Curses in the CIXth *Psalms* are imputed to a human Passion ; yet St. *Peter* teaches us, *Acts* I. 20. that it is a Prophecy. It seems the better way therefore to take all those Curses for simple Predictions, and not for Imprecations, and so to translate in the Future Tense ; *Thou shalt set a wicked Man over him, and his Adversary shall, &c.*

Answer.

“ This might be a Prophecy, of that
 “ sort which we said were sometimes
 “ pronounc’d without their being aware
 “ who

“ who pronounc’d it ; of which we
 “ brought some Examples : which sort
 “ of Prophecy is not inconsistent with a
 “ violent Passion ; as appears by the Example of *Caiphas*. But indeed these Expressions cannot be translated in the future Tense, without extream violence to the Text ; and accordingly the ancient Interpreters, as well as modern, have made use of the Imperative or Optative Mood : Nor ought it to seem strange that we think there was in this an Excess of Passion, since it is impossible to explain any other way those words of *Psalms* CXXXVII. *Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the Stones, &c.* Let any one compare the words of *Psalms* CIX. with those which a Heathen Poet puts into the Mouth of a desperate Woman.

“ *Vivat, per urbes erret ignota egens,*
 “ *Exul, pavens, invisus, incertus laris,*
 “ ——— quoque non aliud queam
 “ *Pejus precari, liberos similes Patri,*
 “ *Similesq; Matri.*

“ In fine, if it were necessary to render
 “ all these words in the future Tense,
 “ to

“ to avoid making the Psalmist pronounce such Curses, there are a great many other places where the Version would need to be reform’d, and where we should be oblig’d to strain the Text; as may easily be perceiv’d in turning over the Book of *Psalms*.

Objection 4.

Page 26.

It has been said, that Inspiration seems not absolutely necessary to the composing of pious Hymns; and concluded from thence that it ought not to be said that all such Hymns were immediately inspir’d. The same sort of Argument has been applied also afterwards to divers other places of Scripture. But it no ways follows, because Inspiration was not absolutely necessary, that therefore there was none:

Answer.

“ My Argument proves not directly that there was no Inspiration on these occasions, but only that there was nothing in the thing it self to induce us to believe that there was any; and consequently, that such Inspiration is suppos’d without any necessity. “ When a thing may be done by the “ ordi-

“ ordinary course of Nature, we ought not to have recourse to Miracles. “ Hence I conclude, that there ought to be no recourse to Inspiration, “ when there is nothing in a Book to make us believe it was inspir’d; and “ when all that is in it might have been said without Inspiration; unless we “ have some positive Proof that he who “ compos’d it was inspir’d. Now I “ maintain that there is no Proof of “ this nature, sufficient to persuade us “ that all the Books of the Scripture “ were inspir’d in the same manner “ that they are commonly said to have “ been.

Objection 5.

It has been inferr’d from the evident marks of Meditation, and Pains taking, which appear in several places of the Scripture (as those where the Verses begin with all the Letters of the Alphabet in order) that those places have not been inspir’d. But it does not appear that Inspiration excludes all sort of Meditation and Pains-taking, as Mr. *Simon* has observ’d, &c. *Resp.* p. 125, &c.

Page 27.

Answer.

Answer.

"I acknowledg that it cannot from
 "thence be concluded that the matter
 "was not inspir'd; nor was this Argu-
 "ment made use of, but only against
 "those who hold the Inspiration of the
 "very words; that is to say, principally,
 "against the generality of Protestant
 "Divines. There is certainly little like-
 "lihood that the Spirit of God would
 "inspire such things as those. But the
 "Consequence I have drawn from thence
 "is only this, that the Stile not being
 "inspir'd, we cannot be sure that the
 "things are; unless the Characters of
 "Inspiration appear in those things
 "themselves, or that we have other-
 "wise some positive Proof of it.

Objection 6.

Pag. 28, &c. What has been said concerning the
 Inspiration of the sacred Historians is
 not enough: There ought to have
 been added also, as Mr. Simon has it,
*That God directed the Pen of the sacred
 Historians in such a manner, that they
 could not fall into Error. They were Men
 that wrote; and the Spirit that directed
 them depriv'd them not of their Reason,
 nor their Memory, to inspire them with
 matters*

*matters of Fact, which they themselves
 knew perfectly: but it determin'd them in
 general to write of some matters, rather
 than others, though they knew both alike
 well. Resp. p. 128.*

Answer.

"This may be granted; provided
 "that by *directing the Pen of the sacred
 "Historians* be only understood the de-
 "termining them in general to write of
 "some matters rather than others, though
 "they knew both alike well. Mr. Simon
 "fights here with his own Shadow:
 "for no body deny'd that. On the
 "contrary, it was said that the sacred
 "Historians have writ of no matter,
 "whereof they were not well instruct-
 "ed: And this in opposition to those
 "who pretend that the Historians of
 "the Bible were inspir'd with the mat-
 "ters, in the same manner as if they
 "could not have known them any o-
 "ther way. But these People would
 "condemn Mr. Simon as well as me.

Objection 7.

"It is suppos'd, without any Reason, Page 35.
 that there are sometimes real Contra-
 dictions amongst the sacred Historians,
 L where-

whereas they are but seeming ones. The Learned have reconcil'd them all, not excepting that about the Death of *Judas*, which is cited as an Example of a *manifest Contradiction*.

Answer.

"To answer this Objection fully, it would be requisite not only to quote the places, where 'tis believ'd there is some little Contradiction; but also all the Explications which many learned Men have given of those places, whereby to show that there is not any of those Explications that clears the Difficulty. But to do this would require a Book for every place; for there is so great variety of Opinions upon these Passages, that there may be reckon'd up ten or twelve Interpretations of one single place. One Learned Man has made a Volume in *Quarto*, of an hundred and ninety two Pages, upon that single place concerning the Death of *Judas*. But if the most of these Interpretations be consider'd without prepossession, they will be found to be very much strain'd. Words are never wanting. And it is no easy matter

J. Gronovius
de pernicio &
casu Judæ.

"matter to silence a Man of an indifferent Capacity, who undertakes to defend an Opinion that cannot be demonstratively disprov'd. Let me therefore, on this occasion, intreat the Reader to examine some of those places, that have given the Learned the most trouble; and then let him ask himself whether he would admit of those Reconcilements that he finds in the Commentators, if the Question concern'd other Authors than those of the Bible. Assuredly he would reject them; and would say that it were better to confess that there is some Contrariety in small things, than to render the whole History doubtful, by persisting obstinately in defence of things of no consequence. If this were done in what concerns the Death of *Judas*, which is brought for an Example, I am well assur'd there is no Opinion would appear more reasonable than that of *Salmasius*, in his third Letter to *Bartholin* concerning the Cross. * *It is manifest*, says he, *that it was usual with the Evangelists not to take much heed of minute Circumstances, when they were in the right, as to the principal History: Nor do*

* Constat Evangelistis hunc morem fuisse ut minutias *τῶν περιστάσεων* neglexerint, cum de principali Historiâ sibi rationem veritatis scirent constare. Nec video quomodo aliter id in quo dissident de morte Judæ, *Matthæus & Lucas*, componi queat. p. 618.

" I see how otherwise that wherein Mat-
 " thew and Luke differ, concerning the
 " Death of Judas, can be reconcil'd.

Objection 8.

Page 40.

Whereas it is doubted, whether it
 were well done to admit the History
 of *Esther* in the Hebrew Canon, because
 there are some Circumstances in it
 which seem to be pure Invention;
 Ought not those Circumstances to have
 been cited? And supposing they were
 such; may it not be said, with Mr. *Simon*
 (*Pag. 129.* of his Answer) that the
 Book might be a Parable, and not the
 less Canonical for that?

Answer.

" I might save my self the labour
 " of answering this Objection, because
 " I have affirmed nothing in this mat-
 " ter. On the contrary, I said that I
 " would not examine the Opinion of
 " those who believe the History of
 " *Esther* to be a feigned History. Nei-
 " ther will I make my self at present
 " a Party in the Dispute. But since it
 " is desir'd, I will barely recite the
 " Reasons for which some reject this
 " Book.

" In

" In the first place; *Mordecai* and *Est-*
 " her, whom the Author represents as
 " pious Persons, and particularly fa-
 " vour'd by Heaven, agree to do a
 " thing forbidden by the Law. It is
 " where *Mordecai* counsels *Esther* to in-
 " deavour to please *Ahasuerus*, which
 " she consents to; though *Moses* had ex-
 " pressly forbidden them to make Alli-
 " ance with the Heathens.

" In the second place; All the Cir-
 " cumstances of this Story are very ob-
 " servable. *Esther* pleases the King,
 " who proclaims her Queen of the
 " *Medes* and *Persians*, but does not ob-
 " lige her to tell him from what Ex-
 " traction she is sprung. *Mordecai* dis-
 " covers a Conspiracy against *Ahasue-*
 " *rus*, and advertises him of it by the
 " means of the Queen, without recei-
 " ving nevertheless any Recompence;
 " only the Conspirators were hang'd,
 " and the whole matter recorded.
 " *Haman* grows in great favour at
 " Court, insomuch that all the World
 " bowed and revered him. *Morde-*
 " *cai* thinks not fit to do it. *Haman*
 " cannot bear his Neglect; and having
 " learn'd that he is a Jew, resolves to
 " make the whole Jewish Nation perish
 " for

" for his sake. He offers King *Abasue-*
 " *rus* ten thousand Talents, if he will
 " consent to that Nation's Destruction.
 " The King presently consents (with-
 " out taking the Money) and gives
 " *Haman* his Ring; who makes use of
 " it in sealing the Letters, wherein it
 " is order'd to lay violent Hands on all
 " the Jews, not sparing Women nor
 " little Children. Messengers are di-
 " spatch'd to carry these Letters all
 " over the Kingdom, and the Edict is
 " publish'd at *Shushan*. *Esther*, who had
 " not yet told what Extraction she was
 " of, is inform'd that *Mordecai* was at
 " the King's Gate all in Sackcloth.
 " She sends him Raiment; which he re-
 " fuses, and expects a second Message
 " before he tells what makes him so
 " sad. *Esther* having learn'd the mat-
 " ter, is afraid to appear before the
 " King; because it was forbidden by
 " the Laws of the Kingdom, unless the
 " King by reaching out his Scepter of
 " Gold dispensed with it; but being
 " blam'd by *Mordecai*, she resolves to
 " run the hazard, after a Fast of three
 " days observ'd by her self, her Ladies
 " of Honour, and all the Jews in *Shu-*
 " *shan*. *Esther* appears before the King.
 " He

" He sees her, and reaches out his Scep-
 " ter of Gold that she might come
 " near him. She invites the King and
 " *Haman* to a Banquet in her Apart-
 " ment. They go, and the King at the
 " Banquet asks the Queen what she
 " would have him grant her. She invites
 " *Abasuerus* and *Haman* again the next
 " day. *Haman* puff'd up with his good
 " Fortune, boasts of his Happiness to
 " his Wife and all his Friends; but
 " complains at the same time extream-
 " ly of *Mordecai* the Jew for not doing
 " him Reverence. His Wife advises him
 " to cause a Gibbet to be made fifty Foot
 " high, and to speak unto the King on
 " the Morrow that *Mordecai* might be
 " hanged thereon. *Haman* goes to Bed
 " thereupon, secure that the next day
 " he should be reveng'd of the Inso-
 " lence of the Jew. But the King, who
 " could not sleep that Night, causes
 " the Records of State to be read to
 " him, where he finds the good Office
 " that Jew had done him; for which, on
 " Inquiry, he was told that no Reward
 " had been given him. *Haman* comes
 " to Court early in the Morning, to
 " speak to the King that *Mordecai*
 " might be hang'd. But he is no sooner
 " in

" in the Prefence, than the King calls
 " to him, and asks him what should
 " be done to the Man whom the King
 " would extreemly honour. *Haman*,
 " who fancy'd it was himself that the
 " King was minded so to honour, an-
 " swers in a way that tended to the
 " advantage of the Person that was to
 " be honoured. Immediately the King
 " commands him (what a Thunder-
 " bolt for an ambitious and revengeful
 " Person!) to go do it to *Mordecai*
 " the Jew. He retires home in Confu-
 " sion, to bewail his Misfortune with
 " his Friends; who tell him plainly that
 " the Jew will be too hard for him.
 " Presently the King's Chamberlains
 " come to call him to the Banquet in
 " the Queen's Apartment. At the
 " Banquet *Esther* tells the King there
 " was a Design to destroy her and her
 " People. The King in a Passion asks
 " who it was design'd it; and being
 " told it was *Haman*, he goes out in
 " Wrath into the Garden. *Haman*, on
 " the other side, stays with the Queen,
 " and throws himself upon her Bed, in-
 " deavouring to pacify her Wrath.
 " The King returns while he was in
 " that Posture, and believes *Haman* was
 " about

" about to force the Queen. *Haman* is
 " seiz'd upon to be put to Death, and
 " the Gibbet being found ready fitted
 " for *Mordecai*, *Haman* by the King's
 " order is hanged upon it. *Mordecai*
 " succeeds in the place of *Haman*; and
 " by *Esther*'s means obtains another
 " Edict, whereby the Jews are per-
 " mitted to take Arms, and defend
 " themselves against those that should
 " fall upon them. The day mention'd
 " in the Edict being come, the Jews
 " kill all those that went about to de-
 " stroy them. They slay five hundred
 " in *Shushan*. And the like leave being
 " given them the next day, they kill
 " three hundred more, besides *Haman*'s
 " ten Sons who were hang'd by the
 " King's order. Now upon the confi-
 " deration of all these Circumstances,
 " it is observ'd by some, that if *Unity*
 " of Time and Place had been observ'd
 " in this Story, there would have
 " been nothing wanting to have made
 " it a good Tragi-Comedy. For my
 " part I determine nothing upon the
 " Point.

" But this I can say, that in all like-
 " lihood Mr. *Simon* had not read of a
 " long time this Book, when he writ
 " the

" the 129th Page of his Answer; where
 " he says, *That though it should be sup-*
 " *pos'd that the Books of Esther, Judith,*
 " *and Tobit are not true Histories, yet*
 " *it does not follow therefore that they ought*
 " *to be left out of the Catalogue of Cano-*
 " *nical Books: And that he has observ'd*
 " *in his Critical History, after St. Jerom,*
 " *that the Parabolical Stile has always been*
 " *in esteem amongst the Eastern People, and*
 " *that a Book whether it contain a true*
 " *History, or a plain Parable, or a Hi-*
 " *story mix'd with Parables, is not there-*
 " *fore the less true or less Canonical. If*
 " *the Histories contain'd in these Books*
 " *are not true, they are certainly not*
 " *Parables, but Romances. The bare*
 " *reading them is sufficient to show that*
 " *those who writ them publish'd them*
 " *not for Books of Morality, but only*
 " *as surprizing and wonderful Stories.*
 " *To say nothing of Judith and Tobit,*
 " *it is plain by the Original which the*
 " *Author of the Book of Esther gives*
 " *to the Feast of Purim, that he com-*
 " *pos'd that Book with design to make*
 " *it look like a true History. See the*
 " *IXth Chap. v. 27. to the end. The*
 " *Original of a Feast uses not to be*
 " *founded upon a Parable; and such a*
 " *Histo-*

" History as that of *Esther* is not wont
 " to be mix'd with Parables. Mr. Si-
 " mon says well, that there are Para-
 " bles in the New Testament so well
 " circumstantiated, that one would take
 " them for true Histories. But we
 " must not have read either the Book
 " of *Esther*, or the New Testament, to
 " be perswaded that there is any re-
 " semblance betwixt the History of that
 " Book, and the Parables of our Savi-
 " our. The Parable most like to a Hi-
 " story is that of *Dives* and *Lazarus*,
 " but there is nothing in it like the
 " History of *Esther*. See *Joseph. Antiq.*
 " *lib. 11. cap. 6.*

Objection 9.

The Prudence and Reason of the Page 46.
 Apostles is often spoken of, as if the
 use they made thereof were inconsistent
 with the Inspiration attributed to them;
 but these things may well agree toge-
 ther, as Mr. *Simon* observes.

Answer.

" If Mr. *Simon* understood what he
 " would say, when he speaks of recon-
 " ciling Human Prudence with Inspi-
 " ration, he believes undoubtedly the
 " same

" same thing that I do, concerning the
 " Inspiration of the Apostles. We a-
 " gree that the Terms were not inspir'd.
 " The question is only about the Things.
 " The Inspiration of the things con-
 " sists, either in presenting to the Mind
 " general Principles, from whence they
 " that are inspir'd, according as they
 " have occasion afterward, draw Con-
 " sequences; or in furnishing it with
 " Arguments ready fram'd. If God
 " furnish'd the Minds of the Apostles
 " with Arguments ready fram'd, they
 " made no use of their Reason, having
 " nothing to do but to declare what the
 " holy Spirit had inspir'd them with; as
 " the Prophets were only to express the
 " Sense of what God had said to them.
 " And this is that which every body calls
 " properly Inspiration. But if it be
 " suppos'd that God presented to the
 " Minds of the Apostles only general
 " Principles, of which by their own
 " reasoning they made necessary and
 " fit Application, upon emergent occa-
 " sions; they were in that case no more
 " inspir'd than those, who having care-
 " fully read the holy Scripture, have
 " the Ideas thereof so present in their
 " Minds, that they never fail to make
 " use

" use of it when it is necessary. In
 " this last Supposition Reason indeed
 " is made use of; but in the other it
 " is not. Now it appears that Mr. Si-
 " mon is not of the Opinion that ex-
 " cludes the use of Reason. And there-
 " fore I say it is probable that he is of
 " the same Opinion with me, though he
 " know it not. For I deny not but
 " God might have presented to the
 " Minds of the Apostles, either by su-
 " pernatural or natural ways, the ge-
 " neral Ideas of which they should stand
 " in need, to defend themselves at their
 " Trials. I only deny that God always
 " inspir'd them with all the Arguments
 " they made use of on those occasions.
 " Mr. Simon adds, *That to say that*
 " *the Spirit of Courage and Holiness,*
 " *which the Gospel produces in our Hearts,*
 " *dictated to the Apostles what they should*
 " *say, is to destroy intirely the inward*
 " *Grace which God did spread abroad in*
 " *the Hearts of his Apostles, and which he*
 " *yet daily spreads abroad in the Hearts*
 " *of the Faithful.* But what does he
 " mean by this inward Grace, which
 " is common to the Apostles and the
 " Faithful? Is it not the Spirit of the
 " Gospel? At least the Faithful have
 " no-

“ nothing else in common with the
 “ Apostles. Now if the Apostles by
 “ virtue of this Promise, *It is not you*
 “ *that speak, it is the Spirit of your Fa-*
 “ *ther that speaks in you*, have receiv’d
 “ (as Mr. Simon gives us to understand)
 “ only the inward Grace which God spreads
 “ abroad daily in the Hearts of the Faith-
 “ ful, the Inspirations of the Apostles
 “ were not different from those of the
 “ Faithful now a days,

Objection 10.

Page 45, 48.

Whereas it is said, That the Apo-
 stles spoke many things at their Trials
 which might have been spoken without
 Inspiration, and from thence is inferr’d
 that it is not necessary to believe that
 they were inspir’d with those things;
This way of arguing may be apply’d to the
Prophets, whom nevertheless we acknow-
ledg to have been truly inspir’d. Mr. Si-
 mon Resp. 131.

Answer.

“ Mr. Simon, who sees nothing in
 “ Books but what his Passion shows him,
 “ might have taken notice that I said,
 “ that the Prophets teach us they are
 “ inspir’d, when they say *Thus saith the*
 “ *Lord*, &c. There are two ways to
 “ know

“ know if a thing be inspir’d. The
 “ first consists in observing if those
 “ who say this or that thing, maintain
 “ that they had it from God by an
 “ extraordinary Revelation, whereof
 “ they give undeniable Proofs, as did
 “ the Prophets. The second is when
 “ the thing it self declar’d shows it to
 “ be so. When the first way fails, we
 “ must have recourse to the second; and
 “ where they both fail, we have no
 “ reason to believe there is any Inspira-
 “ tion. Now this is that which ap-
 “ pears in many Discourses of the Apo-
 “ stles, where they do not say that God
 “ has taught them by extraordinary Re-
 “ velation that which they publish; And
 “ where the matter it self shows that
 “ there was no need of his doing it.
 “ It does not therefore follow, that
 “ those who acknowledg the Inspirati-
 “ on of the Prophets are obliged to ac-
 “ knowledg the like of all other sacred
 “ Writers; because there are convin-
 “ cing Reasons which oblige us to be-
 “ lieve that the Prophets speak Truth,
 “ when they say *Thus saith the Lord*, &c.
 “ and no reason to believe that the A-
 “ postles were extraordinarily inspir’d,
 “ when they say it not; and when their
 “ Dis-

" Discourses have in them no mark of
 " such like Inspiration.

" If we reflect upon this difference
 " between Prophecies, and Discourses
 " which have nothing of Prophetic in
 " them, we shall take heed of applying
 " to this Subject a loose Maxim, and
 " which is good for nothing; viz.
 " *That it happens most frequently that those*
 " *who distinguish and divide Matters, with*
 " *design to make use of part and reject the*
 " *other, do give great advantage to their*
 " *Adversaries.* On the contrary, it
 " scarce ever happens, that in handling
 " a compounded Subject there can be
 " made such general Rules as may be
 " equally apply'd to all the parts of it.
 " Parts of different nature must of ne-
 " cessity be differently handled.

Objection 11.

It has been said, that by the holy
 Spirit, or the Spirit of God, may be
 understood the Spirit of Holiness and
 of Constancy, which the Gospel in-
 spires; or such a Disposition of Mind
 as is an Effect of our Faith. *But the*
general Reasons there made use of, which
are grounded only upon equivocal words,
can prove nothing but Generals: They must
be

be apply'd, and particular Enquiry made,
whether the holy Spirit has any other Sig-
nification in Scripture or no. Mr. Simon
 Resp. pag. 131.

Answer.

" When a Passage is to be answer'd
 " wherein there is an equivocal word,
 " upon which an Objection is founded,
 " it is sufficient to show that such
 " a word may be understood in ano-
 " ther Sense, than that in which it has
 " been taken. There is no need of
 " examining all the other Significati-
 " ons that it may have. It suffices to
 " show that the Signification then given
 " it is agreeable to the ordinary use of
 " the Language, and suitable to the
 " Subject there treated of. It was
 " Mr. Simon's part therefore to show
 " that where it is said of St. Stephen,
 " (on occasion of whom the Observa-
 " tion was made) *That they could not*
 " *resist the Wisdom and Spirit by which*
 " *he spoke;* I say it was his part to
 " show that by the word Spirit any
 " thing ought to be understood but the
 " Spirit of the Gospel; that is to say,
 " a Disposition of Mind conformable
 " to the Precepts of Jesus Christ. He
 " ought

M

"ought to have shown that this word
 "in this place ought necessarily to be
 "understood in another Sense. But
 "Mr. *Simon* seldom gives himself the
 "trouble to read the places of Scrip-
 "ture that are cited; as appears in the
 "same Page, where he says that St. *Paul*
 "told the High Priest *with a just In-*
 "*dignation, God shall smite thee thou*
 "*mbited Wall*; and where he compares
 "the words of St. *Paul* to those of Je-
 "sus Christ, when he calls *Herod* Fox;
 "and to the Reproaches that the Pro-
 "phets make to the Kings of *Israel*.
 "But he should have shown us in what
 "place Jesus Christ and the Prophets
 "confess'd they were to blame in doing
 "so, as St. *Paul* confesses he was. God has
 "Power to censure Princes; But it be-
 "longs not to Subjects to do it, when
 "they think fit. So St. *Paul* had no
 "right to abuse the High Priest, on his
 "own Head: though those who had
 "receiv'd express Order from God to
 "make such like Reproaches to Princes,
 "cannot be blam'd for it. But Mr. *Si-*
 "*mon*, who probably never thought of
 "all this, is not aware of this difference;
 "and argues always on, without under-
 "standing what he finds fault with.

Obje-cti-

Objection 12.

The Promise which Jesus Christ made Page 42, &c.
 his Apostles, *that the holy Spirit should*
teach them what they should say when
they came before the Judges, seems to
 have been explain'd as a general Pro-
 mise for all that they should say;
 whereas it only relates to what they
 should say for the defence of the Gos-
 pel. *Luk. Chap. 12. ver. 11.*

Answer.

"The Promise is express'd in gene-
 "ral terms, and must relate to that
 "which the Apostles should be oblig'd
 "to say as well for the defence of their
 "own Persons, as for that of the
 "Gospel. For it was of the greatest
 "importance that these first Ministers
 "of Jesus Christ should then say no-
 "thing unworthy of the Doctrine of
 "which they were the Heraulds. But
 "if this Promise must not be taken
 "in so large a Sense, in relation to the
 "Discourses which the Apostles should
 "make before Judges; neither ought
 "it to be so taken in relation to their
 "preaching of the Gospel. My De-
 "sign was only to shew, that since the
 "words could not be taken in the
 "whole

“ whole extent of their Signification,
 “ it could not from thence be necessarily
 “ inferr'd that the Apostles had then
 “ a Prophetic Inspiration.

Objection 13.

Page 53.

The Promise (*John 16.*) that *when the Spirit of Truth shall come, it shall lead you into all Truth*, ought not to be understood so, as if it were intirely accomplish'd the day of *Pentecost*; but as a thing that should be accomplish'd according to the occasions and necessities that the Apostles should be in, of knowing some further Truths. But it seems as if Mr. *N.* suppos'd that this Promise is ordinarily understood, as if it ought to have been accomplish'd all at once.

Answer.

“ The reason of my insisting upon
 “ that was to make appear that this
 “ Promise, though conceiv'd in so ge-
 “ neral terms, ought necessarily to re-
 “ ceive some Qualification; and conse-
 “ quently that it ought not to be under-
 “ stood, like an Axiom of Geometry,
 “ in the utmost Signification of its
 “ Terms. Now that being once gran-
 “ ted, it cannot be made appear that
 “ this

“ this Promise relates to a Prophetic
 “ Inspiration. There is a Passage very
 “ like this in the first Epistle of St. *John*,
 “ Chap. 2. ver. 27. *But the anointing*
 “ *which ye have received of him, abideth in*
 “ *you: and ye need not that any Man*
 “ *teach you: but, as the same anointing*
 “ *teacheth you of all things, and is Truth,*
 “ *and is no Lie: and even as it hath taught*
 “ *you, ye shall abide in him.* It is appa-
 “ rent that this cannot be understood
 “ strictly, since St. *John* speaks to all
 “ the Christians to whom he writ.

Objection 14.

Whereas it has been affirmed that the Apostles did not agree (*Acts 15.*) till after they had disputed a great while; it is not said in that Chapter, That the Apostles disputed; but only that *When there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, &c.* Page 57.

Answer.

“ Two things were considered in this
 “ History. The first is, The Opinion
 “ that Men had of the Apostles, viz.
 “ That they were not look'd upon as
 “ Persons infallible, whensoever they
 “ began to speak of the Gospel; since
 “ they

" they were not believ'd just at their
 " first speaking. The second is, The
 " Conduct of the Apostles on this oc-
 " casion, which is express'd in, these
 " terms : *The Apostles and Elders came*
 " *together for to consider of this matter.*
 " *And when there had been much disputing,*
 " *Peter rose up, and said, &c.* The com-
 " mon Opinion is, that when the De-
 " bate was about Doctrinal Matters,
 " the Truth was immediately presented
 " to the Minds of the Apostles, with-
 " out any need of Meditation. This
 " is undoubtedly true as to the things
 " that Jesus Christ had taught them
 " clearly : And they needed no extraor-
 " dinary Inspiration to call them to mind.
 " But this Principle is extended by some
 " to all the Functions of their Charge.
 " Now I ask if that were so, what need
 " was there that the Apostles should
 " not only meet, but also talk a long
 " while together ? The first that had
 " spoke would have found all the rest of
 " the same mind, and there would have
 " been no more to do but for him to pro-
 " nounce upon the Question, according
 " to their general, though tacit, Agree-
 " ment. It cannot be said there was
 " no Conference amongst the Apostles
 " and

" and Elders concerning this Doctrine ;
 " since St. Luke, after having said that the
 " *Apostles and Elders came together,* imme-
 " diately adds, that *there was much dispu-*
 " *ting, and that Peter rose up and said, &c.*
 " Neither can the Principle of Mr. Si-
 " mon be here made use of, who says
 " that the *Apostles might not determine*
 " *any thing by their own Authority, but*
 " *by the common Consent of all the Church,*
 " and that therefore it was that they
 " assembl'd, and expos'd in publick
 " their Reasons for not imposing Jewish
 " Ceremonies upon the Gentiles. If
 " the Apostles were as much inspir'd
 " as the Jewish Prophets of the Old
 " Testament, it is ridiculous to say
 " that they ought to determine nothing
 " by their own Authority, but by the
 " Consent of all the Church. They
 " had no more to do but to declare
 " what the holy Spirit had reveal'd to
 " them, as did the Prophets : who met
 " not together to confer about their
 " prophecies before the pronouncing
 " of them ; but pronounc'd them as
 " soon as God had commanded them,
 " without staying for any body's Con-
 " sent. And herein they acted not by
 " their private Authority, but by the

“ Authority that God gave them, in
 “ commanding them to speak to the
 “ People. No more would the Apo-
 “ stles have acted by their own private
 “ Authority, in following the Motions
 “ of the holy Spirit.

Ibid.

“ But Mr. *Simon* has fancy'd a very
 “ particular sort of Inspiration in the
 “ Apostles. He says *it was necessary they*
 “ *should declare that they determin'd no-*
 “ *thing, which was not conformable to the*
 “ *holy Scriptures, and to the Doctrine*
 “ *which they had receiv'd from their*
 “ *Master; and that for that Reason it was*
 “ *necessary to deliberate thereupon in As-*
 “ *semblies; in which their Opinions happen'd*
 “ *to be sometimes divided.* A Man must
 “ be very acute, that can comprehend
 “ how Men inspir'd after a Prophetic
 “ manner could be of different Opini-
 “ ons. But Mr. *Simon* clears this Diffi-
 “ culty wonderfully in the following
 “ words. *We ought not (says he) to be*
 “ *surpriz'd at this Diversity of Opinions,*
 “ *since every one grounded his particular*
 “ *one upon Inspiration.* Now this is that
 “ which should have hinder'd them
 “ from being of different Opinions;
 “ since assuredly God inspires not sever-
 “ al Opinions about one and the same
 “ thing.

“ thing. It is all one as if one should
 “ say that we ought not to be surpriz'd,
 “ that of two Prophets, one should say
 “ a thing shall happen, and the other
 “ that it shall not happen, because they
 “ both ground their Predictions upon
 “ Inspiration. And indeed Mr. *Simon*
 “ corrects himself, after a fashion, by
 “ adding; *Or rather upon the Authority*
 “ *of the Scriptures, and the Light which*
 “ *they had receiv'd from Religion.* If he
 “ understands by the Inspiration of the
 “ Apostles, nothing but the Light which
 “ they had receiv'd from Religion, why
 “ does he make all this ado; since here-
 “ in we agree with him? He ought to
 “ tell us whether or no, when the Apo-
 “ stles spoke by Inspiration, they did
 “ any thing, but express, in their own
 “ way, the Reasonings which God had
 “ put ready fram'd into their Minds.
 “ If that be so, how can we conceive
 “ that their Opinions should not be
 “ one and the same? And if he in-
 “ spir'd them not with the Reasonings
 “ they used, then we cannot attribute
 “ Prophetic Inspiration to them; since
 “ it is therein that Prophetic Inspira-
 “ tion consists. It is very absurd there-
 “ fore to believe, that all the Reason-
 “ ings

"ings the Apostles us'd in preaching
 "the Gospel, and all those we read in
 "their Books, were inspir'd. For it
 "is therein that the Inspiration of the
 "Apostles is ordinarily conceiv'd to
 "consist. This is that uniform, con-
 "stant, and ordinary Inspiration which
 "Mr. *Simons* comprehends not, because
 "he never thought well upon it. Nor
 "indeed does he know what Opinion
 "he is of. Sometimes he speaks like
 "the generality of Divines, sometimes
 "again he openly contradicts them, as
 "may be seen by the words I have cited.
 "He must study a little better this
 "matter, if he will have us answer him:
 "For it is very likely that for the most
 "part he understands not himself. I
 "will give but one Example more of it.
 "(It is that which he says concerning
 "the Author of *Ecclesiastes*, p. 138.) For
 "we need but read his words, to find
 "that the Prior of *Bolleville* minds not
 "what he says. The Author, says he, of this
 "Work did not design *ONLY* to persuade
 "Men to pass their Time in Pleasure. — To
 "which may be added, that Declamation
 "being the proper Character of a Preacher,
 "it is no wonder to see him despise all the
 "ordinary Business and Employments of the
 "World,

"World, and to prefer an easy commodious
 "Life, before all the Troubles that attend a
 "contrary Practice: For which he is not to
 "be censur'd as if he were an Epicure, after
 "the manner that Mr. N. here understands
 "the Opinions of the Epicureans. He would
 "have done well to have told us of
 "what sort of Epicurism the Author
 "of the *Ecclesiastes* may be accus'd.

Objection 15.

It is a great piece of Boldness to
 judg four Books of the Old Testa-
 ment (three that bear the Name of
Solomon, and that of *Job*) as unworthy
 to be in the Hebrew Canon. That Li-
 berty of censuring would weaken the
 Principles of our Religion. For
 every one by the same Rule may say
 that such or such a Book is not Cano-
 nical, according to his own fancy.

Answer.

"Although we may reject some Books
 "of the Old Testament, it does not
 "follow that we may do the same by
 "all of them. Neither does it follow,
 "because many Ancient and Modern
 "Divines have thought it would have
 "been better not to have joined, with
 "the Writings of the Apostles, certain
 "Books

"Books that are now in the Canon of the New Testament, that therefore we may reject all the Books of the Apostles. There are Books that are indisputably of those Authors whose Name they bear; and there are others which have been questionable, and are so still amongst the Learned; as the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of St. James, the second of St. Peter, the two last of St. John, and that of St. Jude. These Doubts, hinder us not from agreeing about the Gospels, and St. Paul's Epistles; nor from proving clearly that they are the Books of those whose Name they bear. I know not why we may not doubt of some of the Books of the Old Testament, as well as of some of those of the New, and why ill Consequences should be drawn from their Opinions who doubt of some of the former, when none is drawn from theirs that reject the latter. The Canon of the Books of the New Testament ought to be of much greater importance with us than that of the Old. It is a mistake that we ought to receive all or reject all. It is not true that we ought to receive all; it is

"is less true that we ought to reject all. But there is a mean betwixt these two Extreams.

Objection 16.

But what will be said to these words of St. Paul, 2 Tim. III. 16. *All Scripture is of Divine Inspiration?* For they ought to be read in the vulgar Translation, according to the Greek, and also according to the ancient vulgar, *Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata & utilis*; whereas Mr. N. reads them, *Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est*. The Verb *est* is not in the Greek, but *εστι*, which signifies *Et*, is before *utilis*. If this Verb be to be supply'd (because it is often wanting in the Hebrew and the Syriac, and consequently in the Greek of the New Testament) it ought to be done in this manner, *Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata est & utilis*.

Answer.

"Mr. Simon's Decrees are not without Appeal. We maintain, against him, that this Passage may very well be thus translated; *All Scripture that is divinely inspir'd is also profitable for Instruction, for Reproof, &c.* *παισα*
γεαφὴ θεόπνευστος ἔστι ἀφελίμος, &c.
 "So

" So the vulgar translates it ; which
 " Mr. *Simon* improperly corrects, and
 " which the Gentlemen of *Port-Royal*
 " have judiciously follow'd. *St. Paul's*
 " Design favours this Version. He tells
 " *Timothy*, that the holy Scriptures are
 " able to make him wise unto Salvation :
 " to which he adds, That all Scripture
 " given by Inspiration of God is profitable
 " for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Instructi-
 " on in Righteousness ; that the Man of
 " God may be perfect, &c. These words
 " are a sort of Explanation of those
 " foregoing, where *St. Paul* sets down
 " after what manner the holy Scriptures
 " may instruct to Salvation. There is
 " a tacit opposition here between Holy
 " Writ and certain prophane Studies ;
 " As will easily appear, if we go back
 " a little higher to find the Thred of
 " *St. Paul's* Discourse, and observe the
 " occasion of his saying, That all Writ
 " divinely inspir'd is profitable, &c. *St. Paul*
 " describes in the * beginning of the
 " Chapter a sort of wicked People,
 " whom in the 5th Verse he orders
 " *Timothy* to avoid. The Characters
 " he marks them by suit very well
 " to the *Gnosticks*. But it matters not
 " of whom He speaks. It suffices
 " that

* Ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.

" that we observe that they were Per-
 " sons who boasted of teaching their
 " Hearers many things ; witness those
 " * Women they had seduc'd, which * Ver. 6, 7.
 " were always learning, and never arriv'd
 " to the knowledg of the Truth. † But † Ver. 8, 9,
 " the Apostle foretels their Seducement
 " should not long continue. || He re- || Ver. 10, 11.
 " presents to *Timothy* that he had fully
 " known his Doctrine, his manner of
 " Life, and the Persecutions he had
 " suffer'd ; in order to strengthen him
 " by his Example. * He declares that * Ver. 12, 13.
 " the Good shall always be persecuted,
 " and that there shall still be Seducers,
 " and Persons seduced. † But *Thou*, con- † V. 14. & fol.
 " tinues he, be steadfast in the things
 " thou hast learn'd, and hast been assured
 " of, knowing from whom thou hast learn'd
 " them, and that from a Child thou hast
 " known the holy Scriptures, which are able
 " to make thee wise unto Salvation through
 " Faith in *Jesus Christ*. He opposes
 " plainly the Study of the holy Scrip-
 " tures to the Study of fabulous Do-
 " ctrines ; which some Impostors then
 " taught, and whereof he complains in
 " many places of his two Epistles to *Ti-*
 " *mothy* (1 Ep. Ch. 1. v. 4. Ch. 4. v. 7. 2 Ep.
 " Ch. 4. v. 4.) And as here he orders
 " his

"his dear Disciple to continue firm in
 "those things he had learn'd, and which he
 "had been assur'd of; he likewise ends his
 "first Epistle with this Exhortation,
 "O Timothy, keep that which is commit-
 "ted to thy Trust, avoiding profane and
 "vain babblings, and opposition of Science
 "falsely so called; which some professing,
 "have err'd concerning the Faith. And thus
 "when he adds, That all Scripture given
 "by Inspiration, &c. It is as if he had
 "said to Timothy, That he ought to
 "keep close, as he had done hitherto,
 "to the study of the Old Testament;
 "which would instruct him sufficiently
 "in the way to Salvation, by joining
 "thereunto Faith in Jesus Christ: Be-
 "cause all Scripture inspir'd by God,
 "as is a great part of the Old Testa-
 "ment, is profitable for Instruction:
 "Whereas if he apply'd himself to the
 "false Science that some Impostors then
 "boasted of, he would cultivate Do-
 "ctrines that would be proper for no-
 "thing, but to raise Disputes, instead of
 "edifying; as he had else-where told
 "him. By this it is evident, that all this
 "reasoning of St. Paul does in no wise
 "suppose that all the Scripture of the
 "Old Testament is inspir'd; and that
 "the

"the Apostle pretends thereby only to
 "intimate that the inspir'd Writings
 "(without fixing the number of them)
 "are more profitable than those that
 "some Persons at that time boasted of.
 "Rivet had objected this Passage to
 "Grotius, against the Opinion of that
 "incomparable Critic concerning the
 "Inspiration of the sacred Books. Let
 "us see how Grotius answers
 "him. * The place, says he,
 "(2 Tim. Chap. 3. v. 16.) has
 "another signification than D. Ri-
 "vet thinks: For St. Paul says
 "not, All Writing is divinely in-
 "spir'd. (For how many are the
 "Writings of human Invention ?)
 "Nor does he mean that all that
 "is inspir'd is divinely inspir'd.
 "That would be trifling. But
 "this is his meaning: All Scrip-
 "ture that is divinely inspir'd
 "(that is the Word of Prophecy,
 "as St. Peter styles it, 2 Ep.
 "Chap. 1. v. 19.) is not only
 "useful in its own time, to
 "show God's Præscience, and to
 "give Authority to the Prophets:
 "but is moreover at all times
 "profitable: because it contains
 "N "many

* Locus 2 Tim. 3. 16.
 alium sensum habet quam
 putat D. Rivetus. Non
 enim hoc dicit Paulus,
 Omnis Scriptura est Θε-
 οπνεύματος divinitus inspi-
 rata; quam multa enim
 sunt Scripturæ humani
 ingenii? Nec hoc vult
 omnem eam quæ est
 Θεοπνεύματος esse Θεοπνεύ-
 σον; id enim esset nu-
 gari: sed hoc vult, Om-
 nem scripturam quæ à
 Deo inspirata est (id est
 λόγον προφητικόν sermo-
 nem propheticum, ut lo-
 quitur Petrus 2 Ep. ch. 1.
 v. 19.) non in hoc tan-
 tum valuisse suo tempo-
 re, ut ostenderet Dei
 Præscientiam, & Prophe-
 tis auctoritatem daret,
 verum semperesse uti-
 lem, quia simul multa
 con-

continet docu- " *many standing Rules, Reproofs of Vices,*
 menta perpe- " *Incitements to Righteousness, &c. This*
 tua, viciu- " *Sense was rightly observ'd by the Syriac*
 reprehensio- " *Interpreter who thus renders it ; In the*
 nes, excita- " *Scripture, which is written by the*
 menta and ju- " *Spirit, there is profit in respect of*
 stiam. Hunc " *Doctrine, &c.*
 sensum recte
 vidit Syrus, sic
 interpretans ; In Scriptura, quæ per Spiritum scripta est,
 utilitas est ad doctrinam, &c.

" This Passage then of *St. Paul* proves
 " nothing against me ; let *Mr. Simon*
 " say what he pleases. He seems not
 " to understand Christian Religion
 " thoroughly enough, to treat of these
 " matters.

These, Sir, are the principal Ob-
 jections that have been made to *Mr. N.*
 against his Essay concerning the Inspi-
 ration of the sacred Pen-Men. You
 may judg whether he has solv'd the Diffi-
 culties propos'd or no. For my part
 I will not judg of that Question. But this
 I dare boldly say ; that *Mr. Simon* is not
 the Man that will run him down ; and
 that the Answers you have now read,
 are plausible enough to puzzle an abler
 Man than he. I am, &c.

THE

THE
 FIFTH LETTER.

I Am perswaded, Sir, that the two
 last Letters I writ you, will have
 fully satisfied those among your
 Friends, who wish'd that the Writing
 about Inspiration had been suppress'd,
 or who desir'd some Explanation of the
 Author's Opinion, or even who believ'd
 they were in the wrong that said it was
 hard to confute it. We must now try
 to give some Satisfaction to those who
 have said that this Opinion leads to De-
 ism, and that our Friend was infected
 with the detestable Opinions of the
 Deists. Now I having openly main-
 tain'd the contrary, he has impos'd
 upon me the Task of justifying him in
 this Particular. And I think I can
 evidently demonstrate, that they who
 have brought this Accusation against
 our Friend, have therein violated that

N 2

which

which is most sacred in Christian Religion; and that while they endeavour to maintain it by a Zeal, not only wanting Knowledge, but also void of Charity, they have not sufficiently reflected upon the true Proofs of the Divinity of our Religion, and upon the Method us'd by many of those who have undertaken to defend it against Atheists and Infidels. But I confess to you I dare not promise to my self ever to satisfy intirely this sort of People; because they are such as fancy they know every thing. They have given over all Study; they examine nothing; and they think they should do a thing unworthy of their Character, if they should confess they had condemn'd any one wrongfully, and if they abated never so little of the heat of their Zeal. This Zeal, or rather blind Passion, which is made up of Choler, and animated by Superstition, Pride and Envy, discomposes them so violently, and with so little Intermision, that it is very hard to find a moment wherein they are fit to hear quietly the Justifications of those, whom they have too rashly condemned. It is not amiss however to tell them our Reasons.

If

If they themselves will not hear them, yet perhaps these Reasons may prevent some other Persons of more ingenuous Dispositions from forming such rash Judgments, as the vehement Declamations of these implacable Zealots would otherwise move them to.

Two things ought here to be distinguish'd: The Person, and the Opinions. A Man may have Opinions, the Consequences whereof are very evil and very dangerous, without being aware of these Consequences, how necessarily soever they may seem unto others to follow from them. I have made this plain in the beginning of my first Letter on this Subject. It ought not then to be concluded, because a Man embraces a certain Opinion, that therefore he admits all the Consequences. This Truth is own'd by every one; but little made use of by any, when they pass Judgment upon those that are opposite to their Party. Nevertheless, none that are equitable can refuse to allow this Justification of our Friend; I mean that protesting, as he does, an utter abhorrence of those impious Consequences, which in his Judgment are unduly wrested from his

Opinions, he himself (at least) ought to be absolv'd, although his Doctrine be condemned.

Natural Equity obliges us to believe that a Man is perswaded of a thing when he affirms it, and when we have no evident signs of his design to deceive us. This also is a Rule in Morality generally agreed upon, but of which as little use is made as of the foregoing one. But let Men do what they will; it must be acknowledg'd that those who refuse to believe our Friend, when he affirms that he is perfectly convinc'd of the Truth of the Christian Religion, do violate the Charity, and the Equity, which we ought to have naturally one for another; seeing they have no evident sign to convince them that this Protestation of his is hypocritical.

The Truth is, these Zealots, who judge him of his Piety, ground their rash Judgment but upon very light Suspicions. They believe that our Friend has discover'd but part of his Opinions concerning the Inspiration of the holy Writers, for fear of too much thwarting the Public, and losing altogether his Reputation. But he, on the other

side,

side, protests that he has laid open the very bottom of his Thoughts, without any Reserve; and without hiding any thing, which he thought might contribute to discover the whole Extent of his Opinion in this matter. This is all he can do to repel so unjust a Suspicion. If they who frame a rash Judgment upon so ill-grounded Suspicions, met with the like Usage, none of them would be found innocent. It might always be said, when they maintain any thing from whence an ill Consequence may be drawn (and from what may not that be done?) that they speak not all they think, for fear of being cry'd down, and losing their Pensions. The Zeal, for example, of which they are so proud, might pass for an Effect of an artificial Policy; by which they endeavour to render themselves Masters of the Peoples Minds; in order to satisfy their Ambition, and oppress their Enemies. In a word, they should not make one step, which might not be interpreted maliciously, and made look odiously. But it behoves us and them to remember that Precept of our Saviour, founded upon the plain Light of Nature,

Nature, *Do not to another that which ye would not should be done to you.* If the Heat of an indiscreet Zeal keep them from observing this Precept, yet nothing shall make us transgress it.

I conclude then that our Friend cannot be ill thought of, without wronging the universal Rules of Equity and Charity; and in this case those Rules will be the more enormously broken, by how much the Impiety which our Friend is accus'd of is more detestable. Rash Judgments and ill-grounded Suspicions are always Crimes, although the matter they relate to be of small importance: but when the Concern is not only the Reputation of a Person, but also his Life, and which is yet more, his Salvation, they become still more heinous. To affirm that a Man is of an Opinion such as is that of the Deists, without having evident Proofs of it, is to say that a Man is an Enemy of God and Men; that he is in a State wherein he can expect nothing but the Anger of Heaven; wherein he merits even to be no longer suffer'd upon Earth; and it argues that these Calumniators, after having made him lose his good Name, would if they could deprive

deprive him also of his Life. Let any reasonable Man judg, if, without certain and convincing Proofs, a Man may pronounce so terrible a Sentence against his Neighbour, and not be guilty of the greatest Injustice imaginable.

It seems to me, Sir, that this is so plain I need dwell no longer upon it. The Person of our Friend then being justified against these rash Suspicions; we will now show that the Truth of the Christian Religion may be undeniably prov'd, without taking any side about the Doctrine of Inspiration; and consequently without supposing the common Opinion. This I intend to do; after I have first observ'd that several great Men, and who have pass'd for good Christians, have held this Opinion without losing the Reputation they had of Piety. There is not a Man of Worth and Honour among the Protestants, who will dare to say that *Erasmus* and *Grotius* were Libertines; and yet both of them defended openly this same Opinion. But because there are some Divines who esteem none but those that have been of the Society they

they live in. I will repeat some remarkable words of a Divine famous amongst the Presbyterians in England, and even amongst those on this side the Water. It is Mr. Richard Baxter, who speaks thus in an English Book translated not long since into Dutch, and intitled, *The Saints everlasting Rest.*

In 4^o Lond.
1656. Edit. 6.
par. 2. ch. 3.
Sec. 2. pag.
210.

22. *Though all Scripture be of Divine Authority, yet he who believeth but some one Book, that containeth the Substance of the Doctrine of Salvation, may be sav'd: much more they that have doubted but of some particular Books.* 23. *They that take the Scripture to be but the Writings of godly honest Men, and so to be only a means of making known Christ, having a gradual Precedency to the Writings of other godly Men: and do believe in Christ upon those strong Grounds which are drawn from his Doctrine, Miracles, &c. rather than upon the Testimony of the Writing, as being purely infallible and divine, may yet have a divine and saving Faith.* 24. *Much more those that believe the whole Writing to be of Divine Inspiration where it handleth the Substance, but doubt whether God infallibly guided them in every Circumstance.* And in the next

Page.

Page. 32. *The Circumstantial are many of them divine, yet so as they have in them something humane, as the bringing of St. Paul's Cloke and the Parchments, and (as it seems) his Counsel about Marriage, &c.* 33. *Much more is there something human in the Method and Phrase, which is not so immediately divine as the Doctrine.* 34. *Yet is there nothing sinfully humane, and therefore nothing false in all.* 35. *But all innocent Imperfection here is in the Method and Phrase, which if we deny, we must renounce most of our Logick and Rhetorick.* Nothing can be more expressly said for the Justification of our Friend. Those who have a value for Mr. Baxter, must forgo their Esteem of him, or else not condemn so lightly those who in his Judgment may have a saving Faith, together with some Opinions different from those commonly receiv'd.

It may likewise be observ'd, that many of those who have writ of the Truth of the Christian Religion, have prov'd it without supposing the particular Inspiration of the Historians of the New Testament to be such as it is ordinarily taken to be; as *Crotius*, whose

whose Book has been alike esteem'd by all Parties. Which shows that our Belief is not founded upon this Supposition; and that consequently one may be a good Christian without admitting it. But it is better to represent this by an Example, which will give you a more lively Impression of what I aim at.

I will therefore now endeavour, in as few words as is possible, to give you the Idea of a Method that seems to me very strong, and very proper to convince a Libertine of the Truth of our Religion, without once mentioning any thing of particular Inspiration. I do not pretend thereby to condemn all other Methods that may be us'd to the like purpose; but it seems to me that this is the simplest of all, and subject to the fewest Difficulties. You will allow me, Sir, this small Digression; which may perhaps not be useless, in a time when there are every where so many that doubt of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

The first, and the greatest Objection the Libertines make us is, That our
Judg-

Judgments are pre-possess'd, which hinders us from being undeceiv'd. We say the same of them; and maintain that it is nothing but sensual Inclinations that raise those Difficulties in their Minds, which would vanish if they examin'd them without Passion. It is not just that either they or we should take for granted our Pre-possessions, as Principles demonstrated, or which need not be demonstrated. Let us then act on both sides as if we had not yet espous'd any Party, and let us urge nothing that is not founded upon Principles which both sides acknowledge.

It is agreed that there are certain Characters by which we may be assur'd whether a thing has been done or no, and by which we may distinguish the Truth or Falshood of a History. If we do not agree in that, we are *Pyrrhoniens*; or, to give it a better Name, altogether senseless: for none but a Mad-Man can doubt of the Truth of all the Histories in the World. But farther, we must also agree in another thing, which is no less certain. It is, that there are certain Matters of Fact, the Truth whereof is better conceiv'd
than

than it can be prov'd ; and which are of such a nature, that unless a Man be in a proper Disposition of Mind he can hardly be induc'd to believe them. For Example, If any one should tell us here that the Inquisition of *Spain* and *Italy* has approv'd the Works of *Calvin*, and allow'd the People to read them in *Spanish* and *Italian* ; although it is impossible for us to believe it, and that we are firmly perswaded of the contrary, we should not be able to convince a Person who should be obstinate in maintaining it, until we had given him evident Proofs thereof. In like manner, if there were false Witnesses ready to swear that one of our Friends, (whose Vertue had been well known to us for divers Years, and who but just then was gone out of our Company) went then immediately in cold Blood to assassinate a Person unknown to him, for no other reason but only to make an Anatomical Dissection of his Body ; it is certain we should not believe them, although it might not be in our Power to prove judicially the contrary.

It is easy to imagine a thousand Examples of such like Truths, which we
appre

apprehend better than we can prove. That being suppos'd, if we come to the Christian Religion, there occurs at the very first a difficulty in discerning what are the Doctrines of this Religion : for Christians have great Controversies among themselves about their Belief. There would be no end of going about to examine all these Controversies. Let us therefore suspend our Judgment thereupon, and see first wherein all Christians are agreed. They all agree, for Example, that most of the Books of the New Testament are the Writings of those Authors whose Name they bear, and who writ them more than sixteen hundred Years ago ; that the History therein is true, and that we ought to obey the Commandments therein contain'd. This Obedience may be reduc'd to these general Heads ; a rendering to God the Service due to him ; a trusting in his Promises ; and a keeping his Commandments, in what concerns both our selves and our Neighbour. But this supposes a Belief of all those Scriptural Truths without which a Man cannot perform his Duty ; as that there is a God, absolutely perfect, who has sent

sent Jesus Christ into the World to draw Men from their Sins, and guide them to eternal Salvation; that this Jesus has been rais'd from the Dead, and that he now reigns in Heaven, &c. All Christians agree in all this.

Let us suspend still our Judgment concerning Doctrines, and speak yet only of the practical Part of our Religion. It cannot be deny'd but that if all Men liv'd according to the Precepts of the Gospel; and that, out of the hope of another Life, they betook themselves with Care to adore the Creator of the Universe, to live always in Temperance, and Sobriety, and to do constantly to their Neighbour as they desire their Neighbour should do to them; It cannot be deny'd, I say, but this manner of living would be very agreeable and very advantageous to Human Society. We should not then hear any words spoken that could cause us Trouble, or that would kindle Divisions in Religion. There would be no Sickness through Intemperance, no Vexation, nor any Quarrel occasion'd by Debauchery. The doing Wrong to ones Neighbour, and the suffering any Inconvenience through the Inhumanity

manity or Malice of Men would be things unknown: Men would help one another in all their Needs, with all the Fervency and Earnestness that could be desir'd: If by mistake any of them had been the occasion of Inconvenience to one another, they would mutually pardon one another, and repair that Damage by all sorts of Services. The love of Honours, or of Riches, would trouble no Man's Mind, nor cause any Envy or Discord. In a word, the Mind being in a perfect Tranquillity, the Body as healthful as feeble Nature will admit, and both Mind and Body enjoying the innocent Pleasures which the Gospel allows, this amiable Life would not be quitted but for the enjoyment of another, freed from all the inevitable Inconveniences entail'd by Nature upon the Inhabitants of this Earth.

All that have any Idea of the Rules of Morality taught by Jesus Christ, must necessarily agree in this Truth; that by generally observing them, Men would be exceedingly happy. But it may perhaps be ask'd, Where is there in the World a Society in which, Men live conformably to these Rules of Morality? That is not the Question.

It is sufficient for our present purpose that there are at this time many Nations that make Profession of it, though they live not up to the Practice. Let us enquire whether these Nations invented those Rules, or receiv'd them from their Predecessors? They all tell us they are not the Inventers; and it may well be judg'd, by their way of living, that they say true: For it is not probable they should have invented the Precepts of the Gospel, and yet live so contrary to them. Inventions always favour something of the temper of the Spirit of the Inventors.

But we have no need of Arguments to convince us of this: We may examine from Age to Age the Authors that are left us, beginning at our own, and going backwards to that wherein Christian Religion was first spoken of, to see who they were that brought it into the World. We shall readily find, by reading those Authors, that it is more than thirteen hundred Years since the *Roman Emperors* being become Christians, Christianity has flourish'd in a great part of *Europe, Asia, and Africa*. Since that time we may be convinced, by a very great number of Christi-

Christian Authors, that Profession has been constantly made of believing that the Morality taught us in the Gospel came from Heaven. If we go yet further backwards, we shall find that even under the Pagan Emperors there was a great multitude of Christians that profess'd the same Doctrine. We have many Christian Authors, of those times, who assure us of it. But, without staying to reckon up needlessly Authors sufficiently known, let us examine in what Age Christianity began first to be spoken of. All Christians agree that it was under the Reign of *Tiberius*; and if we consult Heathen Authors, we shall see that before that time it was altogether unknown. *Tacitus*, who was born towards the end of the Reign of *Claudius*, or about the beginning of that of *Nero*, says that *Nero*, after having set *Rome* on fire in divers places, and thereby destroy'd the City, accus'd the Christians of it, and made them suffer horrible Punishments. Upon that occasion he speaks of the beginning of Christianity in these terms. *The Author of this Sect* (says he) *was Christ, who in the Reign of Tiberius was put to death by Pontius Pilate Governor of Judæa.* An. l. 15. c. 44.

This dangerous Superstition, continues he, in speaking of the Christian Religion, *though nipp'd in the Bud, broke out a fresh, and spread not only through Judæa, where the Mischief first began, but came even into Rome it self, where all things shameful and abominable are brought, and find Persons ready to join with and uphold them. Presently as many as confess'd they were Christians, were seiz'd on, and soon after a great many more were discover'd, but were not found guilty of the Fire, though they were the Objects of the public Hatred, &c.* You see here the Testimony of a Heathen Author, who being born in the beginning of Christianity, and very well vers'd in the Passages of his Time, assures us of two things then publickly notorious. The one, that the Authors of the Christian Religion had liv'd in Judæa in the Reign of *Tiberius*, and had been punish'd during the Government of *Pontius Pilate*. The other, that after his Death, in few Years, the Embracers of his Doctrine were extreamly multiply'd. *Suetonius* also tells us, that in the time of the Emperor *Claudius*, the Christians were banish'd out of Rome; which shows that there were then a great number of

In Claud. c. 15.

of them in that Capital City.

We find also by the Testimony of another Author, contemporary to *Tacitus*, that the Christians at that time made Profession of the same Morals they teach now a-days. *Pliny* being Proconsul of *Bithynia*, about threescore and ten Years after *Pontius Pilate* had been Governour of Judæa, by *Trajan's* Order sought out the Christians within his Province, and inform'd himself with all the care imaginable concerning their Opinions: Hereupon he writes a Letter to *Trajan*, which Letter is still preserv'd. *I was inform'd*, says he, *that all their Crime, or Error, consisted only in that they us'd to assemble themselves upon a certain Night, and to sing together a Hymn to Christ, as to a God: That they all oblig'd themselves by Oath not to any Crime; but on the contrary, that they would not commit Felony, Robbery, or Adultery; and that they would deceive no Man, nor break a Trust: This done, they dispers'd and return'd again after sometime to eat together, which they did in common, and without any harm: But that they had given over doing it upon my Proclamation, wherein, according to your Orders, I had forbidden all sorts of Conventicles.* This

Lib. 10. Ep. 97.

made me believe that I could not get out the Truth better than by putting to the Rack two Women Servants, whom they call *Diaconesses*; but I discover'd nothing but a strange and excessive Superstition. They that understand the Latin Tongue, will not wonder that *Tacitus* and *Pliny* make use of the word *Superstition*. The Romans gave that Name to all sorts of Religious Worship that were not establish'd by public Authority.

Two such Witnesses as these cannot be excepted against; Seeing it is evident they had no favour for Christians, and were perhaps the most able Men of their time; but especially if we consider that they treat of matters of Fact, which they themselves had either seen, or which were known by all Men, as was the Death of *Jesus Christ* under *Pontius Pilate*. The Writings that we have of Christians living between the times of *Pilate* and those of *Tacitus* or *Trajan*, attest the same Truths: They date the beginning of Christianity from the same Christ that *Pilate* put to Death, and they preach to us precisely the same Morals.

We must then necessarily allow that there was in *Judea*, during the
Reign

Reign of *Tiberius*, a Person that laid the Foundation of the Christian Religion, and had many Disciples. Let us now examine some of his first Disciples, and see what sort of People they were. Let us read the Epistle which *Clement*, Bishop of *Rome*, writ to the Christians of *Corinth*, forty Years after the Death of *Jesus Christ*, and in the beginning of the Reign of *Vespasian*. There appears in this Epistle a Spirit of Peace, of Charity, of Humility, and many lively and pathetic Exhortations to the Observation of the Gospel-Morals. He reproves severely those that had not observ'd them, but commends those that had. In the beginning of that Epistle, he says among other things, *That the Christians of Corinth had labour'd day and night for their Brethren (to the end that the number of the Elect might be sav'd) in applying themselves to Works of Mercy, and of a good Conscience; That they had been sincere, without Malice, and without remembering the Ill that any of them might formerly have done to one another; That all Division and Schism was abhorr'd by them; That they were afflicted for their Neighbour's Failings; That they look'd upon his Necessi-*

ties as their own ; That they never repented them of well-doing, but were always ready to do all sorts of good Works ; That in their Conversation, full of Vertue, and worthy of Veneration, they did all things in the fear of God, whose Commandments were writ in their Hearts. He adds afterwards, *That he had known many Christians, who, to redeem others out of Slavery, had put themselves in Chains ; That many having sold themselves for Slaves, had maintain'd others out of the price of their own Liberty.*

The Masters of this *Clement* were the first Disciples of *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was the first Teacher of Christianity ; and he gives Testimony of their great Piety. Indeed if we read their Writings, we find nothing in them but what speaks a profound Veneration of the Deity, an extream Tenderneſs towards all Men, and an extraordinary Strictneſs in all that concerns the Government of a Man's Self. Let us chuſe which we will of them, we ſhall find nothing in their Works but what tends to Piety. If ſome of their Writings have been question'd, let us take thoſe concerning which there never was any Question ; Or, without looking further, the Gospel according to *St. Luke*, and

Page 123. Ed.
Ox. in 12°.

and the first Epistle of *St. Paul* to the *Corinthians*, which are cited by *Clement*, and we shall perceive every where the same Morals which they endeavour to implant in the Hearts of their Disciples.

I suppose all along that the Reader has some knowledge of the Precepts of the Gospel, and has given some attention to what I said at the beginning ; And then I dare boldly say, that unless he have lost all Sense, he will acknowledge that there is nothing more reasonable than the Morals of the Gospel ; and that it were to be wish'd that all the World observ'd them. The Apostles then in exhorting their Hearers to live after a manner so reasonable, and so profitable to human Society, requir'd nothing of them contrary to Reason, or to the true Interests of all Mankind. And this puts me in mind of the Saying of a Person, that once had no great Opinion of the Truth of our Religion. When the Morals, which the Disciples of *Jesus Christ* preach'd throughout the World, were thus lively describ'd to him, he could not but fall into these words, which the Evidence of the thing drew from him, *I wish all the World had believ'd them.*

This

This Doctrine of the Apostles ought undoubtedly to make all those who love human Society, and their own Advantages, to listen to it. But it may here be objected that perhaps the Apostles preach'd not this Doctrine, but in design to insinuate themselves into the Minds of the People; and afterwards, upon pretext of Piety, to get from them whatsoever they had a mind to. But to answer that Objection, in the first place I observe, and suppose it will be granted me, that this Suspicion has no Foundation in the Doctrine which they preach'd. For that condemns the love of Honours, of Riches, and of Pleasures. There cannot so much as one single Passage of their Works be alledg'd that favours Ambition, Covetousness, or Concupiscence.

This being so, this Suspicion can be grounded but upon one of these two things; Either that the Apostles could hope to make some advantage of this their Doctrine, when it should be receiv'd; or that they actually made it, when they preach'd it. I understand here by Advantage A Good out-balancing all the Inconveniences that the Apostles underwent in preaching the Gospel,

Gospel, or at least such a one as they esteem'd in that degree. It is not probable, if they were Deceivers, but that they propos'd an Advantage to themselves greater than the Pains they took: Otherwise they might justly be look'd upon as Fools, which they cannot (without great Impertinence) be suppos'd to have been by any that read their Writings.

Now the Apostles could not hope to make any Advantage of their Doctrine, unless it were receiv'd by the generality of those amongst whom they preach'd it. For without that, they would have been expos'd to perpetual Persecution. None but Fools could expect to live quietly amongst People vehemently prepossess'd with Opinions directly contrary to those they resolv'd to profess and teach; People that believed themselves oblig'd for the Interest of the State, and of Religion, to take away both the Estates and Lives of those that oppos'd their Superstition. Such were the *Romans*, the *Greeks*, and the *Jews*, in the times of the Apostles. They must then have hoped that their preaching would take such effect as would draw after them the greatest part

part of the World. But that was impossible to be hop'd for, by any that had never so little knowledg of the Disposition of the Heart of Man. And the Apostles, who had a great share of this Knowledg, as appears by their Writings, could less than others imagine such a thing. The *Jews* were so passionately wedded to their Ceremonies, that there was not the least likelihood of succeeding with them. The *Romans* and *Greeks* were so over Head and Ears in Pleasures, so covetous, so ambitious, that the small number amongst them who had not lost all thought of Vertue, speak of the Manners of that Age with Horror and Detestation. The Histories of both those People (if we judg of them by the Ideas of the Gospel) present us, in the Events of those Times, with a Picture of the most horrible Corruption that ever was. And can it then be imagin'd that the Apostles should hope to draw to their Opinions the generality of those that liv'd in such times? How could they promise themselves, that People so blinded by their Passions, and so harden'd in their Crimes, would ever relent? No, they tell us plainly

plainly (after their Master) that they hoped not to make the Gospel be receiv'd by any great number of Persons; in comparifon of those that would remain in Unbelief.

But if yet it be suppos'd that the Simplicity of the Apostles might have encourag'd them to hope for the Conversion of the greatest part of the Roman Empire, Experience however would at length have undeceiv'd them; since after having preach'd many Years they were forc'd to acknowledg they had gain'd very few. History shows us clearly, that for some Ages after the beginning of Christianity there were much fewer Christians in the Roman Empire than Heathens. Thus then we see that the Apostles were necessarily expos'd to cruel Persecutions all their Lives; scorn'd, and hated alike by Jews and Gentiles, they could have no Recompence any way proportionable to their Labours. And so they tell us plainly, that they expected nothing but Afflictions in this Life; and that it was all they hoped for from Men of this World, in Recompence of what they undertook in preaching unto them

a Doctrine so reasonable as are the Gospel-Morals. Nor were they deceiv'd; for after having suffer'd great Torments, they in the end lost their Lives in an ignominious manner, by the hands of Executioners, asserting to the last the Truth of the Doctrine they had preach'd. *It was by great Injustice and Malice,* says Clement, whom we cited before, *that Peter underwent not one or two, but many Pains; and after having thereby born Testimony to the Truth, went to the place of Glory that was due to him. It was through the like Malice of Men that Paul receiv'd the Reward of his Patience; having been seven times put in Chains, whipp'd and ston'd; Having been the Herauld of the Gospel in the East and in the West, and having render'd his Faith illustrious; Having preach'd Justice to all the Earth, and being arriv'd at the utmost part of the West, after having born Testimony to the Truth before the principal Rulers there, he departed out of this World.*

This Event of the preaching of the Apostles, absolutely overthrows the second Ground whereon Men might build suspicions of their Sincerity, viz. that

that they had made an Advantage by their preaching equivalent to the Troubles and Dangers they were subject to. If they were esteem'd by a small number of Persons of mean Condition, that hinder'd them not from being despis'd by all the rest of Mankind, Jews and Gentiles; from being ill treated and persecuted; from suffering extream Poverty; and at last from dying upon Scaffolds and Croffes; as we have seen by what Clement says, and as all their Disciples unanimously affirm: One of the Apostles themselves also tells us the same thing in one of his Epistles: *Even to this present hour* (says I Cor. IV. II. *he) we hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted; and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own Hands. And again, If in this* 1b. XV. 19. *Life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.*

There is no body surely that has common Sense, who to obtain the Esteem of a small number of People, without Power and without Reputation, would suffer so great Troubles, become the Horror of Mankind, be us'd as the worst of Men, and as those that

1b. IV. 9.

that were condemn'd to the Amphitheatres, *be made a Spectacle to the People.* A Man may be tickl'd with the itch of Glory, when he fancies to himself that most of those among whom he lives will applaud that which he is doing: But it never came into the Mind of any Man to expose himself to long Sufferings, and at last to a cruel and ignominious Death, to the end only to be esteem'd by a very few contemptible People, and in the mean while to be look'd upon as a wicked and as a mad Man, by the greatest part of those with whom he liv'd.

The Truth of these Matters of Fact cannot be deny'd: That they preach'd the Doctrine which we read in their Writings (and whereof the Christians still make Profession) in the Reigns of *Tiberius*, and some of the following Emperors: That they liv'd in great Trouble, and under many Afflictions: And that at last they dy'd miserably, in maintaining the Doctrine they had for divers Years publish'd. We have seen these Truths attested by Heathens, as well as by their own Disciples.

If

If we would suppose that the Apostles liv'd after a voluptuous manner, and contrary to the Morals they preach'd, we must be oblig'd to deny their having undergone those Sufferings which are attested by their Disciples; the first whereof, in imitation of their Masters, as they themselves say, offer'd themselves courageously to very many Afflictions, without making any advantage thereof in this Life. *To these Men, says Clement, speaking of St. Peter and St. Paul, who liv'd after a divine manner, there joyn'd themselves a great number of the Elect, who having suffer'd many Punishments and Torments, have left us a fair Example.* Nay, supposing their living so voluptuously, we must also suppose an Absurdity that is inconsistent even with common Sense; *viz.* That they preaching that Men ought to undergo much Suffering for Religion, exhorting the People to all sorts of Vertue, and yet living themselves at their Ease (without taking care to practise the Precepts they gave to others, except only so far as might serve to deceive the World) did nevertheless make a great number of Disciples, not only

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sincere

sincere Imitators of their Master's pretended Vertues, but who also dy'd for a Doctrine, for which those that had taught them it refus'd to suffer any thing.

It is conceivable enough that seduc'd Persons may be as thoroughly perswaded of a Falshood, as others are of the most evident Truths; and may consequently, in maintenance of a Falshood, do all that the most resolute Men would do in Justification of Truths of the greatest importance. But it cannot be conceiv'd, that Persons prepossess'd from their Infancy with Opinions contrary to those of the Apostles, would let themselves be so miserably seduc'd, that after having embrac'd their Doctrine, they would suffer for it the most cruel Punishments, whilst they saw that their Masters would not undergo any at all for it. Now we see, by the Passage of *Tacitus* which we cited, that at the beginning of Christianity a great number of People declared themselves Christians, tho they saw that the bare public Profession of that Religion would expose them to the Punishments due to Incendiaries, and to *Nero's* Fury. The reason

reason of this must necessarily be that some of the first Preachers of the Gospel, as their Disciples assure us, gave Examples to others. Without that it is impossible to conceive they could draw so many after them, and especially so many who endur'd such horrible Torments for the Religion they learn'd from them.

From all this I draw no other Consequence than that the Apostles were sincere Persons, who believed their own Doctrine; as were also those who by their Example dy'd for it. They must have been truly perswaded of the thing, that would suffer so many Inconveniences, Fatigues, and Punishments as they suffer'd, rather than abandon it.

Now the Apostles having been indisputably sincere Persons, we must confess that if ever there were any in the World whose Vertue deserved Esteem, they certainly deserv'd it from all Men. No design could be conceiv'd more profitable to Mankind than theirs, as has been shewn in treating of the Morals they preach'd. None could go about to bring that Design to pass with more Earnest-

ness and Zeal than they did, who sacrific'd to it their Fortunes, their Preferments, their Honours, their Pleasures, their Repose and their Lives. They compass'd Sea and Land under a thousand Dangers, attempted a thousand Difficulties, suffer'd Inconveniences and Pains unexpressible. They expos'd themselves to most Mens Scorn, Malice and Cruelty. And to what end? To perswade the same Men to live one with another after a manner so conformable to Reason, so advantageous to Society, so pleasant, so sweet, that, except the Sovereign Happiness to be enjoy'd in the Life that never ends, nothing can be imagin'd preferable to it.

I ask now, If (being perswaded of the probity and sincerity of the Apostles, and otherwise satisfied by their Discourses that they were not at all out of their Wits) we could deny Credit to their Testimony, if they had said they had seen with their own Eyes certain matters of Fact, which they related with many Circumstances; and that they had heard with their own Ears Discourses full of Sense and Wisdom, which they repeated from beginning

ginning to end. Let every Man ask himself, if he would refuse to believe one of his Friends, whom he knew to be sincere and judicious, if he assur'd him positively that he had heard such and such a thing. Would one suspect for a Lie the Testimony of a rational Man, and one who gave good signs of Sincerity, when he affirm'd that he had been present at the Execution of one of his Friends, had seen him die, and had heard him say many things which he very distinctly remember'd? I confess they that know not the Sincerity or Judgment of a Person, may make a doubt of the Truth of what they hear him say; but if once they are perswaded of his Integrity and Understanding, it is impossible they should refuse to believe him. Every Man may be convinc'd of this by his own Experience, and may, as I have already observ'd, frame a thousand particular Examples to himself of what I have been saying.

Now the Apostles tell us they liv'd some Years with Jesus of *Nazareth*, from whom they learn'd all their Doctrine; that they saw him crucified, such a day,

of such a Month, of such a Year ; that they saw him die upon the Cross, and after that buried in a Sepulchre, hewn out of a Rock for the Family of a Jewish Counsellor call'd *Joseph of Arimathea*, who begged the Body of Jesus from *Pilate*, and who, after having put it into the Sepulchre, roul'd a great Stone to the Door ; that they saw the Roman Souldiers keep Guard about the Sepulchre, and that the chief of the Jews had carefully seal'd it up, for fear any should take away the Body. Can we, being perswaded as we ought to be of the Sincerity and Wisdom of the Apostles, refuse to believe them in these things? Certainly we must have lost all Sense, to believe that Persons of Wisdom and Integrity would prevaricate, in affirming a thing of this nature with so many Circumstances. The same Judgment must be made concerning the Discourses of Jesus Christ, which they relate to us after a manner so lively, and so circumstantiated, that we could not relate them better, if we came directly from hearing them,

It

It is more clear than day, to those who are perswaded that the Apostles had but common Sense and Sincerity, that they really spoke Truth in all these Particulars.

That being so, Why should we not believe the same Apostles, when they assure us that they have often seen their Master, in a moment, cure many incurable Diseases ; restore the Dead to Life ; raise himself, after having lain more than thirty hours in the Sepulchre ; eat and drink with them afterwards, for several days ; and at last ascend, in their Presence, in a Cloud to Heaven ? I perceive indeed that many Persons who would not have question'd the Testimony of the Apostles if they had said nothing of the Miracles, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, do, for that reason only, doubt of it. They would have easily believed that in *Judea*, during the Government of *Pontius Pilate*, there had been a Man named Jesus, who taught the Morals we read now in the Gospels ; that the Jewish Priests through Envy and Malice put him to Death ; but that his Disciples refrained not from teach-

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ing

ing his Precepts, and that the most afrightful Torments hinder'd them not from publishing them. They would praise all Christ's Doctrine, as the most excellent Philosophy that ever was known to have been taught amongst Men, and the best Principles that can be thought on to oblige them to live well one with another. But they reject all this, and believe that the Apostles were Impostors, only because they speak of Miracles, which they say they saw their Master do. Let us consider a little why these Men do so.

There are but two ways whereby the Falshood of a matter of Fact may be known. The first is, when it is known that the Witnesses who relate it are deceiv'd, or have a design to deceive, though otherwise what they relate seem very possible. The second is, when by clear and evident Proofs we know that the Fact in question is in it self absolutely impossible. That the Apostles design'd not to deceive us has been made appear; nor can it be said that they were themselves constantly deceiv'd in all the Miracles of Jesus Christ which they relate. If the Que-

stion

were about a small number of Miracles, that could not without difficulty be examin'd, this Suspicion might with some probability be started: But they relate so many, and of so many different sorts, that if what they say be not true, it must of necessity be that they have gone about to deceive us. For Example, they could not be mistaken in Christ's Ascension into Heaven, which they have constantly affirm'd, and of which the Christians from the very beginning have made one of the chief Articles of their Faith. Those who, as *Pliny* reports, sung Hymns to Jesus Christ as to a God, believ'd without doubt that Christ was ascended into Heaven. And indeed I cannot but think that any who will take the Pains to read only the Gospel of *St. Luke*, and the first Epistle of *St. Paul* to the *Corinthians* (where are related the Circumstances of many of the Miracles of Christ, and particularly of his Resurrection, and after that of his appearing divers times unto the Disciples) must certainly agree that those who spoke after that manner were not seduced; and that if what they say be not true, of necessity they

they must have design'd to deceive those to whom they related these matters.

Now it has been shown demonstratively that the Apostles were very sincere Persons. And those who refuse to admit their Testimonies do not tax them of having been deceived; Nor do they undertake to oppose directly the Reasons, by which we prove their Sincerity. They content themselves in making Objections upon the nature of Miracles; and so reduce themselves to the second way of knowing the Falshood of a matter of Fact, which consists in showing that the thing related is in it self absolutely impossible.

I cannot engage my self here in the Examination of their Reasons; neither is it necessary. It is sufficient to observe in general, that all the Arguments, with which *Spinoza* and those that follow his Opinions do dispute against Miracles, are not comparable in evidence and force to the Principles we have establish'd. These Men endeavour to show that the extraordinary Effects of the Divine Power, which we call Miracles, may be the necessary Consequences of some of the Laws of Nature

ture, to us unknown; and that they are no more to be made use of as Proofs in this matter, than those which occur daily in the ordinary course of Nature. They bring also some Metaphysical Arguments, to show that every thing comes to pass necessarily. But all this overthrows not the direct Proofs which we have brought of the Truth of these Events, and which are infinitely more clear than their Reasons, which no body can understand, as perhaps neither do they themselves. But there is no danger that they should persuade any Man that the Resurrection of a dead Body, or the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven, could happen as naturally as the Birth of a Man into the World. As long as the direct Proofs of the Truth of those matters of Fact hold good, no Man will be persuaded that the Miracles which the Apostles relate are natural Effects of certain Laws of Nature, unknown to Men: Because it will presently be ask'd, Why then are no more of these Effects produced? How could Jesus Christ know that after he was buried, he should rise again and ascend into Heaven? And how came
it

it to pass, at that instant that he commanded a lame or a Paralytic Man to go, &c. that the Laws of Nature (unknown to us) were prepared and ready to cause the lame or Paralytic Man to walk.

It is plain then that the Philosophical Difficulties alledg'd against the Testimony of the Apostles, are not of so great force as the Arguments we have brought to confirm it; nor can they take place, so long as a Man is persuaded of the Sincerity of the first Disciples of Jesus Christ. And the truth is, that those who make these Objections do take this course, only because they cannot possibly alledg any thing against the matters of Fact, which we have prov'd. They endeavour to confound the Minds of their Admirers by obscure Metaphysical Arguments, and Suppositions, which they cannot prove, and which they assert nevertheless to be common Notions.

This being so, it cannot be doubted that Christ Jesus was extraordinarily favoured by God: And as it cannot be suppos'd, with any colour of Reason, that God would work Miracles in

in favour of an Impostor, it must necessarily be acknowledged that he was a Teacher sent from Heaven, to set Men right that were gone astray; and consequently, that his Doctrine is true. But I will not insist upon this Consequence, as well because it is evident in it self, as because many Learned Men already have thoroughly handled it. I will add only this Reflection before I end; *viz.* That we have no Reason to suspect that Jesus Christ himself designed to deceive us: Because all the Reasons brought to prove the Sincerity of the Apostles are as strong in respect of him as of them. To be convinc'd of this, we need but apply to him, both as to his Person and Doctrine, all that has been said concerning the Apostles. All the Religion which he taught Men, and which we find in the Gospels, tends only to bring us to the Observation of the most holy and most admirable Morals that can possibly be imagin'd. And he could have no other Interest in the Establishment thereof than what we all have; that is, the universal Welfare of all Men.

Thus

Thus then you see the Christian Religion establish'd after an invincible manner, without supposing any Inspiration in the Histories of our Lord and his Apostles. There remains nothing more to be added, but that to apprehend the Truth of all our Proofs, it is necessary only that we have the same Disposition of Mind towards the Apostles, that we have towards any Person whose Sincerity is very well known to us, and whom we could not refuse to believe when he should assure us of a thing he had seen and heard, and in which it is morally impossible that he should be deceived. The chief thing then is, to be well assur'd of the Integrity of the Apostles, which is easy to be done in following the Method we have described. Otherwise, while we attend not to the Reasons which give Evidence thereunto, we shall never be sufficiently sensible of the strength of the other Arguments, that may be brought to prove the Divine Original of our Religion.

I intreat you, Sir, to examine what I have said exactly, and to let me know if

if I have been to blame in affirming that we may be perfectly assured of the Truth of Christianity, without believing the History of the New Testament to be inspir'd. If I would have treated of this Subject thoroughly, I must have compos'd a Book, not writ a Letter. But what I have said is sufficient to let you see, that our Friend is not with any sort of Justice to be suspected of Irreligion, upon the account of his not believing the Inspiration of the Scriptures as it is commonly believed. I am, &c.

FINIS.

The chief Errors of the Press, which the Reader is desired to correct, are in Page 63.

Line — for — Read

- 17 — *It is not likely* — *It is apparent.*
 21 — *should* — *would.*
 22 — *with the Him* — *with Him.*
 23 — *should* — *would.*

Advertisement:
BY THE
TRANSLATOR,
TO THE
READER.

FOR the better understanding of these five Letters; it seems necessary in a few words to explain the Occasion and Subject of them. They are not, in French, one distinct Volume, as they are here made in English; but a part of two larger Volumes written in an Epistolary Form. The First entituled, (1) The Thoughts or Reflections of some Divines in Holland, upon Father Simon's Critical History of the Old Testament. The Second, (2) A Defence of (1) *Sentiments de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du vieux Testament,* Composee par le P. Richard Simon. (2) *Defense des Sentimens, &c. contre la Responſe du Prieur de Bolleville.*

those Thoughts, in Answer to the Prior of Bolleville; who is supposed to be also the same Mr. Simon, disguised under a borrowed Name.

The general Design that Mr. Simon drives at in the Critical History of the Old Testament, as well as in that of the New (which are now both of them published in English) is to represent the many Difficulties that are amongst the Learned concerning the Text of the Scriptures, and thereby to infer the necessity of receiving the Roman Doctrine of Oral Tradition.

This Design raised him many Antagonists amongst the Protestants beyond the Seas, who have opposed him in their Writings, each according to his different Genius or Principles. The Book first above mentioned was one of the earliest of that kind; and it's Anonymous Author appears second to none, either in Critical Learning, or Solid Judgment. But it is not necessary to my purpose in this place to insist upon his particular differences with Mr. Simon in Points of Criticism. This only in general, is needful to be observed; That though on the one side he sufficiently overthrows the pretended necessity of Oral Tradition; and on the other side, ingeniously

uniously acknowledges all the Difficulties that are amongst the Learned about the Text of the Scriptures; yet he does not thereupon leave the Judgment of his Reader in suspense about so weighty a matter; but propounds a middle way, which he conceives proper to settle in Mens Minds a just esteem of the Scriptures, upon a solid Foundation.

The Scheme or System of this middle way, he says, he received from his Friend Mr. N. and therefore he gives it not in his own, but in his Friend's words. It is comprized in the Eleventh and Twelfth Letters of his foresaid Book. And because That is a distinct Subject of it self, and of more consequence to the generality of Christians, than those nice Disputes of Criticism, with which he is obliged, in following Mr. Simon, to fill up the rest of that Volume, I have therefore thought fit to translate those two Letters into English. They are the two First of these Five; and are the Ground and Occasion of the rest.

The publishing of that Volume of Letters produced an Answer from Mr. Simon, or the Prior of Bolleville, as he calls himself; and further gave opportunity to the Author to learn from several hands, what-

soever was objected most materially by others against the fore-mentioned Scheme, which he had published in his Friend's words. This afforded him occasion, in replying to the Prior of Bolleville, to insert a further explanation and defence of that Scheme, from the hand of the Author; as also to justify himself for having published it; and in the last place to remove the great Popular Objection arising from a Jealousy, lest that System of Mr. N's should prejudice the Foundation of the Christian Religion. I say, it prompted him to answer that Objection, by giving a solid Demonstration of the Truth of our Religion, without interressing it in this Controversy. This is done in the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Letters of his Second Book, Entituled, A Defence, &c. And they are the three last of these following Five.

I have translated them all, that the Reader may at once have a full view, both of Mr. N's Opinions concerning the Holy Scriptures, in the fore-mentioned System; of the Objections that have been made against it; of the Answers he gives to those Objections; and of the Use that may be made of all, in settling the Christian Religion upon a Basis not to be shaken by

by the Difficulties about the Scripture, which the Learned are forced to acknowledge to be insuperable.

This is all that I think needful to present the Reader upon this Subject. Only if in the perusal of the two first of these Letters, any one should be apt to condemn me for publishing things of this nice concernment in our Language, I intreat him to suspend his Censure, till he have read the rest; and as he goes along, to apply unto me the Author's Apology. Our Case is the same, and, I think, he has said all that is needful upon it. In a word, We live in an Age of so much Light, that it is not only now (as at all times) unbecoming the Dignity of such Sacred Truths, as the Christian Religion teaches us, to build them upon unsound Principles, or defend them by Sophistical Arguments; but it is also vain to attempt it, because impossible to execute. The Doctrine of Implicit Faith has lost its Vogue. Every Man will judge for himself, in matters that concern himself so nearly as these do. And nothing is now admitted for Truth, that is not built upon the Foundation of Solid Reason. Let not therefore any sim-

ple-hearted pious Persons be scandalized at these Disquisitions. They are not calculated for their Use. But they are absolutely needful for many others, who are more Curious, and less Religious. And that they may be in some measure useful to the Propagation and Advancement of True Religion amongst such, is the strong Hope, and hearty Desire of the Translator.

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FIRST LETTER.

YOU are desirous, Sir, that I should inform you more particularly about the thoughts of Mr. N. concerning the Inspiration of the *Sacred Writers*; and you ask me if our Friends do not suspect him to be tainted with *Deism*? He that gave me the Essay, which I send you, told me nothing of his other Opinions, nor of his Manner of Life: And for his Thoughts concerning that Divine Inspiration, which the Sacred Penmen received from God, it is conceived that from thence he cannot be concluded to be a *Deist*. It is presumed on the contrary, without entering into the Examination of what he says, that he believes by this Method he better answers the Objections, which the *Deists* and *Atheists* have used to make against the *Style* of Holy Scriptures: And it appears

appears by this Essay, that he is far from being of their Opinions.

We ought not always to measure, or judg of the extent of any Man's Thoughts, in reference to Religion, by the manner of his explaining or defending them; as if all those who do not defend well their Religion, were Men of ill Design, that only seemingly defend, in order to destroy it. 'Tis said that the impious *Vaamini* designed to shew there is no God, in making as if he would prove there is one. But it does not follow from thence, that all others do the same, who defend, or oppose, weakly any Opinion. Otherwise we must believe many Writers both *Catholicks* and *Protestants*, who injudiciously oppose the Opinions of their Adversaries, and as ill defend their own, to be guilty of ill Design. If a Man would make an exact Catalogue of all the Catholick Authors, who have made impertinent Answers to the Protestants, and have used as impertinent Objections against them, it would amount to several Volumes in Folio; and the number of Protestant Authors, who have succeeded no better, would be little less. Nevertheless, I do not believe there is any Body so unjust, as
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to pretend, That the generality of those Authors, on both sides, have been Cheats, who maintained what they did not Believe, or opposed what they did.

You Sir, have too much knowledge of the Frame and Constitution of Man's Mind, to be ignorant, that it is capable of believing in good earnest the most ridiculous things in the World; and, which is yet more astonishing, of giving its Assent at the same time to two things directly opposite. If you should, on purpose, invent the most ridiculous Religion imaginable, there would be People found in *Asia*, whose Opinions would not appear more rational. You have read Mr. *Bernier's* Travels, and the History of the *Brahmins*. What do you think of the Heathens of the great *Mogul's* Country, and of those famous *Indian* Philosophers? Do you think there is none among them, that believes the monstrous Principles of their *Theology*? For my part I am perswaded there are very few that see the absurdity of it. You will say perhaps, That those Nations are under a blindness, which is next to down-right Foolishness; and that the *Europeans* are
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not to be judged of by *Indians*. But are there not, in your Opinion, some even among the Christians, who believe things absurd, and against all sort of appearance? The Protestants at least do pass that censure upon many of the Roman Catholic Doctrines, as *Transubstantiation*, *the Infallibility of the Pope, or Council, &c.* And the Catholics are not wanting to make like reproaches to Protestants.

The Catholics believe, That many Units make more than a single one; and do so much believe it, that he would pass for a Fool amongst them, as well as amongst other Christians, that would undertake to deny it; and nevertheless they believe that a Million of Humane Bodies, separate from one another, make but One. This is a visible Contradiction: Yet you know this is their Opinion concerning the Body of Christ. There are some that assuredly believe, That *God is not the Author of Sin, &c.* Who at the same time assert, That he created Man with a Design to let him fall into Sin; as a means to make his Justice Eminent, in punishing the greatest part; and his Mercy, in pardoning some few. It is evident, that to say God ordered Sin should be, on purpose

purpose to accomplish thereby his Ends, is to make him the Author of it. But this is the frailty of Man's Mind; he sees not these Contradictions, because he has been so long accustomed to shut his Eyes, when they are presented to him.

A Man may then not only defend an ill Opinion that he believes, but also believe things absurd, and even contrary to one another, without being aware. And that's the Reason our Friends suspect not Mr. N. to be a *Deist*, though some may think his Opinions favour those that are so called. But that you may be able to judge, I send you here an abridgment of what he says; which one of my Friends imparted to me a while ago.

There are, says Mr. N. three sorts of things in Holy Writ, *Prophecies, Histories, and Doctrines*, which are not ascribed to particular Revelation.

To begin with the First; God made himself known to the Prophets after several manners; but it seems as if they might be reduced to these three. They *had Visions* by Day or by Night; they *heard Voices*; or they were *inwardly Inspired*. It is not our business here to examine

examine these things in themselves. We only enquire after what manner they have written that which they learnt by these Visions, by these Voices, or by these Inspirations.

I. Of Prophecies.

Prophecies have been written by God's express Command; by the Prophets themselves, or by others. For we cannot tell whether the Prophets themselves have always Written, or Dictated them; or whether their Disciples have Collected and Written them as exactly as their memory would serve. However it be, we cannot doubt but God made known to the Prophets that which we find in their Books, and that we ought to believe St. Peter, when he says, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Pet. I. 21.

To tell us that which appeared to them in *Visions*, whether it be they themselves that writ it, or others that heard them tell it; there needed nothing but a good memory. A Man has no need of inspiration to relate faithfully what he has seen, especially when the impression it made upon him was strong; as commonly hap-

happen'd to those to whom God sent any Vision. Hence it is observed, that every Prophet has his particular Style; by which it appears that they related what they had seen, as they used to relate other things. Their Style was the same when they spake by the Order of God, with that which they us'd in their ordinary Discourse.

The same Judgment is to be made concerning the recital of the words they heard. There needed no more but a good Memory to retain them. But we cannot be Assured that they have always recited exactly the very words they heard, and not sometimes thought it sufficient only to tell us the sense. When God told them the Name of some Person, it was necessary they should retain the Syllables of that Name; as when God ordered *Isaiah* to foretel that *Cyrus* should give the Jews liberty to return into *Palestine*, it behoved *Isaiah* to remember those two Syllables *Co-res*. But there is no likelihood, that in the rest of his Discourse *Isaiah* has related word for word what he heard. The diversity of Style does moreover prove, that the Prophets expressed after their own manner the sense

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of what they heard. There is, for example, much difference between the Stiles of *Isaiah* and *Amos*. *Isaiah's* manner of writing is high and lofty. On the contrary; that of *Amos* is low and vulgar; and we find in it divers popular Expressions, and many Proverbs, which sufficiently testify that this Prophet, who was a Shepherd, expressed after his own way what God had said to him. This is the Opinion of St. *Jerom*, in the Preface of his Commentary on this Prophet.

* *Amos* Prophetæ fuit imperitus Sermone, sed non Scientia: Idem enim qui per omnes Prophetas in eo Spiritus Sanctus loquebatur.

† *Diximus illum artis sue usum* Sermionibus: Et quia Pastor gregum nihil terribilius Leone cognoverat, iram Domini Leonibus comparat.

* *The Prophet* *Amos*, saith he, was skilled in Knowledge, not in Language; for the same Holy Spirit spoke in him that spoke by all the Prophets. This Doctrine attributes clearly the expression to the Prophets, and the thing it self to the Holy Spirit; which appears also by the Remark he makes on Chap. III. saying, † *We told you that he uses the Terms of his own Profession: and because a Shepherd knows nothing more terrible than a Lion, he compares the Anger of God to Lions.* St. *Jerom* should have said, according to the common Opinion, that God made use, in speaking to *Amos*, of popular terms, and suitable to his profession, whereas he attributes plainly to

to the Prophet the choice of the Terms in which the Prophecy is expressed.

* *That words were dictated by God to the Prophets*, (says a late Learned Critick) as it cannot be denied to have been done sometimes, so it does not seem to have been done always: And hence it is, that according to the variety of the Times, and the Speakers, the Phrase of the Prophets is also different.

But it is commonly alledged, that the Prophets recite the same words they heard; Because they introduce God himself, speaking, Thus saith the Lord, &c. That is no Proof. For it is the custom, both of the Hebrews and Greeks, to bring in always those, whose Sense they relate, as speaking in their own Persons; though in doing so, they tie not themselves to their words. I will give you a plain Example thereof. It is the different manner in which the Decalogue is set down in *Exodus* and in *Deuteronomy*; although God is said to speak personally in both places. God says in *Exodus*, Remember the Sabbath day, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, Keep the Sabbath-day, &c. It is in *Exodus*, To keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, To keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six

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* Ut verba à Deo Prophetis dictata sint, sicuti internum evenisse non est negandum, ita non videtur perpetuum. Atque hinc factum est ut pro temporum atque loquentium varietate etiam Sermo Prophetarum differret. Grot. in Mat. 1. 22.

days shalt thou labour, &c. It is in *Exodus*, Nor thy Cattel, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, Nor thine Ox, nor thine Ass, nor any of thy Cattel, &c. And this Commandment ends thus, That thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, may rest as well as thou; And remember that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, thro' a mighty Hand, and a stretched-out-Arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day. In *Exodus*, the reason of keeping the Sabbath, is taken from the Creation of the World in Six Days, without any mention of Slaves, or of the slavery of Egypt. There are some other Differences in that which follows, but not considerable. However it appears by this, that either *Moses* in *Deuteronomy*, or the Author of the Book of *Exodus*, did not tie themselves scrupulously to exact words, as the Jews now a-days do; altho both these Authors bring in God speaking personally. *Grotius* has hereupon

* Sciendum est autem quæ in Exodo hoc loco habentur verba per Angelum Dei nomine prolata, quæ vero sunt Deuter. V. esse Mosis eadem memoriter referentis, & qui-

made this judicious Remark. * It is to be observed, says he, that the Words set down in this place in *Exodus*, were pronounced by an Angel in the Name of God; but those which are in *Deuteronomy*,

are the words of *Moses* repeating the same things; and that with so great liberty, that sometimes he transposes words; changes some for others of the same signification; omits some as sufficiently known by those gone before; and adds others by way of Interpretation. The like liberty of changing words is obvious to a careful Reader in other places of Sacred Writ, as Gen. XVII. 4. compared with 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. compar'd with 43. Exod. XI. 4. compar'd with XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11, &c. compar'd with Deut. IX. 27, &c. Now this shews, That we should not catch at words in Holy Writ, as some of the Jews do, who fancy that those words in *Exodus*, and those in *Deuteronomy* were pronounc'd in one and the same moment of time. They fancy also that where there is transposition, and changing the order of what was said first, what last; that the last importing the same sense were also said first. There are in the Holy Histories

quidem ea libertate, ut voces transponat interdum, quosdam cum idem significantibus commutet, omittat quædam satis nota ex prioribus, addat alia interpretamenti vice. Par mutandi verba libertas & aliis in locis Sacre Scripturæ non indiligenti ejus lectori apparet. Ut Gen. XVII. 4. collato 7. Gen. XXIV. 17. collato 43. Exod. XI. 4. collato XII. 28. Exod. XXXII. 11. & seq. collato Deut. IX. 27. & seq. Pertinet autem hæc observatio eò ne in Sacris Literis simus VOCULARUM AUCUPES, ut Judæi quidam, qui & illa quæ in Exodo & quæ in Deuteronomio sunt verba pariter, uno eodemq; puncto temporis prolata, simulq; ubi transpositio est inverso ordine, quæ prius fuerant dicta & posterius, posteriora eundem sensum continentia prius etiam dicta somniant. Satis multa sunt in sacris Historiis miracula, ut nova extra necessitatem, nulloq; usui comminisci nihil sit opus.

so many Miracles, that we ought not to invent new ones without necessity, and such as are of no use.

If you require yet another convincing Proof, that this manner of speaking personally, does not denote that they are the proper Words of him that is introduc'd speaking after this manner, you have no more to do but to look into the Gospels, where the Evangelists always make our Saviour to speak personally, and yet recite not the same words that he made use of. For, beside that Christ spoke *Syriac* or *Chaldee*, there is oft great difference between their Recitals. The Holy Spirit never tied it self up to words, as many of our Divines do now a-days. He only prompted the Holy Pen-men to give us the true sense of the Words that God made use of to make the Prophets understand his Will; and it is only in respect to the sense, and to the things, that the Apostles assure us that they were inspired from God.

The third sort of *Prophecy*, or manner by which God made known his Will, was by inward Inspiration, without Vision, and without Voice. Here-
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of two different sorts may be conceiv'd. For either God might inspire *Prophecies* or *Predictions* word for word, as the Prophets should pronounce them: As when there was occasion to tell some Name, unknown before to the Prophet: Or he might inspire only the sense, which they might express afterwards in their own way: As most commonly it happen'd; the first Occasion being very rare. It seems to me, that when any one does apprehend a sense distinctly, it is not difficult for him to express it faithfully. And we ought to suppose, that the Prophets full of the thoughts wherewith God inspir'd them, had a very clear and distinct *Idea* thereof: Which will be easily understood, if we consider, that the things wherewith God inspir'd them were easy to be conceiv'd, and proportion'd to the understanding of all the World; at least as to the literal sense. It happened also sometimes, that without inspiring either Words or Sense, God drew from the Mouth of some Persons, Prophecies which those who spoke them understood otherwise, and did not think them to be Prophecies. He cast them into certain Circumstances, and involv'd

them in certain Events, which made them say things that were true Predictions, without their knowing them to be so. Such was *Caiaphas's* Prediction, when he says, *That it was better that one Man should die for the People, than that the whole Nation should perish.* Now he said not that of himself, says *St. John*, but being *High Priest* that Year, he prophesied. To speak properly, God inspir'd him not those words, but the Nature of the Business they were about in the *Sanhedrim* drew them from him. They were afraid that *Jesus* would draw all the People to him, and enterprize something against the Roman Authority, which would not then fail to send a puissant Army into *Palestine*, and totally waste it. *Caia-phas* thereupon urges a very common Politic Maxim, *That it were better to destroy one Man, though he were innocent, than to expose the whole State to utter Desolation.* In *Caiaphas's* sense there is nothing of Prophetic or Inspir'd. But in the Gospel-sense, that which *Caiaphas* said, signifi'd more than he intended, and contained a true Prophecy. It's very likely that more Predictions of this nature may be found in the Old Testament.

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For Example: *David* says of himself and of his Enemies divers things, without thinking of prophesying, which contain nevertheless Predictions of that which ought to happen to *Christ* and his Enemies. He says *Psal. xlii. 10.* *He that ate of my Bread hath lift up his Heel against me:* He meant surely some of those who were risen against him in *Afolom's* Conspiracy, as *Achitophel* or some other, and he speaks plainly of a thing happened to himself. It is this very thing that inspires him, if one may so say, these words; which betoken what should befall *Jesus Christ* by the Treachery of one of his Disciples, as appears by *John xiii. 18.* The Author of the *lxiixth*, and *cixth Psalms*, whether it were *David*, or some other, did not probably think of fore-telling what should one day befall a Disciple of the *Messiah*, when he curs'd his Enemies: And yet *St. Peter* in the *Acts* applies some *Acts i. 20.* words of these *Psalms* to *Judas*. There needs no great sharp-sightedness to see that the Author pretended not to speak of *Judas*, and that he was not immediately inspir'd by the good and merciful Spirit of God, when he said, *Set thou a wicked Man over him, and let Sa-*

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tan stand at his Right-hand : When he shall be judged let him be condemned, and let his Prayer become Sin : Let his days be few, and let another take his Office : Let his Children be Fatherless, and his Wife a Widow : Let his Children continually be Vagabonds and beg ; let them seek their Bread also out of their desolate places : Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger spoil his Labour : Let there be none to extend Mercy unto him ; neither let there be any to favour his Fatherless Children : Let his Posterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out : Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembered with the Lord ; and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out, &c. It is plain that these are the words of a Man full of excessive Choler, and of an extream desire to be revenged. Now the Law of Moses permitted not, any more than the Gospel, to wish ill, or do it, to Children, in revenge of the Injury received from their Parents. Yet some famous Divines have put in the Title of this Psalm, *That David, AS A TYPE OF JESUS CHRIST, being driven on by a singular Zeal, prays that Vengeance may be executed on his Enemies,* And where do they find that Jesus Christ

Christ does curse his Enemies at that rate ? Have they forgotten the words that proceeded from his dying Mouth, in favour of the wickedest Race that ever was ? Those that crucified him, were they not the greatest Enemies he had, and the most obstinate Adversaries of the Gospel ? And, far from making the Imprecations against them that they deserved, did not he pray to his Father to forgive them ? Has he not ordered us to imitate him, and to pray for those that persecute us ? I cannot understand how it can be said, that *David*, as a *Type of Jesus Christ*, made such horrible Imprecations against his Enemies.

I confess, I understand not Christian Religion, if it permit the pronouncing such Curses, and the wishing to be revenged after so cruel a manner, as does the Author of this Psalm, and those of divers others, in which we find such like Imprecations ; As that of *Psalm cxxxvii. O Daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us : Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little Ones against the Stones !* God forbid that we should desire to dash out the Brains of
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Infidel's Children ! Yet nevertheless we see that all these Psalms are indifferently sung in Protestant Churches, without taking notice that they are not all equally inspir'd. And I remember that asking a Divine, how we could sing Psalms full of such Imprecations ? He answered me slightly, that it was lawful to use them against the Enemies of the Church, and that for his part he made that Application to them, when he sung these Psalms. Thus you see what the Jewish Opinion of the Inspiration of words, and of the Divinity of each Verse of the Scripture produces.

We may conceive another sort of *Prophecies*, which consisted not in foretelling things to come, but in explaining the Scripture, and in composing readily Hymns to the Honour of God. There are some Examples of these Hymns in the New Testament, as that of the blessed Virgin *Mary*, and some others. It seems as if there went only Piety and Zeal to the composing them. At least it is very conceivable, that a pious, zealous Man may easily now a days praise God in that manner, without any Preparation. A good part of the Psalms seems to have been thus compos'd, as also divers

vers other Songs which are in the Old Testament. The Psalms where the Verses, or the Pauses, begin with the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, seem to have been compos'd at more leisure. For this Regularity shews that there was Meditation and Pains used, as is in Acrosticks. See *Psal.* cxix. and the *Lamentations* of *Jeremy*. So we see too, that in this sort of Works, the Holy Writers do not speak in the Name of God, nor begin their Discourse with, *Thus saith the Lord*. Yet we may say that the Authors of these pious Songs were full of the Holy Spirit, when they compos'd them ; that is to say, it was a Spirit of Piety that carry'd them to take pains in those Compositions ; and in that sense we may say that they were inspir'd by God, though not so immediately as Predictions. The Spirit of God is often taken for the Spirit of Holiness, that is to say, for a disposition of Spirit conformable to the Commandments of God ; as many Learned Men have observed.

I will now remark briefly in what manner the Sacred Histories have been written : And then, in treating of Doctrines, I will speak of that sort of
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