A DEMONSTRATION OF THE

First and Divinity

OF THE

Christian Religion.
A DEMONSTRATION OF THE Truth and Divinity OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

IN Several DISCOURSES.
A DEMONSTRATION
OF THE TRUTH AND DIVINITY
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
IN SEVERAL DISCOURSES.
A DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
Truth and Divinity
OF THE
Christian Religion,
As it is propos'd to us in the SCRIPTURES
of the NEW TESTAMENT.
IN
Several DISCOURSES.
To which is annex'd
A DISCOURSE in general,
To prove that Matters of FAITH are
at least equally, if not more Demonstrable,
in the strictest Sense of that WORD,
than those of REASON.

By ROBERT GREEN, A.M. and
Fellow of CLARE HALL.

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A DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
TRUTH AND DIVINITY
OF THE
Christian Religion

A DISCOURSE to
prove the Scriptures
of the New Testament
in
seven DISCOURSSES

To which is annex'd
A DISCOURSE in general
To prove that Matters of Faith are
not less obviously in those
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Woodhouse and Robert Chamber, booksellers to
the University, MDCCLX.
To the WORSHIPFULL
Sr JOHN'S BARB,
Of Broadlands in Hampshire, Baronet,
My most Honoured PATRON:
SIR,

I NEED not enlarge upon the Excellency of Your Character, since it is so well known in the Place where You live; and where it is not known, I might possibly lye under the Imputation (tho' I shou'd say nothing but truth) of making only a Panegyrick: You will therefore, I am certain, excuse me on this Head, and think that the best Description of a Patron's Worth and a Merit,
Merit, is to be had from the Nature of the Book address'd to Him. This is concerning the Truth and Divinity of our most Holy Religion, and is a Confession to the World, whilst You permit this Address, notwithstanding the meaness of the Author, that You have entertain'd a most affectionate Esteem and Veneration for it, which is the brightest Ornament, and the truest Reputation that can either belong to a Gentleman, a good Man, or a sincere Christian.

I am, with all Duty and Respect,
S I R,
Your most Oblig'd
and Humble Servant
ROBERT GREEN.
THE PREFACE.

§. 1. AFTER the commendable Performances of the Judicious Bishop of Exeter, upon the Subject we have at present undertaken, and the Elaborate Treatise of Grotius, concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion, it may perhaps seem to be a Presumption to attempt any thing which shall look like entering into the same Argument, which they may possibly be supposed to have exhausted: But as we pay all the Deference to those Great Men that can be imagin'd, so we must likewise insist upon the same Privilege which they took, of considering things in that Way and Method, which appear'd to them to be most agreeable, to produce a rational Conviction of the Truth they propos'd to prove.

§. 2. The Learned Bishop above-mentioned has indeed taken abundance of pains to shew the Necessity of a standing Revelation.
The PREFACE.

tion, and in other Points has argu'd with a great deal of Clearness and Force; but I must humbly beg Leave to say, that as to what respects the Proof and Evidence of an Actual Revelation to Mankind, as to what concerns a Demonstration of the Truth and Divinity of the Holy Scriptures, his Arguments are laid too general, and are not so convincing, as if they had been drawn out into the particular Proofs we have of the Internal and External Evidence, both Humane and Divine, of these Sacred Writings, which we have endeav'our'd to do.

§. 3. If this Reverend Prelate has not insisted upon the exactest way of Demonstrating we cou'd desire, and which cou'd not be expected in those narrow limits that were prescrib'd to his Admirable Discourses: The other Eminent Person we have nam'd, has still less; since we lay it down for a certain Maxim, That Christianity is not so justly and directly prov'd any other way, nor can be, as by an immediate Vindication of those Holy Oracles,
The PREFACE.

Oracles, by which it is transmitted to us.

§. 4. For, besides the Evidence we have from Testimony for the Scriptures, and the Christian Religion, there are only two others pretended to: First, The Reasonableness of the Doctrines it proposes; Secondly, Their Preference to those of any other Religion.

§. 5. First, As to the Doctrines of Christianity, and that Fundamental one of the Existence of a God, His being a Spirit and Immortal, His being Immortal, all-powerful, infinitely wise, and just, and good, according to the sense which Christians have of Him, it will be very hard, if not impossible, to prove these and the other Attributes, which accrue to Him from the Scriptures, by Natural Arguments, and manifest and plain deductions of Reason, which may not be liable to a Contradiction; all the Moral Duties and Relations likewise which we owe to each other, from what Religion inculcates to us, will be still more difficult to evince.

§. 6.
§. 6. For it is not, as is commonly practic'd by these Rationalists, it is not sufficient to the ascertaining of the Christian Religion, to give us a general account of the Being of a God, and some of His more demonstrable and apparent Attributes, as His Immensity, His Omnipotence, or His Infinite Wisdom, &c. nor yet is it enough for the obtaining that end, to explain to us the Reasonableness of certain Duties, which are common to Heathenism with Christianity itself, since unless we can deduce from Reason that Individual Almighty Being, with all His several Attributes and Perfections, which are represented to us in Scripture, as that unspeakable Love which He express'd to us in our Redemption; and unless we can also from the same Reason deduce those very Duties in their full latitude, as the preferring others to our selves, and the doing good for the evil we receive, which Christianity prescribes; such an Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion can be of no force or significance; because if by Reason we collect one kind of an Almighty Being, and
and one sort of Moral Duties, and by Revelation are furnish'd with another; what we infer or conclude from Reason, will not be a confirmation of, as it will have no connection with that which we own to proceed from Revelation.

§. 7. But farther, if we shou'd grant that Reason cou'd demonstrate the several Doctrines of Christianity, it wou'd not from thence follow, that the Christian Religion was either true, or of a divine Original, it cou'd only prove it to be a Rational System; whereas the evidencing what is a Rational System of Religion, is not a Demonstration that such a System is Divine, or that in Fact it is the Christian: that is, to argue from the Reasonableness of a Doctrine, to the Certainty of its being a Christian one, is not a just way of concluding, unless Christianity and Reason are reciprocal Terms, and whatsoever is Reasonable is Christian, and whatsoever is Christian is Reasonable; which at least cannot be known till we are certain what Christianity in Fact is; and consequently to argue
The PREFACE.

from the Rationalness of its Doctrines is upon the very supposition that the Truth of it is already prov'd.

§. 8. If yet Reason cou'd deduce all the Doctrines of Christianity from its own Principles, it wou'd altogether be incapable of solving the Mysteries of it, which therefore some have been so bold to deny, because, I suppose, they found it impossible to be reconcil'd with such kind of Demonstrations; which Demonstrations yet we have evidence'd to be none at all.

§. 9. Secondly, As to the preference of the Doctrines of Christianity to those of any other Religion, whether Mahometan, or Pagan, or the Jewish, that may be a reason why we shou'd embrace one Religion rather than the other, if they stood upon an equal Evidence of being only Human Institutions: But it is no Argument in Matter of Fact, which of these Religions is true, and which of them had the fullest and clearest Attestations to their Divinity.

§. 10. If it be said, The Reasonableness of a Doctrine is one Attestation, we must then
then inquire, and do desire to be inform'd, what is meant by Reason; if by that is intended what we can collect by the Force and Power of our own Faculties, we say, that we cannot from thence infer the several Mysteries reveal'd to us in Scripture, and consequently those Mysteries either have no Attestation from Reason, and yet are Divine, and must be prov'd another way to be so, than from Reason, or else there are no Mysteries at all: If there be no Mysteries, that must be prov'd from Reason or the Scriptures, but that there are no Mysteries cannot be prov'd from Reason, because they are in the former Argument suppos'd not to come under its cognisance; if from the Scriptures, and it is Matter of Fact that there are none, then those Scriptures are to be evidenc'd not from Reason, but from Attestation, so that which way soever we consider Christianity, it is plain the sole proof of it must at length be resolvd into the Validity of the Testimonies produc'd for it.

§ 11. In fine, it seems to be very absurd and unreasonable, where the Question is concerning
The PREFACE.
cerning the truth of Matter of Fact, to have recourse to the Reason of that, the Fact of which is only inquir'd, and to prefer our Speculations about it, which may prove in all probability to be wrong, before a just Examination into the Evidence concerning it, in which it will not be so likely for us to be deceiv'd: thus for instance, if any one should tell us, that there was a certain wonderful piece of Mechanism in the Indies, which we never heard of before, contriv'd and adjusted in that manner, as to exhibit to us all the Motions of the Spheres, the rise and setting of the Stars, and the Revolutions of the Planets, according to their several periodick Times; another should come and tell us the same thing, a third, a fourth, and a hundred or a thousand should agree in the same story; I ask which would be the most rational for us to do, to compare and compute the several Testimonies we have to convince us of this matter, or to go wisely about to prove from Reason and Speculation, how such a piece of Clock-work might be Mechanically contriv'd; should we not rather be
be first sure that this was not an Imposition upon us? And if it was certain Matter of Fact, shou’d we not rather conform our Reason and Sense to it, than make it submit to, and change in obedience to our Fancies and Opinions?

§ 12. The case is the same in Christianity; it was a wonderful contrivance in Almighty God, for the Salvation and Redemption of Mankind, and it is confirm’d to us by an abundant Testimony transmitted down to us from the first time of its being promulg’d to the World; and if in this present Age any one doubted of it, which would be the most rational way for him to be convinc’d? certainly (for the Instance is exactly parallel) not by reasoning upon this Miraculous Dispensation of Almighty God, but by examining whether he has sufficient Evidence to believe there ever was such a Dispensation; and if there was, to make his Reason be rather obedient to his Faith, than subject his Faith to his Reason.

§ 13. We have spoke more largely to this, that we may shew upon what different
The PREFACE.

Principles the Truths of Religion, and those of Reason are founded, which yet in the present Age have been so little distinguished, that Christianity, for some time, has scarcely been thought to have been supported by any other Patronage than that of the kind Offices Reason has been pleas'd to do it; whereas it stands firm upon its own Evidence, and do's not need to depend upon the pleasure and caprice of so fickle and inconstant an Advocate.

§ 14. After what we have said, it is scarcely worth while to take notice of that common piece of Sophistry, which is so much espous'd by the Rationalists of the Age, that Revelation cou'd not be demonstrated other-wise than by Reason; since it is easy to know what we mean by that word, and which is more fully explain'd in Discourse the Tenth of this Book; that is, what the World now generally means by Rational, is, the deducing of one Proposition from another in Matters of Science and Speculation, and the whole Province is committed to the Mind of forming and abstracting its No-
Notions at pleasure, and discoursing upon them; and where the Understanding is thus employ'd, we cannot but think it is more capable of being deceiv'd, by the plain Instances we shall give in Mathematicks and Philosophy, than when it only considers Matters of Fact, and the Testimony we have for 'em; which tho' it may be call'd Reason, yet is widely different from what is meant and intended by the former.

§. 15. We shall add, that what we now propose to the World is with a sincere and affectionate Design of vindicating Religion, against the Atheism of the Age; and if we have been guilty of any incidental Errors, in the following Discourses, we shall desire to be inform'd of them; which upon the first conviction, we here profess ourselves ready and willing to retract. And here we cannot but take notice of the Eminent and Learned Dr. Jenkin, and Dr. Gastrel, who have gone much farther upon this Subject, than perhaps any Persons before them; whose Labours as we very much value and esteem, so we shou'd find an extreme Satisfaction from our own, if
The PREFACE.

if this short Vindication of our most Blessed Religion might meet with their and all other good Men's Approbation; especially seeing what we have produc'd in this Argument, is not design'd to supersede, or to evacuate what is writ by other Pens, but to add a fresh Weight and Moment to the Evidence already all'd, in the Defence of so Great and so Divine a Truth, as that of our Common Christianity.

I shall only farther in this Section desire my Reader's Leave, to subjoin, to the end these Papers may not suffer by the meaness and unworthines of the Author, that they have been communicated to some of my Friends, who are capable of judging, and who in the main encourag'd the Publication of them.

§. 16. To conclude, If what is here offer'd can be of any Service to the World, or can do the least good either in confirming Men in their most Holy Faith, or reducing them to it: I earnestly request in the first place, my Reader will pay his pious Acknowledgments to the Memory of the most Excel-
The PREFACE.

Excellent Mr. Robert Green, formerly Mercer in Tamworth, my Dearest and most Honoured Father, to whose Affectionate and Religious Education and Instructions, which I receiv'd from Him, in the Principles of our Divine Christianity, next to God's Blessing and Assistance, these Discourses are chiefly owing; a Person, who for his exemplary and singular Piety towards God, his stedfast and unshakeExpectations of the Happiness of another World, thro' the Merits and Mediation of our Lord, and his humble and charitable Behaviour and Deportment towards all; who for his Sobriety, Temperance and Meekness, and all the Ornaments of a truly Holy and Christian Life, as by what instances we have seen of the best Men in the present Age, he seems not to be imitated, by those who shall succeed him, so we cannot but think he was not to be parallel'd by any that went before him, since the times of the Apostles, and the very first Foundation of our Religion itself; nor, however extraordinary, is this a Character too great with those few who knew him;
The PREFACE.

him; and whose Name therefore ought to be entitled to a just Mention in these Papers; in which if there is any thing good or truly valuable, I may in a Literal sense almost say, He being dead, yet speaketh.

I cannot but likewise here remember, with the greatest Testimony of Respect and Duty, the Reverend Mr. John Pretty, Rector of Farley near Winchester, my most Honoured Patron and Uncle; by whose Generosity and Kindness, upon the Death of my Father, I have formerly been assisted in my Maintenance in this University; and altho' he desires out of his abundant Piety and Goodness, to be conceal'd from the Publick, my extraordinary and excessive Obligations to him, will not suffer me to pass over in silence a Name so dear to me.

These are they, to whom, if to any one my Reader is oblig'd; and therefore he will pardon me when I desire his affectionate Remembrance of them, if the least Benefit or Advantage should accrue to him from a Perusal of what is here writ, having no Demands as to what concerns my self, unless those of his Ingenuity and Candour.
A DEMONSTRATION OF THE Truth and Divinity OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

16. All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.

17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works.

DISCOURSE I.

§ 1. HAVING a design in these Religious Exercises, which the Authority of our Pious Founders has prescrib'd, to treat of the Holy Scriptures, and to go as far as we can in a Plain and Natural Interpretation of them; it seem'd very reasonable in the first place to speak of them at large, and to consider both
A Demonstration of the Divinity
both the Authority, and the Nature and Intention of 'em: upon which account we have made choice of the Words of the Blessed Apostle St. Paul, All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God; under which Head we shall examine into

First, The Authority of these Sacred Writings, both in respect of their Truth and Divinity.

2ly, The same Apostle tells us, That they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; where we shall endeavour to shew the excellent Nature of the Doctrines and Precepts contain'd in 'em. And

Lastly, Explain the Design and meaning of 'em; namely, To make us better, and more holy, to carry us on from a Knowledge to a Performance of our Duty, That the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works. And

First, As to the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

§ 2. The Divine Authority of any Writing must necessarily depend upon its own intrinsic Evidence, or else upon some External Testimony.

There can be only these two ways for the proving any Book, any written Tradition
of the Christian Religion.

dition really Divine, both which we have in the fullest manner that is possible.

§. 3. I shall not here have recourse to that way of proof, which some Men of Controversy have thought fit to make use of; and that is, to evince the Truth of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, and to vindicate 'em from an Imposture, by the Excellency of the Morals they were wrought to confirm; since altho' such a Method of Arguing may be convincing enough to some, yet there are those who will never be persuaded, notwithstanding all the Distinctions we can make to evade the Objection, that if the Truth of Miracles is to be demonstrated by the Morals they assert, there was any occasion for Miracles at all. And indeed upon a very plausible, and I'm afraid a very good Reason; because, if the Morality of any Doctrine is sufficient to make an extraordinary Action or Performance Divine or Miraculous, it will be likewise capable of stamping the same Character upon any Extraordinary or Mysterious Doctrine too; and by this means all Miracles will be set aside, as useless and insignificant to the proving of those Mysteries, for which, they say, they were primarily design'd, and we shall be reduc'd to no other Religion, than what plain Nature dictates
A Demonstration of the Divinity to us. I mention this the rather, since I find it is chiefly the Moralists and Socinians in Divinity who chuse to argue in this way; and that others, who notwithstanding they mean well, submit too easily and tamely to their Opinions.

§. 4. Besides, I would ask, Whether an Impostor cannot lay down good Moral Rules for our Conduct? 'Tis evident several Heathens, and Pythagoras in particular has done it in his ἐπί Αριστ, whom I more especially name, upon the account of Apollonius Tyanaeus, who was an Impostor, and one of his Disciples and Followers; and consequently it is a Natural Power and Faculty, which any one may have, who do's but enjoy his Reason; as Morality is indeed only several Deductions from it. If therefore an Impostor may work Miracles, by the Power of the Devil, and may propose to the World a Rational and Pious Doctrine, by the force of his own Mind, which is suppos'd to be the case of Tyanaeus, how can the Goodness and Reasonableness of any Doctrine be an Argument for the Divinity of any Action? Which, after all we can say, must receive its Denomination from its own Nature, and from nothing else, by what we can at present apprehend.
§. 5. I know our Blessed Saviour's Words are produc'd on this occasion, and it is alledg'd, that he appeals to his Doctrine to justify his Miracles; that he says, *A Kingdom divided against it self cannot stand*; and if by Beelzebub he casts out Devils, he asks, *By whom their children cast 'em out?* To all which the answer is very obvious and plain, that he equally insists upon the *Divinity* of his Doctrine, not the bare *Morality* of it, with that of his Miracles; and if the Extraordinary Wonders he wrought were not able to convince 'em, it was very just for 'em at the same time to consider, whether *he did not speak as never any man yet spake.*

§. 6. We shall therefore proceed in a different way from what others have done, and endeavour to shew,

*First,* The Divine Authority of the Scriptures from External Testimony, independent of, and separate from their Internal. And

*Secondly,* From their Internal Testimony, distinct and abstracted from the External; from the Majesty and Greatness of the Doctrines they comprehend, as superior to any thing else, but the Divine Character and Authority with which they are invested.

We
We shall begin with the External Testimony, which consists of two parts, the Humane and Divine.

§. 7. The Humane Testimony, which we have for the Truth of these Sacred Oracles of our Religion, we shall first consider, and on which, at this distance of Time, the Divine, I mean, the External, must of necessity be founded; for it will be impossible for us to know there was one Miracle wrought, one dead Person rais’d to Life, unless from the Assurance and Observations of those who were Eyewitnesses of it. Let us therefore enquire what it is that is requisite to the making any Humane Testimony infallible, in the present circumstances of time and place so remote from us, and then examine whether we have not all the Demonstration that is possible in our case, for the certainty of these Holy Writings.

§. 8. There is nothing therefore more requir’d to make such an Evidence indisputable, than the Veracity of the Attesters, and a continu’d succession of ’em from the earliest Times, from the very Times in which these Books were wrote: If the Authority of ’em has been constantly maintain’d from their first being publish’d, thro’ all the Ages of the Church, and
of the Christian Religion.

and by Men whose Fidelity and Credit we have no manner of Reason to suspect; there cannot be any thing more that we wou'd desire for our Satisfaction in this point.

§. 9. But before we enter upon this Argument, we shall take the liberty to complain of the Hardship that is put upon us, by the Opposers of our Religion, in requiring a Proof of the Authentickness of those Books, which stand as clear from any just Reproach of their being falsify'd, as any other Book or Author whatsoever, whose Reputation they are yet willing to vindicate, and you'd take it amiss, if we shou'd dispute it with 'em.

Let us instance in Cicero, Sallust, Livy or any of the Writers of the Age, in which, or at no great distance from it, these Books were penn'd; is it not a little monstrous that Men, who shall read and be conversant with these Authors, shall take them to be of undoubted Authority, and fully acquiesce in them, that they shou'd cavil against these Scriptures we defend, which in all Reason and Sense have the same right to be thought Authentick and Genuine, which were writ about the same time, and whose Authors have nothing more lies against 'em than the Writers we have men-

A 4 tion'd,
§ 10. And since the whole Issue of this matter is in reality upon that foot, give me Leave to put the Authors we have nam'd in the same Circumstances with the Holy Apostles and Evangelists of our Lord, and enquire however Authentick they are now acknowledg'd to be by our Opposers, whether they would not fall under the same or a greater necessity of a Vindication from them, which they yet endeavour to oblige upon us in respect of the Holy Scriptures. Had Tully, Livy or any of the Ancient Writers in Rhetorick or History, struck at the Foundations of a Worship and Superstition, which had possed all Mens Minds, by which thousands and those of the subtillest and acutest parts, and consequently who would be the severest and worst Enemies, were supported and maintain'd, on which the Roman, that powerful Empire, was in a manner establish'd, and with which at least it was strictly united and interwoven; had any of 'em done this, which the Blessed Evangelists and Apostles actually did, shou'd not we have had their Writings and Works every where decry'd, Exceptions rais'd against 'em, and a hundred Arguments contriv'd, and little
of the Christian Religion. 9

little Falshoods invented to overturn and
sink the Credit and Reputation of 'em?
'tis in some sort necessary to Human Na-
ture, and therefore we may conclude
they wou'd have met with such a Treat-
ment.

§. 11. But what shall we say, when
without any such Provocation there have
Wits started up, who have in fact endea-
voir'd to prove 'em Spurious, and that
there is not one Genuine piece of Anti-
quity of all those so much celebrated a-
mongst us, excepting Virgil and Pliny,
and I think, one or two more; when
Men of Learning and Sagacity can thus
wanton in Argument, and can take a
Pleasure in Criticizing away the Author-
ity of a Writer, out of a meer Humor
of Dallying, what may we conceive they
wou'd not have done, had they been
whetted on by Rersetment? Provocation
sharpens the Understanding, and supplies
it with abundance of Wit to Cavil and
Object, and it is hard to say, whether, in
such Circumstances, the best and most ap-
prov'd amongst the Greek and Roman
Authors, wou'd not have lain under other
Suspicions of being forg'd, than at pre-
fent they do.

On the contrary, in these very Cir-
cumstances, the Holy Scriptures have stood
the
A Demonstration of the Divinity

the Shock of innumerable Adversaries, and
are still untainted in their Reputation,
amidst the unjust Reproaches of Both
Jews and Heathens, who wou'd have
found their Account in it, if it had been
possible for 'em, by any means, to have
invalidated their Testimony, and explo-
ded 'em out of the World.

§. 12. We only mention this, to shew
the Unreasonableness of this Request,
since it, at the same time all things con-
sider'd, obliges those who make it, to ju-
stify and prove the Authority of any
Classick Writer they can name, which
ev'ry body, as well as themselves, owns
to be good and indisputable; and yet
perhaps wou'd be difficult enough to e-
vince by Positive and Direct Arguments,
and of which Demand therefore we
might very deservedly complain; but
since Complaints are of no use with
those, who, it is to be fear'd, are before-
hand prepar'd not to regard 'em, we shall
proceed from several Particulars to evi-
dence the Truth and Authority of the
Books of Holy Scripture; so as we hope
there will be no room left in the leaft to
doubt of 'em.

§. 13. And first, the Human Testimo-
ny that we have for 'em is altogether ir-
resistible,
resistible, down from the Council of La-
odicea, which was held about the Year
365 from our Lord's Incarnation, where-
in the Canon of Scripture was fully af-
ferted; and from thence was read in all Churches, cited on all occasions, and ap-
peal'd to in all Controversies of Faith and Doctrine, to the present Time we live in: I speak of the Canon of Scrip-
ture in General, for, as to the several Books of which it is compos'd, some of
which had a later Reception in the Church of Christ than others; we shall consider them apart, when we come to speak more distinctly to 'em; but from the Council of Laodicea, there is, I say, such invin-
cible Evidence for their Authentickness,
by the multitude of Quotations from them
in all Ecclesiastical Writers, down thro' ev'ry Age from that Time, and I had al-
most said ev'ry part of an Age, that there
is not any Book extant which is capable
of so entire a Proof of its not being sup-
possitious, as the Holy Scriptures are; and
this, so far as this Council goes, the moft
Inveterate of our Enemies will not dif-
own. Other Authors, unless such as are
of the first Class, (and they too in some
measur'e) depend upon a kind of Oral
Tradition for their Credit and Repute of
being Genuine; nothing of which is want-
ing in our Case, whatever the Romanists
may
A Demonstration of the Divinity

may pretend. The Authority of the Scriptures is sufficiently prov'd by the Written Tradition of the Church; and it wou'd not be hard, however laborious it might be, to trace 'em up by it almost thro' every the minutest period of Time to that Council.

§. 14. If we go back 40 Years to the first Oecumenical Synod in 325, we have express Passages cited out of these Sacred Writings in the 2d, 12th and 17th Canons, the Scriptures are appeal'd to by Name, and those Practises condemn'd which were contrary to them: from whence it is evident, there was then a Standard of Holy Writ fixt, which serv'd as a Rule, by which they might judge of the Rectitude or Pravity of their Actions, and their Conformity or Repugnance to the Religion they own'd. But that this Rule was the same in the main Parts of it with that which was afterwards defin'd by the Fathers of Laodicea, any Rational Man must conclude, unless he can assign upon what account the first Epistle to Timothy, which is there quoted, shou'd be more Genuine than the rest.

African and a Donatist, put out a Book against the Catholicks, as Traditors or Betrayers of the Holy Scriptures, to the Enemies of Christianity. About 334, Theodorus Bishop of Heraclea in Thrace, publish'd his Commentaries on St. Matthew and St. John, and on St. Paul's Epistles. About 325, the very Time of the First General Council, James a Bishop in Mesopotamia, and who was a strong Asserter of the Faith in that Council, wrote a Book to prove the Real Advent of our Lord, from the sole Authority of the Scriptures.

And lastly, Eusebius, at or before the same Council, writ his Eclogae upon the whole Scriptures, his Commentaries upon the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and concerning the Disagreement of the Holy Evangelists; than whom there is no one who more diligently enquir'd into, or more perfectly understood the Antiquity and Authentickness of the Sacred Writings.

§. 16. It wou'd be endless to mention the numerous Citations from them, by St. Athanasius and the Fathers that writ in those Times; it is sufficient for our Purpose, that by the Passages we have given in Ecclesiastical History, several parts of 'em were commented upon, that Persons were accus'd for betraying of 'em; that
A Demonstration of the Divinity that Books were wrote, and disputed upon their Authority; and that there was not the Interval of above 10 Years, when one or other of these were not done, from the Council of Laodicea up to the Council of Nice: Is it therefore imaginable, or can any one reconcile it to his Sense, that the Decisions of the Fathers of the one, was not agreeable to the Apprehensions and Thoughts of those of the other; and that the Canon of Laodicea was not in the Principal and Eminent Books of it, the same with the Nicene, since the Times betwixt those two Councils give us a great many particulars of the Canon of Laodicea, and speak of the Scriptures as collected into a Body, and which the Council of Nice it self does? Either therefore the Council of Laodicea was before that of Nice, or if it was after, as all the World knows, it is evident the Canon of the former must depend upon the Authority and Sense of the latter.

§. 17. But all this we have said will à fortiori be true, if we prove that the very same Canon of Scripture, with that of Laodicea, was decreed and establish'd long before the Council of Nice; which is manifest from the 85th Apostolical Canon, whose Authority the late Learned Bishop of St. Asaph has evinc'd beyond Exception.
That Canon expressly names the several Books recited by the Council of Laodicea, and differs in nothing as to the New Testament, but in adding the Constitutions of Clemens, and his Acts of the Apostles, which the other rejects; and in rejecting the Epistle of St. Jude, which the other receives. And in all probability by what the same Learned Person alledges, this Canon was made a 100 Years at least before the first General Council.

§ 18. If this however is not sufficient Evidence, we have an undoubted Testimony from Origen, who wrote about the same time; and who in a manner seems to have been rais’d, by the Wonderful Providence of Almighty God, to be a Witness of the Canon that was then universally receiv’d. Besides his Homilies upon the Old Testament, which we do not consider at present, Antiquity has left us either actual Monuments or positive Records of his Comments upon the Four Evangelists, upon the Acts of the Apostles, upon St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, his First to the Corinthians, upon his Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, his First to the Thessalonians, upon his Epistle to Titus, upon his Epistle to the Hebrews, and a Promise of his expounding the Revelations.

This
This great Man was born at Alexandria in 186, and flourish'd about 230; so that it is almost impossible that these Books he employ'd such Industry and Pains upon, shou'd not be at that Time of the greatest Credit and Reputation imaginable in the Christian Church, that they shou'd not be such as were then accounted of unexceptionable Authority.

§ 19. 'Tis true, he does not Comment upon all the Books which were embrac'd by the Council of Laodicea, nor do's he upon the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, by what we know, nor upon the Second to the Thessalonians, which no one however will make any Objections against, as to their Authority, that will not disown the First that were writ to those Churches; tho' it is not improbable but he might have left Homilies upon them too, notwithstanding they are lost to us, because not quoted by St. Jerome, as the other two are; or if not, it is plain he did not leave Discourses and Explanations upon all the Books he design'd, since we have none upon the Revelations, which he promis'd in his Treatise upon St. Matthew. In fine, it is certainly next to a Demonstration that the whole Canon of Laodicea; I still mean in the Chief parts of it, was as early as this Excellent Man
Man, seeing he alone, as we are fully inform'd, went thro' so much of it, and it is not evident but he went thro' all.

§. 20. Since therefore Origen was born in 185, and it is not conceivable that he shou'd spend so much time and labour upon Books that were newly contriv'd, and which had their Birth in or near his own Age; what can we reasonably conclude, unless that they dated their Authority from at least the Age before, which will fall in with that of the Blessed Apostles and Evangelists themselves? And here we shall at present finish our Enquiries, reserving what remains from the times of Origen, to those when these Books were writ, for our following Discourse.
§ 1. In our former Discourse, upon the present Subject, we endeavour'd to prove the Authority of the Holy Scriptures from Humane Testimony, upon which, as we said, the Divine, that was External, did most evidently depend; in consequence of this we trac'd them up from the Council of Laodicea (and from thence the worst of our Adversaries will allow them to be Authentick) to the times of Origen; and one wou'd think there were no farther occasion to pursue the Argument, since the Books that were Sacred, and esteem'd so in his time, cou'd not in all Humane Sense have a later date than the Age of the Apostles.

§ 2. Some, notwithstanding, who are willing to put all on the foot of Reason, and who can easily imagine how Moses shou'd come to know, without any particular Inspiration from Almighty God, the History of the Antedeluvian World, from the first Creation, by a Tradition from Adam to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Sem, from Sem to Abraham, and so to Moses, who lived at least 300 Years after,
after, will scarcely grant us, that it was possible for Origen to judge of what Writings were unquestionable, by the short Tradition only of a 100 Years: We shall go on therefore, and prove that from Origen up to the Apostles, the Canon of Laodicea, was, in the principal parts of it, receive’d and entertain’d by the Church of Christ.

§. 3. I am aware, however, that we must here proceed in a different Method from that which we before propos’d, which was, of shewing, that these Books were generally embrac’d by the Comments made in ev’ry Age upon ’em, of which we find few more Antient than those we have nam’d; the Reason of which is, that Christianity from the times of the Apostles, to those of the Learned Person which we have so often mention’d, was engag’d with the Jewish and Heathen Controversies, and was therefore less at liberty to attend to its own Genuine Productions; the Writings of the holy Apostles and Evangelists, the first Christians knew were secure against all Allegations that cou’d be offer’d to disprove them in those Times, when such Objections might have been confuted at pleasure; and therefore we perceive the Strain of the Authors we are now to consider, is not to vindicate the Scriptures, which
A Demonstration of the Divinity

which were acknowledged, or to explain 'em, since they were perfectly understood.

The Writers of that first Age after the Apostles had nothing to do, but to shew either the Reasonableness of the Christian Doctrine, contain'd in these Sacred Repositories of it, against the Heathens, or to justify the Explanations of the Old Testament, which were brought in proof of our Saviour's being the Messiah, against the Jews, or else to confute the Heresies which were form'd upon the Apostolick Writings; so that instead of Commentaries upon, we must have recourse now only to Citations from them.

§ 4. And first, Clemens of Alexandria particularly distinguishes betwixt the Apocryphal Gospels, extant in his time, and those that were handed down by the Church as Authentick, namely, the four which we now receive. He likewise makes use of several Passages out of 'em, and out of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans, both the Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Ephesians, that to the Philippians, to the Colossians, the First to the Thessalonians, the First to Timothy, to Titus, to the Hebrews, the First Epistle of St. Peter, the Epistle of Jude, and the First Epistle of St.
of the Christian Religion.

St. John, as a late Learned Writer has, with a great deal of Pains and Industry, collected them into one view, which lay scattered up and down, and dispers'd in the Works of that Author. This Person was about 30 or 40 Years before Origen, and flourish'd in 190.

S. 5. Irenæus, who was still earlier than Clemens, by more than 20 Years, quotes the same Epistles and Gospels, which Clemens afterwards did, and moreover the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Second to the Thessalonians. He was the Disciple of Polycarp, whose Character he has taken care to transmit to us, that he was not only instruct'd in the Principles of Christianity by the Apostles, and familiarly convers'd with those who had seen our Blessed Lord, but that he was ordain'd Bishop of Smyrna by them: 'Tis therefore wholly incredible that Irenæus shou'd not be fully inform'd, by so great a Master, that the Books he gave such an ample Testimony to, were of undoubted Authority: As to what respects the Gospels in particular, he tells us, That our Saviour gave the Apostles a power to preach the Gospel, that they by the will and appointment of God deliver'd down in writing this Gospel, which was the Foundation and Pillar of Faith, that they were only four,
A Demonstration of the Divinity
and their number was as fix'd and unalter-
able as the four Cardinal Points of the
World; however Hereticks endeavour'd to
encrease 'em. Theophilus of Antioch also,
who was Contemporary with Irenæus,
wrît certain Commentaries on the Four
Gospels, from which St. Jerome transcri-
bed several Passages into his own; and in
his Conutation of the Heresy of Hermoge-
nes, the same Bishop of Antioch makes use
of the Apocalypse of St. John, to prove the
 Erroneousness of the Opinions he oppos'd.

§. 6. We shall not speak of the several
Forgeries of the Gospels, the Acts, and
St. Paul's Epistles, which were trump't up
in those times by Marcion, the Ebionites,
Valentinus, the Simonians and others,
which are all, notwithstanding, very just
and good Arguments for the truth of
that Canon which we defend, since so
many counterfeit ones swarming every
where, leads us to a very rational Con-
clusion of the high Authority and Value
of the Original, from which they copy'd;
that of Marcion more especially, which
was distinguish'd into Gospels and Epis-
tles, answerable to that of the Orthodox
Christians; but Marcion is plac'd about
the Year 130 or 140, in the same time
with Justin Martyr, and twenty Years
higher than Irenæus.

§. 7. And
§ 7. And since we have mention'd Justin Martyr, we cannot omit the witness he gives likewise to the Canon of Scripture; the Gospels he terms τοις Ἐρευνοις, the Commentaries of our Blessed Lord's Life and Actions, in opposition to the unnatural and imperfect Accounts of him, which were receiv'd by some; he also calls them the Commentaries and Gospels of the Apostles (Καὶ τοῖς Ἐρευνοις Ἡγεμονεύουσα) and of those who attended upon them, suitable to the sense which the Primitive Church had of 'em, that two of them were writ by those Divinely-inspir'd Authors, St. Matthew and St. John, and the other by St. Mark and St. Luke, who were the Companions of St. Peter and St. Paul, and attended on them; and that this was Justin's meaning seems evident from Tertullian, who writ about the time of Clemens of Alexandria, namely in this very Century, and towards the end of it; he expressly says, Constituimus imprimis Evangelicum instrumentum Apostolos Authorum habere, quibus hoc manus Evangelii promulgandi ab ipso Domino sit impostum, which is agreeable to what Irenæus before had said § 5. Apostolis datam fuisse ab omnium Domino Evangelii prædicandi potestatem, ipsos per Dei voluntatem Evangelia scriptis tradidisse: Tertullian goes on, Marcus quod edidit, Petri
A Demonstration of the Divinity affirmatur, cujus interpres Marcus, & Luca Digestum Paulo adscribere solent; which exactly corresponds with the sense of Justin: Justin farther cites several places out of the Gospels, and tells us, that some part or other of 'em was publickly read every Week in the Churches of the Christians, together with the Writings of Moses and the Prophets.

§. 8. And if we had nothing of all this from that famous Apologist, the Gospels are sufficiently prov'd from the Diatesaron of Tatian, a Scholar of Justin's, which was nothing else than a compendious History of our Lord's Actions, compiled and digested from the Four Evangelists; tho' indeed with the omission of the Genealogy of Christ, which is charg'd upon him, as done upon the account of his being of the Valentinian Heresy, which deriv'd our Saviour from certain imaginary Aëons of its own Invention and Contriving. 'Tis true, Justin makes no mention of the Epistles, because it is probable he had no occasion to do it; however he gives a very significant Character of the Authority of the Revelations; the Credit of which Book, notwithstanding, was constantly acknowledg'd to be in no respect superiour, if we say no more, to that of the others of which he is silent, παγ' ἡμιν, says he ἄριστος ὁ Ὀ-

vosa.
of the Christian Religion. can any one therefore persuade himself, that Justin shou'd speak with that Veneration and Esteem of the Revelations, and not have at least the same value for Writings, which always possessed both before and after his time an equal Repute with them in the Church of God.

§. 9. And now we are at length come to the Age of the Apostles, where Polycarp in his Epistle to the Philippians, in the Year 115 or 116, cites certain places from the Acts, from the first Epistle of St. Peter, and the first Epistle of St. John; and therefore we may justly presume, if those were accounted to be Authentick by him, the Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles were so too; the former since the Canon of the Gospels was precedent to that of the Epistles, and the latter since St. Peter himself makes mention of 'em; nor indeed, as it appears by an Eminent Person, whose Authority we may rely on, tho' he brings no Instances of it, are there Quotations wanting from St. Paul's Epistles in the Writings of this early as well as Blessed Martyr.

§. 10. Lastly, to sum up all, the Scriptures were originally divided into the Evangelick
A Demonstration of the Divinity

lick and Epistolick or Apostolick Canon; the first contain'd the Gospels, and the last the Epistles: as to the Gospels all the History and Tradition of the Church agree, in fixing the Collection of 'em into one Canon betwixt 90 and 100 by St. John; the same History and Tradition tell us, that the Gospel of that Apostle was writ by him at the request of the Asiatick Bishops, and was added as a Supplement to the rest, in order to compleat the Evangelick Canon, which from thence was universally receiv'd and publickly read in all the Christian Assemblies. The Epistolick or Apostolick Canon was not much later, it was evidently before the Heresv of Marcion, which had its rise in 127, since he divides his Books into the Εὐαγγελίων and Αποστολίων, or the Gospel and Epistles, in imitation of the Canon which was then acknowledg'd.

§. 11. But that which sets the whole Canon, both of the Epistles and Gospels, as high as it is capable of being put, and which carries it up to the very times of the Apostles within ten Years, is the Testimony which we can never sufficiently value of St. Ignatius, and which the Incomparable Dr. Grabe has produc'd to the Learned World, out of the Epistle to the Philadelphians, whose words are ἐγγογγυ-
of the Christian Religion. 27

That these Epistles are genuine has been evidenc'd beyond contradiction, by the Famous Dr. Hammond against Blondel, and by the Celebrated Bishop of Chester against Dathie, and all the Objections of our Modern Sectaries; as to what concerns St. Ignatius himself, he suffer'd Martyrdom under Trajan, about the Year 115 or 116, and writ his Epistles as he was passing thro' Smyrna and Troas to Rome, in order to receive his glorious Crown the End and Triumph of his Faith, and his most holy Confession, which he seal'd and testify'd with his Blood. 'Tis reported of him, that he was the Young Child which Jesus took up in his Arms, and that from thence he deriv'd his Name of Σκηπτρος; however tho' this is demonstrated to be a Fable by the Learned Pearson, it is yet a confirmation of the exceeding
A Demonstration of the Divinity ing Primitiveness of this Author, since such a Romance cou’d not, with any appearance of truth, be contriv’d and forg’d concerning him, if Antiquity had not known him to have been contemporary with, that is, to have liv’d in some part of that time in which our Blessed Lord was upon the Earth. Moreover it is agreed he was advanc’d to the See of Antioch by St. Peter, that he maintain’d a particular familiarity and intimacy with the Apostles, and receiv’d his Informations in the Christian Religion from them.

§ 13. If therefore the Gospels and Epistles were form’d into a Canon presently after a 100, it is altogether improbable; and it will be the hardest thing in the world to believe, that the Books themselves were not writ the Age immediately preceding, and by those Apostles whose Names they are distinguish’d by; the First, to wit, that they had their Date in the times of the Apostles is evident, and as to the Last, if Books cou’d be penn’d whilst the Apostles were living, and with their Names affixt to’em when they were not their own, if they cou’d be sent about to all places, as it is plain they were from the first Epistle to the Corinthians, \( \text{ἐπιστολὴν \ τοῖς Κορινθίοις} \) and \( \text{οἱ πάντες τῷ τῷ} \), so as to impose upon the whole community of Chri-
Christians, when, notwithstanding, these very Apostles went about visiting and confirming the Churches, and consequently had continual opportunities of obviating such Forgeries, if this could be done, then nothing appears to be impossible not to be done; for surely if there is any absurdity, this is one, that for instance the Epistles to the Corinthians, (and the same may be said of the rest,) should be receiv’d by that and the other Christian Churches for St. Paul’s, tho’ they were none of his, when notwithstanding he was either present in Person to these Churches, or by those whom he commission’d to inspect and to take care of ’em; since we must suppose in such a case, that either the Corinthians industriously conceal’d these Epistles from him, which went under his Name, (for which they could have no reason, whether they believ’d them to be his or not;) or that St. Paul was willing to subscribe to the Imposture, and set his own Seal upon a Book which he was conscious to himself he never writ, which is not at least very natural for us to think he wou’d. On the contrary, if it is really impossible that Books, which were written in the times of the Apostles, with their Names prefix’d to ’em, shou’d be receiv’d by the Christian Churches, if they were not genuine, since the Canon mention’d by...
A Demonstration of the Divinity
by St. Ignatius, as to what respects the
New Testament, is already prov'd to have
been writ in the Age of the Apostles;
the collected in his own, and since the
Books of that Canon are put out under
their Names, 'tis evident to a Demon-
stration, that they must be and were in-
dited by the Apostles themselves.

And thus we have gone thro' the first
part of our Argument from Humane Te-
stimony, which was to shew a constant
Succession of Witnesses in all Ages of the
Church to these Sacred Writings, even
up to the Apostles, and from thence to
evince, that they were the certain and un-
doubted Authors of those Books, of which
they have been hitherto reputed and es-
est was to be.

§. 14. And now let us make a short Pause,
and reflect on the good Providence of
God in preserving these Records, and
these faithful Monuments of the Truth
and Authentickness of the Scriptures,
had the Acts of the Council of Laodicea,
or the Works of Origen, or Clemens, or
Irenæus, or the Apostolical Canons been
fatally lost to us, how had we in a great
measure fail'd in convincing our Adver-
saries by this way of Proof, which per-
haps they wou'd chiefly require, that the
Scriptures were not some Pious Frauds
of
of the Roman See, to subdue us to its Prescriptions and Obedience, as everything now a days which carries any appearance of Religion with it, is too fatally and cruelly branded with the odious Names of Popery and Superstition: I tremble to think what the Barbarity and Fury of one of those many Northern Nations, which fell into the Roman Empire, might have done in this particular, how easy had it been for one of 'em to have swept off at once, by a universal Deluge of Paganism and Ignorance, all the Histories of former Times, and the best and most valuable Memoirs of the Christian Church? must we therefore have disbelieve'd the Scriptures? We shou'd yet even then have had as much Evidence for their being Genuine, as we have for other Authors, whose Credit was never in any respect disputed by Wise or Prudent Men: namely this, That they were receiv'd down thro' all Ages, from their first being writ, for such as we now acknowledge 'em, since there cou'd have been no time assign'd, without a manifest absurdity, when they were impos'd upon the World, and the Cheat shou'd not have been immediately discover'd.

§. 15. Our Adversaries will, I presume, allow this impracticable in Learning, in putting
A Demonstration of the Divinity

putting a false Roman Poet or Historian upon us; and there is altogether the same or more reason to think, and believe it so in Religion; for we will only take one Principle for granted, That there has been a Body or Community of Christians ever since the first Foundation of our Religion, in some measure answerable to what there is now; we will therefore suppose, that down from the Apostles to this time we had receiv'd our Christianity by Tradition only, that no Scriptures were transmitted to us, and that there shou'd now come out several Epistles and Gospels, under the Apostles Names, can we imagine the World (unless there were some innate Characters of their Truth and Divinity, which indeed these have, as we shall afterwards shew) can we imagine the World wou'd receive 'em for Authentick? And what reason is there for us to believe that any other Community of Christians wou'd do what we wou'd not, unless perhaps that we reckon our selves wiser than all those that have been before us, and take a pride in valuing our own Cautiousness and Sagacity, in preference to that of all Mankind besides; which at least is not the best Mark of that wonderful Discretion and Prudence we wou'd seem to assert to our selves. All Ages as well as Persons, have laid some Claim or other
to their being Wife; and if the present has the truest Title to it, I am apt to think it is upon no other account, than because the preceding are gone, and are not here to contest it with 'em; but if former Ages and Communities of Christians had as good a share of Sense, as the present is suppos'd to have, since it is granted, we should not be so grobly deluded, as to receive Writings for genuine which were never heard of before our own time; why shou'd we surmise or conclude that others wou'd, if those Writings were not so?

§. 16. However, we have no occasion for this Argument, which is the principal Basis of the Authority of other Books, (God be thank'd, and such is his good Providence) it is not one nor the frequent irruptions of several Barbarous Nations, nor even of the Saracens themselves, those implacable Enemies of Christianity, which have been able to despooil us of such mighty and invincible Testimonies to the Truth of the Scriptures; that if we can persuade our selves to wink against the Light and Force they carry with them, we may refuse to see, or perceive either in the Beams of the Sun.

In fine, there is all the Evidence for the Holy Scriptures, that ever was for the Authority of a Book; and a great deal
Section 17. 'Tis true, as we come nearer to the Time in which the Scriptures were wrote, these Quotations are rarer, as Streams grow less the higher they approach to their Fountains, for it can't be suppos'd, that the Apostles wou'd make much use of each others Writings, who were furnish'd with Inspirations of their own, or that those who immediately succeeded them wou'd, who had been fully instructed in the Lively Oracles of God, by the Apostles in person, and by consequence were in some sort inspir'd by them, and therefore had no occasion to have recourse to their Writings for Doctrines, which they had receiv'd from them by a more immediate Infusion; and thus much for the present.

Section 18. We have hitherto spoke concerning the constant Succession of Witnesses to the Sacred Canon, which we said was one requisite to make a Humane Testimony certain, the other was the Veracity of the Attesters, which we shall next consider.
Discourse III.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§ 1. In those Discourses we have already had upon the Truth of the Holy Oracles of our Religion, we have brought the Argument concerning the Validity of the Scriptures thus far, namely, we have proved a continued Series of Attestations to the Truth and Genuineness of them, which was the first thing required to make any Humane Testimony, in such a case as this, which we at present consider, certain and infallible: The second is the veracity of the Attesters; Eusebius, Origen, Clemens, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, Polycarp, St. Ignatius, and the rest, of whom we may presume to say, that they have at least an equal Claim to a Reputation of Integrity with any other Writers.

§ 2. But farther, that they were Men of undoubted Probity, is evident from their being ready, some of 'em, as St. Ignatius and Polycarp, to suffer the last extremities of Pain and Torture, and even Death itself, for the Faith which they professed; and others, as Eusebius, Clemens, Origen and Irenæus, to undergo the greatest
A Demonstration of the Divinity
greatest Fatigues, and the severest and
most laborious Studies, that they might
be able to transmit a true Account of Chris-
tianity to succeeding Ages. This looks
like Persons that were serious and in Ear-
nest, and we have no reason to imagine
they wou'd deceive and abuse us, since
that might have been done at a much
cheaper rate; besides, Study on the one
hand, or on the other Afflictions and Ca-
lamities, and a prospect of Death ap-
proaching, naturally induce a kind of
Austerity into our Minds, and forcibly
incline us neither to speak nor act any thing
but what is sincere, and agreeable to the
Rules of Truth and Sobriety, and will
scarcely leave us at liberty to entertain the
very Thoughts of trifling, and imposing
upon others; so that if we consult the
natural Temper and Disposition of Men,
which is always necessary in certain stated
Circumstances, it is altogether improbable,
that those who were in these, which we
have describ'd, and who are the Asserters
of the Sacred Canon, shou'd be even so
much as capable of an Imposture, not to
add their continual Mortifications and
Self-denials, and the Persecutions to which
they were constantly subject, which wou'd
certainly teach them other Lessons, than
those of Intrigue and Insincerity. It is
likewise remarkable, that the earliest Wri-
ters
ters of the Primitive Church, and the first
and most strenuous Advocates of Christianity and the Scriptures, were those who had been train'd up in the Rudiments and Discipline of the Heathen Philosophy, as Dionysius of Athens, Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Athenagoras, and Origen; which as it did not usually prepare Men to receive and embrace either Writings as Authentick, or Articles of Faith as certain Truths, with too great a Fondness and Credulity, so it render'd them less capable of imposing upon others, what they had not the best and most powerful Reasons imaginable to be convinc'd of; I say, less capable, both in respect of that Impartiality and Integrity of Mind, which Philosophy for the most part introduces, and that Accuracy and Exactness of Judgment which attends it.

§ 3. However, cou'd we suppose they had admitted of an Intention to deliver down to us a false Scripture, it wou'd have been wholly impracticable here, unless they had done it by an unanimous Consent, and by proper Measures concerted amongst them; which how they cou'd be taken by those who liv'd in different Ages, and at several Years distance from each other, will be hard to conceive: If there were no such Measures contriv'd or enter'd
ter'd into, then each single Witness to the Sacred Canon, wou'd find himself under a plain Necessity of giving in a true and impartial Testimony to it, if he design'd any at all; since otherwise he must not expect it wou'd stand long, which in all probability wou'd have been contradicted and refuted by the next; and it is Matter of Fact, that this was the case, that they gave in an impartial Testimony to the Sacred Canon, since they all agree in their Evidence to these Writings; and seeing such an Evidence cou'd not be form'd and projected, and laid together before-hand, where Persons liv'd in distant times and places, that Harmony and Agreement cou'd be nothing but the effect and result of Truth, which will be the same in all Ages and Climates, and which alone cou'd unite Men remote and unacquainted, in the Affirmation of the same Thing. And this is the sum of that External Proof which Christianity and its Records afford us, for the Holy Canon of the Evangelists and Apostles, and indeed, to a truly sincere and unprejudiced Mind, there can be nothing fuller for our Conviction.

§ 4. It has pleas'd Almighty God, notwithstanding, to imprint such innate Characters of Integrity on these Writings, and to set such plain and distinguishing Marks upon
upon them of their being Genuine, that we might very justly collect the Validity of them, from the several Passages they contain, which we call their Internal Testimony; and which added still to the External, will set the Evidence we have for their Authority as high as it is possible, and I am apt to believe will make the whole amount to no less than a Demonstration. The Arguments taken, from the Nature of any Writings, must either concern the Stile or Method, or the Matter and Subject of ’em; and, God be prais’d, there is not one of these which does not furnish us with sufficient Evidence for the asserting the Truth and Validity of the Holy Scriptures.

§. 5. The First Argument we shall consider, is drawn from the Stile and Expression of these Books, which is such as abundantly shews the Innocence and Integrity, with which they were wrote, and that they were not Men of Artifice and Design who penn’d ’em; for if Truth is to be measur’d by the Plainness and Simplicity of the Relations, there is nothing more Eminent and Conspicuous than that in every part of these Writings, so that they seem to have an Eye to nothing but a Punctual and Faithful Delivery of Matter of Fact, and are altogether
§ 6. Thus in St. Matthew, Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him; But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness: Then he suffer'd him. I give this only as an Instance of the Sincerity and Plainness of the Holy Writers, tho' there are a Multitude of other Places which confirm the same Character, or rather the whole Tenour of the Scriptures are in the same Strain, and shew that they were regardless of every thing, excepting what was really said or done, and to give a true and succinct Account of it, without any labour'd Stile or premeditated Expressions: But where there is a Negligence of the outward Dress or Fashion in Writings, 'tis strongly to be presum'd there is something more substantial within to make amends for that, which in comparison is slighted and disregarded; and consequently that the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord thought Truth so Beautiful.
ful and Amiable in it self, and encompass'd with such bright and shining Excellencies, that it did not require any Fineness of Speech, or any Embellishments of Stile and Eloquence to adorn and recommend it.

S. 7. Secondly, The Second Argument we shall use to justify the Truth of these Writings, is from the Inaccurateness of the Narrations as to Time and Order, and the seeming Contradictions in them: St. Matthew says, An Angel from Heaven roll'd away the Stone from the Sepulchre, sat upon it, and spake to the Women that came thither: St. Mark makes this Divine Apparition to be, A young Man, cloth'd in a long white garment, and sitting within the Sepulchre, whom the Women perceiv'd at their first entrance into it: St. Luke describes 'em to be two Men in shining Garments, and which came and stood by the Women, after they were come into the Sepulchre; and began to be under some perplexity upon not finding the Body of Our Lord, in the place where they expected it to have been. Lastly, St. John's Account is of Two Angels that sat within the Sepulchre, and which were seen by Mary, not after her entrance into it, but upon her stooping down, and looking in. These various and differing Relations center in this, That there was a wonderful Angelick Appear-
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Appearance at the Resurrection of Our Lord, which by the fright those were in, who saw the Vision, cou'd not be so perfectly describ'd to others; and the disagreeing in the Circumstances of it, is a Proof of the Sincerity of the Historians; for had they (we speak in general,) had they all deliver'd the very same things, without any Variation, their Exactness in ev'ry minute particular might have been interpreted a Contrivance, and they wou'd not have been without suspicions of having writ by Concert; but now that they are Unanimous in the most Material Points of their History, and seem to clash and interfere in some Incidents only, which are not essential to the Account: Their departing from each other in those inferior Matters, gives a mighty addition of Evidence to those greater and more important in which they agree: For, I say, we speak in general, and what is said of this Passage in respect to the Resurrection, is applicable to all others we find of the like Nature, where there appears to be any dissent as to Time or Place amongst the Holy Writers, which are only Circumstances that are indifferent, and do not enter into the Nature of the Actions themselves. For seeing the Design of the Scriptures was to instruct us in the Doctrines of Christianity, and to inform us of
of the Wonders done by our Blessed Lord, it is not any ways necessary for us to know either the very point of Time or the Critical Place, when and where the one was deliver'd, or the other perform'd, since there is no accession from thence to their own proper Excellence and Divinity.

§ 8. And consequently it is a vain and unthrifty piece of Learning, to endeavour to make the History of our Saviour's Actions nothing less than plain and direct Annals; 'tis on the contrary more agreeable to suppose they were Occasional Memoirs, writ in several places, and with several views; that the Holy Spirit of God led the Blessed Evangelists into all necessary Truths, for the Propagation of the Christian Faith and Religion; but that for other Matters it pleas'd the Divine Wisdom, that they shou'd not be infallible, that even those circumstantial Errors and Mistakes might be an Advantage to the real Truths, which they propounded to the World; for let us consider what opinion we shou'd have probably had of the Gospels, if they had all of 'em been writ, in the same Order, and in the very same Words and Expressions; what shou'd any of us have concluded, unless that they transcript from each other, and that the Evidence of all of 'em together was no more
more than that of one single Evangelist. On the other hand, when we perceive 'em to differ in their Expressions, and not only so, but in other Matters likewise, which are of as little Importance, we have all the reason in the world to believe that these Gospels were writ by Persons who did not consult or transcribe from each other, and that they are true, as to what concerns our Faith and Belief as Christians upon that account, since abstracting from their Expression and other foreign Circumstances, which signify nothing to the Matter contain'd in them, and notwithstanding they were apparently penned by Men, who were not conscious to each others Designs, yet they very punctually agree in the Salutary Doctrines, and in the Miraculous Actions they propose to our Assent.

§. 9. Having consider'd the Stile and Method of these Writings, and what Arguments do naturally arise to us from them, for their Truth and Sincerity; the next we shall examine, is the Subject Matter of 'em: And first, if we give our selves leave to observe in reading of these Holy Writings, there are some Passages of History express'd in them so very minute and singular, and which are so peculiarly adapted to those Times, in which they are suppos'd
pos'd to have been first extant, that we cannot but think they are so many Evidence of the Scriptures being writ in them: As for instance, the reason of John the Baptist's being beheaded upon Herodias's Daughter dancing before Herod, and the Oath which that Prince made upon it, the Reconciling of Herod and Pilate, upon our Saviour's being sent from the one to the other, the Slaying of the Children in Bethlehem, &c. Which part of History is justifying'd, by that Famous Saying of Augustus, that he had rather be Herod's Swine than his Son, who was suppos'd to have fallen in that Universal Massacre: As to the Epistles, all the Historical Passages contain'd in 'em do so exactly agree with the times, in which they are conceiv'd to be wrote, and with the Acts of the Apostles, that we need only to compare them with each other, to evince that they must receive their Birth and Origine from the Hands and Age of the Apostles. But this will be more fully evident, when we come to consider the several Epistles themselves.

§ 10. In the mean time, the Places we have recited out of the Gospels are either Historical Matters entirely forg'd and counterfeited, or else genuine Proofs of the true Age and Authority of the Sacred Writings; if the first, it is contrary to the
A Demonstration of the Divinity
the Plainness and Simplicity as well as Sincerity of 'em, which we have already confirm'd; if that notwithstanding has not been done, the Testimony of Augustus, in one particular at least, as is before alledged, wants still to be confuted: And lastly, if neither that is yet valid, these must be acknowledg'd to be Forgeries without a Design, and from which the Authors cou'd not propose anything for the Service of Religion or for their own; and therefore may be justly esteem'd, by those who have allow'd themselves to entertain the worst Opinion of these Holy Writers, unfit and ridiculous to be invented by them; if they are real Truths in History, they seem to be of that nature so unnecessary to be known, and so unlikely to be preserv'd, that they could scarcely be suppos'd to be deriv'd from any other Information, than that of the Times in which they were transacted, and consequently are a Demonstration that the Scriptures were then produc'd to the World. It were easy to collect several other Passages of the like kind, but as before in the two last Heads, we contented our selves to single out an Example or two, to shew the Meaning and Intent of our Argument; so in the present we have follow'd the same Method; tho' to give such Arguments as these their full
force and moment, it wou'd be in a manner necessary to transcribe the whole Scriptures: However it will be sufficient if we point at the chief Lineaments and Characters, by which we may distinguish them, to have a just and perfect resemblance of the Times in which they are presum'd, and by all wise and understanding Men have been thought and confess'd to be wrote.

S. 11. 2dly, We may argue for these Holy Writings, from those private References we meet with to Persons and Things, which cannot be explain'd without fixing 'em in the Age of the Apostles; but if any after Ages had cherish'd a fancy to impose these Books upon us as Apostolical, when really they were not, is it probable they wou'd have rest'd in such short and blind Intimations, so as we shou'd be oblig'd to find out by labour and search, what they were desirous we shou'd embrace as certain and undoubted, without the least Difficulty or Scruple? And here again we shall only mention some few Instances, tho' there are several others of the same import; thus the Gospel of St. John was design'd against the Heretical Opinions of Ebion and Cerinthus; the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in part, seems to be levell'd at the licentious
A Demonstration of the Divinity of the Nicolaitans; the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in one Chapter of it, in all probability, has some respect to Claudius; and the second Epistle to Timothy to Nero; and in general the whole Scriptures of the New Testament appear to take such a negligent notice, if I may call it so, of the Times and the Transactions in them, that we cannot with any Sense imagine it was either affected or contriv’d.

§ 12. There is something in the Air and Mien of Persons, which as much distinguishes them as any thing else whatsoever; and so it is in Writings, and in particular with relation to the Scriptures, where the Natural and Genuine way in which they are writ, and as any one would have writ, if he had liv’d in those Times, is as great a Proof that they were writ in those Times, as can possibly be had or suppos’d; and consequently Jerusalem, and the Polity of the Jews, is represented in the Gospels as yet standing; and the chief Arguments we meet with in the Epistles are such, as ly against Judaism and the Philosophy of the Heathens, agreeable to what we may justly conceive were the first Enemies Christianity wou’d be to engage; and all this is done in a manner that plainly declares, the Writers were not Men who had
had only a faint Relish of the Times there describ'd, and had deriv'd some Notion of them from dead Monuments, and flat Memorials concerning 'em; but such as were form'd and molded, as were train'd up and educated in them, and who deriv'd their Sentiments from the Opinions of the Age, without themselves almost being aware of it.

§. 13. Men generally receive their Temper, and the Complexion of their Minds, from the Conversation they keep, and the Principles they imbibe, which together with their Natural Powers and Faculties, is that which sets a Distinction upon them, by which they are differenc'd from all others; and so it is in Ages, which are likewise distinguish'd by their Inclinations and Humours, and the various Circumstances which surround 'em; so that a Man, as it were, takes his Being and Constitution from the Age he lives in, and his Thoughts are wholly turn'd and fram'd to the particular Occurrences of it, and consequently it is as impossible for a Writer of one Age to put on all the Qualifications, and if I may say the Peculiarities, that are the effect and result of the former, as it is to place himself in those certain and distinguishing Circumstances which are the occasion of them; or as it is for a Man who has been from his Infancy
fancy leaven'd and charg'd with one kind
and set of Thoughts, to shift and change
'em as he pleases for another: There is
something that is singular in all Ages,
which cannot be transcrib'd into a suc-
cceeding, no more than one Person can
transform himself into any other Person,
who is as different from him as can be
well imagin'd; and thus it is in the present
case, since the Apostles write as Men
who had liv'd and convers'd in the Age,
in which Christianity was first promulged
to the World, and not as those who had put
on the bare Semblance of such Authors,
and endeavour'd only to personate and re-
present them.

§ 14. But this will farther appear, if
we consider under a third Head the Af-
fections and Passions with which the
Scriptures are wrote; and these are so
evident in our Saviour's Sermons to his
Disciples, in the zealous and most persua-
usive Reasonings, and the pathetick Incite-
ments to Piety and Goodness, which are
to be found in the several Writings of
St. Paul, and the other Apostles; they
carry such a Force of Nature with them,
and are so exactly expressive of those Re-
sentments, which the Apostles might be
justly and the truliest suppos'd to admit,
that if we can believe them to be any
thing
thing else than the Genuine Productions of the Apostles, and those who convers'd with our Lord or his Disciples, we shall go a greater length, as to the point of being Credulous, than we cou'd be ever said or prov'd to do in the believing our Religion. For, if what we have before all'd is true, that Men receive into their Temper a particular kind of Tincture from the Age they live in, which it is almost impossible to derive into another, so as to make it appear the same, it seems to be more especially plain in respect to the Passions, since they are so exceeding delicate, and take such quick and sudden turns, that they do not look to be capable of being represented to the life out of the Person that has 'em; all the Imitation in the World can never sufficiently express that extreme Liveliness and Force they act with, and those who have the best Faculty at doing it, and have made it the Business and Employment of their Lives, (I mean the Retainers to the Stage,) with Reproach enough to themselves to mick and dissemble them, have always betray'd a manifest Affectation, or at the best an Artifice, not agreeable to the Plainness and the Sincerity of Nature: and indeed for Men to put on those Affections and Passions which they really have not, is like what we perceive in the other D 2 Forces
§ 2. A Demonstration of the Divinity Forces of Nature that are borrow'd, (as Light or Heat from the Sun,) which as they are always more faint and languid, so they are distinguishable enough by that very Infirmity from their true Source and Original.

§ 15. And now we have at length finish'd our Argument from the Internal Testimony of the Scriptures, consider'd as Humane, which these Writings contain for their being Genuine, excepting one Branch of it, which being a distinct Subject, we shall reserve for another Discourse; and that is, the Truth and Impartiality observable in the whole, and this may be justly reckon'd one Part of the Internal Evidence for the Genuineness of the Scriptures; since if we prove them to be true and impartial Writings, they must of consequence be Genuine ones, and cannot be supposed to have those Names or Times forg'd which are impress'd or stamp'd upon them; for which Reason the Integrity of these Authors has already been prov'd, from the Plainness and Simplicity of the Stile in which they writ, and from their Negligence and Unaffectedness, as to the Time or Order of the Transactions they relate. It is notwithstanding a Different Subject, and upon that account we shall wave it for the present,
sent; seeing, although we should evidence the Scriptures to be never so genuine, it would not from thence follow that the histories they give us were exactly true; for albeit it were granted, that St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, and so of the rest, were the undoubted authors of the Gospels which are receiv'd, we could not from thence immediately conclude, that those Evangelists had deliver'd down to us plain and indubitable matter of fact, and that they had not impos'd upon us spurious doctrines, and miracles of their own inventing.

§. 16. This therefore we shall afterwards consider, and at present only add, in respect of the Scriptures being writ in the times, of the transactions of which they give an account, that even in fact and experience, there is so manifest a difference betwixt books that are written by men who have been present, and concern'd in matters they comment upon, and those who have not, that there cannot be well a greater: thus if we compare the Greek rhetoricians, as Demetrius or Aristotle, with those of the Romans, as the author to Herennius and Tully, or the orations of Demosthenes with those of Isocrates, or those of Cicero with the declamations of Quintilian, the histories of the Christian Religion.

...
A Demonstration of the Divinity of Xenophon or Thucydides with Herodotus; or lastly the Famous Historian of our own Age, with others who have treated upon the same Subject, we shall evidently find there is this sensible distinction, that there is a Life and Vigour of Expression, a Strength and Sprightliness of Thought, and a Majesty and Greatness of Passion and Sense in the one, suitable to that Temper and Genius to which they had been form’d, and as it were excited and inflam’d by their several Pleadings, or the Actions in which they had been engag’d; whereas on the other hand we meet with little or nothing of all this, and are entertain’d only with dry and Philosophick Rules, or else a fine Cadence or Numerousness of Periods from the Rhetoricians; and from the Historians, as Herodotus with long and empty Accounts, which have little more, many of them, than their Antiquity, and the Smoothness and Accuracy of the Stile in which they are deliver’d to recommend them; and thus it is in the Scriptures, those holy Oracles which we defend, they are not, as will be evident to any one who reads them with the least attention, they are not jejune and studied Memorials of things which had been long before transacted, but speak the Sense of Men who had an intimate share and concern in what they transmit to us; and
of the Christian Religion. and if we will not allow them that Character, we may with as great justice deny it to the best Historians, of either the Ancients or the Moderns, which is all the Reputation, in relation to these Sacred Writings, for which we at present contend.

D I S C O U R S E IV.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§ 1. It has been hitherto prov'd, in the present Subject, that the Scriptures were written in those Times, and by those Persons which have been in the several Ages of the Church unanimously attributed and affixed to them; and this was done from the Multitude of Unexceptionable Witnesses, produc'd in Attestation of their Validity, as well as from their own Internal Evidence, of which they were pregnant.

§ 2. We are now to proceed, and shew the Veracity and Truth of the Holy Penmen of these Books, as before we endeav'rd to evince the Blessed Apostles and Disciples of our Lord to be the Authors of them. One part of this Argument is already spent on the Proof of their being Genuine, which we shall not repeat, only...
mention the Heads, namely, the Simplicity observable in the Stile of these Writings, which do not seem to carry any Artifice or the least suspicion of a Design in them; and their Negligence and Incuriousness, if I may say it, in respect of things that are circumstantial, which shews the Plainness and Unaffectedness of their Relations; whereas in those which are Material and of any significance and importance, and which concern the real Truth of the Matters they relate, and the Christianity they propose, we find an uncommon Agreement. We are therefore only farther to be reminded, before we pursue our present Argument, that tho' what is alleged without any other respect, than to confirm the Authentickness of the Scriptures, is no Proof of the Truth of 'em, yet, what is brought in Vindication of their Sincerity, is a certain and infallible Demonstration of their being writ by those Persons, and in the Times they set forth and pretend.

§ 3. Having premis'd this, we shall now go on to evidence the Impartiality that is apparent in the Holy Scriptures of our Religion; and after the two Arguments we have mention'd, let us in the next place reflect upon the other, which were offer'd to enforce and convince the Genuiness of 'em; and which, if truly con-
of the Christian Religion. 57
consider’d, do not rest there, but are like-
wise in some measure adapted to prove
the Truth and Integrity of the Writings
themselves: For that St. Paul’s Epistles,
as we shall afterwards demonstrate, when
we come to explain them, so exactly agree
with the History of the Acts; and that
there is such a perfect Concord in the Evan-
gelists that writ at different Times and
Places; what are these but the express
Marks and Characters of the utmost
Truth and Sincerity, since when there is
a Consonance in Historians of the same
Age, and they write on the same Subject,
consistently with each other, in the essen-
tial parts of it, and yet were not made
acquainted with their mutual Designs,
nothing but Truth cou’d lead ’em into
such a Harmony.

§. 4. A second Commendation of the
the Sincerity of the Holy Scriptures, is,
that they do not conceal or dissemble,
even those Passages in which the Enemies
of our Blessed Lord are represented to
reproach his Person, or derogate from his
Religion; as that He cast out Devils by
Beelzebub the Prince of them; that some,
and those of his own Kindred, accus’d him
of Madness; that he was charg’d with
eating and drinking, with being a glutton,
and a wine-bibber, and a friend of Publi-
canes
A Demonstration of the Divinity canes and Sinners; and lastly, that instead of rising from the dead, his Disciples stole him away, and then spread about a Report that he was risen: as for the Apostles of our Lord, the Scriptures do not silence their Infirmities; Judas betray'd his Master, and Peter deny'd him; the Sons of Zebedee cou'd not dissemble their thirst and ambitious Desires after Dominion, nor St. Paul his Passion against Peter and Barnabas. But certainly St. Luke, the first Christian Historian, and the rest of the Evangelists, wou'd have been very cautious of inserting any thing in their Commentaries of the Life and Actions of our Saviour and his Apostles, which might look like a Reflection, if they had not preferr'd a true and impartial Relation of Matters of Fact, to what might appear perhaps more plausible and advantageous; and this is the reason that they fairly and candidly tell us, what was said in those times against our Lord, which it had not been difficult for them to have suppress'd. But they were on the other hand so sure of the many Miracles he wrought, and the mighty Performances he did, that they were not afraid to transmit to Posterity the worst Calumnies which the Malice of his Enemies had contriv'd against him, together with that Divine Character of which they were so thoroughly satisfy'd and convinc'd,
as Wisdom is justify'd of all her Children; so that this open and unreserved way of treating our Blessed Saviour, in respect of that Envy under which he lay with his Adversaries, and of recounting the Actual Infirmities of his Apostles, is grounded upon a confidence of the truth of the other parts of the Evangelick History, which you'd infinitely overballance any prejudices which might arise from such however unjust aspersions on the one hand, or such real failings on the other; for had the Evangelists been conscious to themselves of the Falshood of what they wrote in general, concerning our Saviour's Miracles and Resurrection, and yet were desirous this Doctrine or Opinion shou'd obtain in the World, it is absurd and unnatural to think, or imagine they wou'd not have taken all the care that cou'd be, to smother and stifle any the least occasion that might be given for an Objection, against that which in its own Foundation was false, and they knew to be so; but when they were certain of the truth of what they deliver'd, as to our Blessed Saviour's Life and Miracles, and those of his Apostles, it was easy for them to contemn such suggestions, and to value no trifles that cou'd be offer'd in reproach to the Divine Person, they had so familiarly convers'd with, or the Religion which
A Demonstration of the Divinity which they had so well chosen, and upon such good and evident Reasons.

§ 5. Thirdly, Let us farther consider, as was instance’d before, that there are several places in Scripture, which do not punctually agree in the Circumstances of the Fact related; and that there are others which represent our Saviour many times as scarcely to be known by his own Followers after his Resurrection; such passages as these would perhaps be apt to make Men question whether the one was true, and the other not an Imposture; on the contrary, since the same Writers in the first case plainly aver the Fact it self, and in the last assure us, that our Saviour appear’d in a publick and open manner to his Disciples, and that St. Thomas himself was convinc’d, by feeling the very prints and foot-steps of his Wounds in his Hands and Side; their differing in the more minute Circumstances, is an Argument of the Sincerity of that in which they agree (but concerning this we have already discours’d) and their explaining the Doubts and Scruples, which were in those Times, of our Saviour’s being the Messiah, as it shews the first Christians were not to be impos’d upon; and their being afterwards satisfy’d about them, that they were so on no other Motive than
than real Truth and Conviction, so we have the greater reason to believe this from the Affirmations of those Evangelists and Apostles, who we find are as ready to give us an Account of the Suspicions and Jealousies of the Disciples, as to our Lord's Rising, and his being the same, as of the full and entire Evidence, which they afterwards had of his Appearing amongst them in his own Mien and Person: for what can be a greater Test or Instance of the Impartiality of an Historian, than to enlarge upon such Passages, wherein those of his own persuasion doubted of the Truth of that Doctrine and Opinion, of which he himself was perfectly satisfy'd, and in which he was fully confirm'd?

§ 6. Fourthly, We may also add, that the Scriptures are wrote with those Affections and Passions, which do not only prove the Genuineness, but the Truth of them; when our Saviour laments over Jerusalem, with that abundant Patheticness, upon the account of its Unbelief; when he prays for his Murderers, and makes it one part of his Doctrine to bless our Persecutors, and to do all the good Offices for all the ill; when St. Paul wishes himself accursed for his Brethren's sake, according to the Flesh; when in that eminent Passage in the Acts he says, King Agrip-
Demonstration of the Divinity

Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets, I know that thou believest them, and beseeches God he might be not almost, but altogether such a one as himself, excepting those Bonds; if there can be any greater signs of Truth or Sincerity than these, we must form a new Notion of our selves, and suppose that Men can be the most profligate of all Creatures alive, at the same time that we can't but own them to be the best in the Creation. For, is it possible for us, in any common sense, to imagine that Men wou'd disregard themselves at this excessive rate, or that our Lord himself wou'd, and retain a Value and Respect for all Mankind besides, upon any other Principle than of that Religion, which they knew to be true, and upon the certainty of which they wou'd forfeit their Lives, or any thing else, which was the dearest to 'em; as our Blessed Saviour, and his Disciples and Apostles did; but this will come under another Head, and therefore we shall at present say, that we have mention'd only some few Instances of the Genuine Passion observable in the Sacred Writings, which if we read with attention, there is nothing can give us such a lively Idea of the most affectionate Truth and Sincerity, as that which is impress'd from them.
§. 7. Fifthly, The particular References which are made to the Times, and the Circumstances of Matters as they then stood, as it was a Proof of the Genuiness of these Writings, so is it likewise of the Truth of them; because there is a sort of Unaffectedness and Integrity apparent in the negligent way in which they are intimated: thus our Saviour speaking of John the Baptist’s Preaching in the Wilderness, asks the Jews, What they went out for to see; he supposes John the Baptist’s Preaching as a thing well known in those Times, and the Jews coming together from all parts to hear him; this, and other Passages of the like kind, have such Native Distinctions, such peculiar Marks and Characteristicks of Truth in them, that there cannot be well greater, for where things are in that manner suppos’d and understood, it is a Sign they were so generally rumor’d about, and acknowledg’d, that it was unnecessary to make any express mention of ’em: and this is done, as if the Evangelist himself did not apprehend the Omission, it lying as a fix’d and settled Truth in his Mind to that degree, that he seems to forget that, others need to be acquainted with it. The same we find in the Person who had his Hand withered, where the Sacred Writer represents the Jews putting this Question...
A Demonstration of the Divinity

to our Blessed Lord, whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day, that they
might accuse him? in which account he
supposes our Saviour's Power of Healing,
and the Envy of the Jews to Him, as
what was universally known, and of which
he was so absolutely persuaded, that it
was either needless, or he had forgot to
premise it; it would not be difficult to
produce a multitude of Examples to the
same purpose, but we shall forbear to en-
large, and proceed to another Particular.

§. 8. A Sixth Argument for the Veraci-
ty of the Holy Writings, is from the Com-
pletion of those Prophecies which are
contain'd in them; as our Saviour's Fore-
telling the Destruction of Jerusalem and
the Temple, his promising the Comforter
and the like, which were afterwards veri-
fy'd in the final overthrow of the Jewish
Polity, and in the Effusion of the Holy
Ghost upon the Apostles and Primitive
Christians; nor is it a less Confirmation
of their Truth, that they also justify in
their Accounts the Prophetick Writings
of the Old Testament concerning a future
Messiah; since, as has been fully demon-
strated by the very Learned Huetius, it
may be plainly evinc'd that every passage al-
most in our Saviour's History is distinct-
ly express'd in those Sacred Predictions.

§. 9.
Lastly, The Temper and Genius of the Doctrine, advanc'd in the Holy Scriptures, is directly opposite to any base or sinister Designs of Deceiving and Imposing upon others; but if the Scriptures are not True, they fall under no better a Character: We are forbid to ly, and commanded to tell the truth; our Communication is to be yea, yea, nay, nay; that therefore the Scriptures shou'd be guilty of Lying, and Forgery in the very Precept they give against it, with the greatest Gravity and Seriousness, is so unaccountable and extravagant a piece of Difsembling, that it scarcely comes within a possibility of Humane Nature to receive it, for who would be extremely solicitous for any Doctrine prevailing, and die in its Defence, when he has been all the while treating it with the utmost contempt, in acting contrary to it? The Apostles and Disciples of our Lord maintain'd this Doctrine, that we shou'd not ly one to another, that Liars shou'd not inherit the Kingdom of God, that the Devil is the Father of them; and, amongst the other Doctrines of Christianity, were ready to seal this with their Blood; and yet it is imagin'd possible for the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, in their Prætices (if they impos'd upon us) to slight and undervalue that on which in their E
Thus far we have endeavour'd to shew the Internal Evidence, which the Holy Scriptures afford for their Veracity; the next we shall consider is their External, and which is likewise divided into several Particulars: The First we shall take notice of, is the Incapacity of the Authors of them to put a Fallacy upon the World; is it likely those Persons shou'd form a Design of imposing upon all Mankind, who were neither acquainted so far with Men or Humane Learning, as to be able to judge of the Passions, which were the most prevalent in our Natures, or of the proper Arts and Methods to excite them? They were Men, if we except St. Paul, and perhaps St. Luke, who had a narrow and stinted Education, who knew no more than what belong'd to their own poor and humble Employments, and may therefore be deservedly thought to admit of no other intention in writing, than what was perfectly sincere, than what was founded, not on any subtile or delicate Contrivance, but on what they plainly saw, and were Eye-witnesses to.
of the Christian Religion.

§. 11. Secondly, Besides this, had they been capable of inventing a Scripture for us, they must have foreseen too such a number of Difficulties against the Imposture succeeding, that those who had the Wit to contrive, would have also had the Prudence not to divulge it: for let us grant our Religion and the written Traditions of it to have been false, and to have had no Foundation of Truth in it, what a mad and frantick Design must these Apostles of Christianity be suppos'd to engage in? A few Unlearned Fishermen, without any other Reputation than what their Manual Vocations, and their honest Industry had procured them, are to set up upon a Stock of Credit sufficient to convince the World of New and Unheard of Doctrines, upon their bare Word and Assurance; they were to bear down, not only Heathens, but Jews, Men of their own Nation, and to whom they appeal, by plain dint of Assurance, with a Story of Miracles, and a Resurrection, when there was not one Syllable of Truth in the whole; when there was not one Village, not even Chorazin or Bethsaida in which some of his mighty Works were said to be done, or one single Person in Judea that ever heard or knew of any such thing: can we really believe so Romantick a Project would ever enter into the Thoughts of
of any, who were not absolutely depriv'd of their Senses, or if it did, that the World wou'd not shew an equal Defect in their Understandings, to abet and encourage it? The truth is, those which think the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord cou'd admit of so wild an Extravagance as this, may as well suppose that they invented a Messiah too, and preach'd Jesus in all the Cities of Judea, as a Man who had convers'd among them, who was publickly condemn'd and crucify'd; whereas there was not, nor ever had been, such a Person in the World; and they might with equal Reason flatter themselves, that all Mankind was prepar'd to believe them.

§. 12. Thirdly, If we consider the Persecutions the Authors of these Books underwent, and the Martyrdoms they joyfully embrac'd in defence of 'em, it will be hard to conceive how it was possible for Men to be inspir'd with so firm a Zeal, unless upon the account of their own real Convictions; nor can it be urg'd in this place, that it is granted they might have a full and certain Persuasion of these things, and yet from thence it is not necessary for us to infer, that the Matters they deliver'd were true, since it is not evident but they themselves might be
be imposed upon; such an Objection as this, we say, cannot stand here; because altho' in disputable Cases, the Conviction of the Mind is not always answerable to the Truth and Reality of those things we consider, yet in plain Instances of Fact, and in the obvious Occurrences of Life it is; the passages of our Saviour's History are concerning Transactions, which any one might easily judge of; for the Question only lies in this short compass, Whether our Saviour did cure the Blind and Lame, or not? Whether He did raise the Dead, and perform those Miracles which are recounted of Him, and at last rise Himself after his Crucifixion, and publickly ascend into Heaven before his Disciples, or no? Those who tell us of these things, and profess themselves entirely convinced of them, by such remarkable Proofs of their Sincerity, as suffering the greatest Afflictions, undergoing the severest Persecutions, and dying for them, cou'd not be deceiv'd in a notoriety of fact, they must be certain whether these Matters were so or not; and it is therefore very evident in the present Case, that either the Scriptures are infallibly true, or else that Men can be supposed in great numbers to encounter Tortures and Death, with all the Serenity and Composedness in the World, in Assertion
A Demonstration of the Divinity of a Flagrant and Blasphemous Falshood, and which they were conscious was one, which would shew a Temper so monstrously incredible, that not any Mystery, nor any Miracle, (whatever our Adversaries think of both,) cou'd possibly exceed the Incomprehensibleness of it.

§. 13. Fourthly, Let us joyn to this the constant Attestation of the Church to these Writings; for if we can imagine that Men, in these Times, cou'd be so far misled by Interest or Affection, or an unaccountable Zeal, to propose to the World, under the severest Persecution, what themselves did not believe; is it possible or likely that ev'ry one else, who follow'd them, shou'd take up the same Notions, except upon good grounds, and upon impartially weighing and considering the Merits of that Religion and Cause, in which they were going to embark, and for which, in all probability, they must expect to suffer, if the Apostles of our Lord had a design to impose upon us; can we think that a whole Age cou'd enter into the same idle Project, or if all that Age, that all the succeeding ones wou'd?

§. 14. Moreover, the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, and the Acts of the Apostles, and the Writings of the Holy Pen-men,
and inspir'd Authors to the several Churches were publick, were celebrated and known in the first Age; why was there no one that ever oppos'd them? That wou'd prove the Miracles Impostures, or the Writings false? Why, at least, wou'd not the following Age, if the former was more pleas'd with the Novelty, or less concern'd to confute it? Why, at last, and near the conclusion of 200 Years from Christianity, and from these Books being first publish'd to the World, have we no other Adversaries than Celsus and Lucian, both profest Epicureans, the one endea-vouring to argue, the other to laugh and ridicule us out of our Religion? Why are we only still an Age after this at length attack'd by Porphyry, that subtile and inveterate Enemy to Christianity, with Arguments against the Authority of the Scriptures, the chief of which were found-ed upon some appearing Contrarieties and Contradictions in them, and which, it has been already evidenc'd, are a Proof of their Sincerity? When besides, as it is well known, this Author took his Original Prejudice against the Religion, which he once profess'd, from certain Indignities he receiv'd from those who were the Promoters and Assertors of it: Why lastly, in

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the Times of Dioclesian, were the Acts of Pilate contriv'd and invented, and or-
A Demonstration of the Divinity

der'd to be taught and commited to the
Memory in every School, after the Ge-
nuine ones had been embrac'd, and ac-
counted Authentick for near 300 Years?
What cou'd be the reason of all this? un-
less that the Evidences for the Holy Scrip-
tures, and the Christianity they affirm'd,
were so plain and indisputable, that they
cou'd not be contested, whilst the Wit-
nesses of 'em were living and present,
and were afterwards drawn into Contro-
versy only by Men, whose loose and Athe-
estic Principles wou'd give them leave
to say any thing, which their Wit or Parts
cou'd suggest, in opposition to any Truth
whatsoever, especially where it interfer'd
with their particular Pleasure or Designs;
which seems to be the case of Celsus and
Lucian; or else by Men as Dioclesian and
Porphyry, who had no other measure of
Truth than their Resentment.

§ 15. Nor is it inconsiderable that
Christianity, or the Scriptures of it, were
never oppos'd, or endeavour'd to be re-
futed by the Heathens, as they were not at
first by the Jews, till it was found their
own Religion was at stake, and that the
Truth of the one began, I presume, to
be injurious to, as it prevail'd upon the
other. Neither can it be said that this
universal Attestation, which we now de-
fend,
fend, is of those who were prejudic'd on the side of Christianity; for, by that way of Reasoning, it will be impossible for any one to be an unexceptionable Witness, in any case that shou'd be offer'd, since the best Men must be of that side of the Truth or Merits of which they are convinc'd; and if they were satisfy'd of the Truth of Christianity, it was necessary for 'em to come under that Denomination; whereas, on the other hand, the Resentments and Atheism of those, who wrote against it, seems to carry the face of Insincerity and Prejudice with it.

§. 16. Fifthly, We shou'd now farther produce the Testimonies we are furnish'd with, for the Veracity of the Holy Writings, from both Jews and Heathens, or those who dissent'd from the Orthodox Faith, but these Arguments being of a distinct Nature, from what have been already allegd'd, we shall omit them at present, and only desire Men seriously to consider, whether, if nothing more was capable of being brought in vindication of the Scriptures, there is not enough to persuade us of the Certainty and Truth of them; for why, as before, I again ask it, why must we, we Christians, of all Mankind, be oblig'd to harder Rules and stricter Laws of Evidence and Demonstration,
Demonstration of the Divinity

In order to prove the Validity of an Author, than all other Men are? Much less than this would have serv’d in the cause of a Heathen Writer, and if it is not sufficient in that of the Sacred, and Traditional Books of our Religion, let us beware, whilst we expect, in pretence, a Conviction of our Understandings, we do not in reality appear to demand a cover for our Prejudice and Incredulity.

S. 17. 'Tis true, These are Moral Arguments for our Belief, but they are not less certain upon that account, since it is as impossible in Nature, for plain, sincere and upright Persons, to be the quite contrary, ill and designing Men, as it is for a Line or Angle to be different from itself. And that the Evangelists and Apostles of our Lord were such impartial and undesigned Persons, we have as many Arguments to convince us, as we can have, that there ever were, or still are, such Men in the World: For God’s sake therefore, let us lay aside our unreasonable Cavils, and Scruples against the Holy Oracles of our Religion, let us firmly believe they were penn’d with the utmost Truth and Sincerity, and if we come with these Minds to the Study of ’em, we shall find our pains not misemploy’d, nor our time unfrugally or unprofitably spent about them.
WE concluded, in our last Discourse upon This Subject, with the Proof of the Veracity of the Holy Scriptures, from the constant Attestation of the Church to them; we are now to proceed and shew the Evidences we have for them, from foreign Witnesses, who either dissent from the Christian Faith, or were not profess'd Advocates of it.

§. 2. The first we shall mention, is Abgarus, Prince of Edessa, a City in Syria, whose Epistle to our Lord is still extant; the purport of which, after his Salutation to the Blessed Saviour of Mankind, is,

That he had heard of the miraculous Cures he had perform'd, without any Assistance either of Herbs or Medicines; that he had made the Blind to see, the Lame to walk, and cleans'd the Lepers; that he had cast out Devils; that he had heal'd those who had lain under the pressure of a lingering Illness, and that he had rais'd the Dead; that upon the Fame and Report of these things, he cou'd not but think Him to be God, and sent from Heaven, or at least the Son
Son of God, who wrought such stupendous Miracles; wherefore he earnestly beseeches him to come to him, and cure him of his grievous Malady, with which he was then detain'd; that he had been inform'd of the ill treatment he met with from the Jews, and therefore requested of him that he wou'd repair to Edessa, where he shou'd meet with a different Reception. This Epistle was transcrib'd from the Ancient Monuments and Records of that City, by Eusebius, the most diligent Inquirer into Antiquity that the Church ever had, or the Heathens cou'd pretend to; Ephraem also, the Famous Deacon of this very Edessa, before the times of St. Augustin, makes an honourable mention of the said Epistle, in his Preface to his Syriack Testament, address'd to the Edessenes, Benedicta sit vestra Civitas, Blessed (says he) be the City in which ye dwell, for Edessa is the City and Mother of the Wise, which was openly bles-sed from the Mouth of our Lord Christ, by his Disciples and our Apostles; for when King Abgarus, who built this City, invi-ted the Saviour of Mankind, our Lord Christ, who appear'd a stranger upon Earth, that he wou'd take up his residence with him, he said, I have heard of all the things which have been done by thee, and the many indignities which have been offer'd thee from the Reprobate and Unbelieving Jews, come
of the Christian Religion.

come therefore hither, and dwell with us, for I have this small City under me, which will be sufficient for thee and me. Whose Faith our Lord admiring, sent Messengers thither, and gave an everlasting Benediction to that City, firmans ipsius fundamenta. These Authorities were thought so good by the Learned Pearson, that he did not in the least doubt of the Genuineness of this Epistle.

S. 3. Besides, it is agreed, that there are no Marks of Spuriousness, no Characters of its being false in the whole; on the other hand, that it is probable such an Epistle might be written to our Saviour, is gather'd from hence, that whilst he continu'd at Capernaum, a Maritime place, and whither Merchants and Traders resorted from all parts, healing all manner of Diseases, 'tis said his Fame was spread throughout all Syria: But Abgarus was a Prince in Syria, and wrote to our Lord, upon that very account, that he wou'd come and relieve him in a Distemper under which he labour'd.

To which our Saviour gave this remarkable Answer in writing, Blessed art thou, Abgarus, who when thou hast not seen me, yet hast believed in me; for it is written of me, That those who have seen me, believe not in me, that those who have not
A Demonstration of the Divinity

not seen me might believe and live; whereas thou writest to me, to come to thee; I must perform those things here, for which I was sent; and then must return to Him that sent me: But after my Assumption, I will send one of my Disciples, who shall heal thee of the Distemper with which thou art so much afflicted, and shall give Life to thee and thine: Which, as the Ecclesiastical Writers assure us, was afterwards done by Thaddeus. This Epistle seems to be writ so exactly with the Spirit and in the Stile of our Blessed Lord, as he is represented by the Sacred Historians, that we cannot imagine it to be counterfeited with any Pretence or Colour of Reason.

§ 4. Tis indeed objected, against both these Epistles, that the Evangelists are silent in the Matter, and take not the least Notice of any such Letters being writ, or any Embassy sent upon them, as is commonly said and affirm'd: But besides, that the Gospels are so very short and comprehensive in their accounts, that we cannot suppose they have deliver'd a hundredth part of the Transactions of those Times; for how is it possible that all the Occurrences of three or four Years, from our Saviour's beginning to appear in the World, to his Passion and Death, should be read in a few hours? Besides this, St. John
John expressly says, That Jesus did many other things, which if they were particularly set down, the World would not contain the Books that might be written.

§. 5. It is farther objected, that in our Saviour's Epistle, there is a place cited out of St. John's Gospel, which was compos'd by that Evangelist, long after our Lord's being upon the Earth, and his Ascension from it; to which it may be answer'd, that as to what respects the Expression of That those who have not seen me might believe and live, we may more reasonably conclude it was borrow'd, and deriv'd by the Evangelist into his Gospel from this Epistle; or at least from our Lord who wrote it; who frequently made use of such Sentences, than that it was transcrib'd from that Gospel into this Epistle.

§. 6. And as for its being said there, That it was written of him, that those who had seen believed not in him, that those who had not seen him might believe and live, however, some have falsely refer'd it to the Sixth Chapter of Isaiah, which has no manner of respect to our Saviour, or the expected Messiah, as will be easily acknowledg'd by any one who reads over that Chapter, it seems to be plain our Lord
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Lord intended the 53d, where there is a particular Description of Him, and in which are those memorable Passages, That he had no Form nor Comeliness, and when we saw him, that there was no Beauty that we should desire him; that he was despis'd and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that we esteem'd him smitten, stricken of God and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruis'd for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are heal'd.

§. 7. This evidently has a relation to the Messiah, and at the beginning of this Chapter it is said, *Who hath believed our report; and to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* or as the Hebrew reads it, Gnál mi, i.e. *Who hath believ'd our report,* even to or before whom the Arm of the Lord is, or has been revealed? or according to our Saviour's Interpretation, those who had seen him, believed not in him. The Septuagint, the Chaldee Paraphraß, the Arabick and Syriack Versions of this place, all translate Mi interrogatively, *And to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* The Commentators, not one excepted, likewise interpret it upon that presumption; whereas Mi in Hebrew is not only us'd interrogatively, but In-definitely
of the Christian Religion. 81
definitely and Relatively, as is evident from the 89th Psal. v. 47, Remember what my time is; and Eccles. 1. 9. That which has been is the same which shall be: as also Psal. 39. 6. And he knows not who shall gather them; and from several other Texts of Scripture, which appears to be a Confirmation of our Lord's writing this Epistle, who gave so just a sense of a Prophecy, which has been hitherto mistaken by the most Learned and Sagacious. And in this sense it is plainly connected, with that which follows, For he has no Form nor Comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no Beauty that we should desire him; which is a good reason why those who saw him, or to whom the Arm of the Lord was revealed, should not believe in him; and since this was foretold of him, it was also an Argument that those who had not seen him, might believe and live; seeing the Completion of so eminent a Prophecy might be a rational Conviction to them of his being the Messiah, describ'd in that Chapter.

§. 8. A third Objection is, That if this Epistle had been Genuine, it would have been receiv'd into the number of the Hagiographa or Sacred Writings; the Reply to which is easy, that the Holy Canon was determin'd and sett'd long before this Epistle
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Epistle was drawn out from the Archives of Edessa; and farther, that ev'ry thing our Saviour did or said, was not necessary to be inserted into the Writings of the Evangelists, as is manifest from St. John, and therefore not every thing that was writ by him; there is a large and sufficient Account of his Miracles and Doctrine in those inspir'd Authors, they have transmitted to us whatever is expedient to be known, and our Duty to practise, their Books are form'd and made up, they are modell'd and compos'd of what our Saviour preach'd, and what he acted, and consequently it is the same as if our Lord had writ himself a History of his own Life and Miracles: 'tis true, that which came from so Divine a Hand, ought to be receiv'd and embrac'd with the highest esteem and Veneration, as this Epistle was in some of the first Ages of Christianity, being carry'd in Procession, and laid up amongst the Monuments of the Church, with the greatest Pomp and Solemnity.

§. 9. The last Exception against this Epistle, is, that in the Publick Acts and Records of Edessa, the time of its being sent, is plac'd in the 43d Year of our Lord's Incarnation, which was several Years after his Ascension, but the Excellent Valetius has prov'd from the most accurate Copies of
of the Christian Religion. of Eusebius, and fixing exactly the Era of that City, that the 340th Year of the Edessene Epoche, in which this Epistle is said to be sent, do's not fall in with the 43d of our Lord, but with that very Year in which Christ suffer'd, and arose from the Dead; and in which it is most likely Abgarus wrote to Him, namely, after His Fame had been confirm'd, and fully established by a Series of Wonders perform'd by Him; and is therefore instead of an Objection, a manifest Argument for the Genuiness of these Epistles.

If therefore these Epistles are true, which we have competent Arguments to think they are, and none to think they are not; what better Evidence can we demand for the Veracity of the Scriptures, and the more material passages they relate, (on which our whole Religion depends) the Miracles of our Lord, than this Attestation to them?

§. 10. The second Testimony we shall produce, is that of Pilate in his Acts, and the Relation he gave of what had happen'd in Judea to Tiberius; that Letter which is now extant, and go's under his Name, is to this effect, That the Jews out of Envy had deliver'd to him, and afterwards crucify'd their Messiah, the Holy One, who was sent from God, who had
A Demonstration of the Divinity

had open'd the Eyes of the Blind; had
cleans'd the Lepers; cur'd those who had
the Palsy; cast out Devils; rais'd the
Dead; made the Winds obey him; walk'd up-
on the Sea, and did many other things, which
he had not time to enumerate: Whether or
no this Letter is that which Pilate wrote,
is not so very certain, but that he did
write, and that the Emperor upon it
made a Report of these things to the Se-
nate, which they rejected, because they
were not first acquainted with them, is
witness'd by Tertullian, Eusebius, Orosius,
and the earliest Writers of the Christian
Church: and that there were publick
Minutes taken at Jerusalem of what was
done in relation to the condemning of
our Lord by Pilate, Justin Martyr affirms
in his Apology to Antoninus Pius.

§. 11. Nor is there any thing in this
Letter, which shou'd hinder us from be-
lieving it to be that real and true Account
of our Lord, and his Crucifixion, which
it is evident was transmitted to Tiberius
from Judea; it cannot indeed be deny'd
that it is directed to Claudius, which is
so far from being an Objection, that it
seems to confirm the Genuiness of it;
since Tiberius was call'd by that Name
before he was advanced to the Empire; and
this appears to have been written to him, as

84
of the Christian Religion. 85

a particular Friend, rather than as he was Emperor; seeing it is not Claudio Cæsari salutem, but To Claudius only: and, it is probable, the Senate upon that account might take it amiss, that such Important Transactions were communicated to Tiberius, considered in a private capacity, when they ought to have been imparted to the Roman State in a more solemn and public manner. However, if we will not allow this Letter to be that which Pilate writ to Tiberius, it is indisputable that there were certain Acts or Records of Pilate, which were of great Authority amongst Christians, and which therefore gave a very Advantageous Character of our Lord and his Actions; because we find them forg'd by Hereticks to promote their own Designs, and by those inveterate Enemies of Christianity, Maximinus and Dioclesian, to sink the Reputation of the true.

§. 12. Thirdly, Josephus the great Jewish Historian, is likewise an Eminent Witness to the Veracity of these Holy Writings, who says, In this time was Jesus, a Wise Man, if it is lawful to call him a Man; for he was the Author of very wonderfull things, and an Instruer of those who were ready to embrace Truth, and had several Disciples and Followers, both
A Demonstration of the Divinity amongst the Jews and Heathens: This was the Christ, whom, being accus’d by the Chief Men of our Nation, Pilate crucify’d; notwithstanding which, those who from the first adhered to him, did not cease to love and pursue him with the same ardent affection; for he appear’d unto them alive the third day, as the inspir’d Prophets had foretold this very thing concerning him, as well as many other Miracles which he wrought, and to this present day the Sect of Christians continues, which have their Denomination from Him. This is so full and ample a Testimony, from a Jew, a Levite, and one who liv’d not many Years after our Lord’s abode upon the Earth, in the times of the Apostles, and before the Destruction of Jerusalem; that if it is Authentick, we have all the Satisfaction we can desire, of the Impartiality and Sincerity of the Holy Evangelists.

§ 13. 'Tis said, I know, that this Passage is not to be met with in several of the most Ancient Copies of Josephus, and no wonder, since the Enemies of Christianity wou’d take care to invalidate, if possible, so Notorious an Evidence against them; those who took such pains to falsify the Acts of Pilate, and to rescind the true, who were spirited with a kind of Rage and
of the Christian Religion.

and Madness against our Holy Religion; can we think they would suffer such a Testimony as this to avoid their Fury? No doubt but they eras’d it out of all the Copies that came to their Hands, and omitted it in all they transcrib’d: But the Adversaries of our Faith were very early in the persecuting of it, and endeavour’d sometimes to suppress what ever seem’d to favour and encourage it; that it is not so strange, if there are some Copies of the greatest Antiquity, which want this Attestation of Josephus, as it is that there are any found which have it; and instead of wondering that this passage of Josephus is missing in some Copies, we may justly attribute even the preservation of Abgarus’s Testimony to a Divine Providence, which screen’d it in the Monuments of Edessa, a private City, from the Persecution and Violence of the Antichristian World.

§. 14. Secondly, It is likewise urg’d, that some of the Antients, who were the most inquisitive and industrious that cou’d be, in collecting the Arguments for Christianity, make no mention of this place in Josephus; but since there were very early Manuscripts in which it did not appear, it is not manifest that those Writers might not make use of one of them, or at least
A Demonstration of the Divinity

those who deny the Genuinefs of this Passage upon fuch grounds, must affirm, that it was impossible for any thing to escape the Industry of the firft Christian Writers, or that those who write fo much, and on fuch various Subjects, had also leisure to examine critically into all the Books that were ever publish'd; how easy is it for Men, of the feverest Application, to overlook feveral things, which might fall in well enough with their Argument; can we therefore, from an Omission of that Nature, more reasonably conclude there cou'd no fuch thing be faid or produc'd, than infer it was the Author's Fault, or his Negligence, or his Multiplicity of other Studies, that was the cause he did not produce it?

§. 15. It is farther objected againft the Passage it felf, That ὁ Χριστός ὁ Θεός ἦν occurs in it, an Appellation, which, it is not probable, a few wou'd give to our Saviour, This was the Christ: this Exception therefore is founded upon a false Interpretation of the words; for it is not ἦν ὁ Χριστός, This was the Christ or the real Messiah, but ὁ Χριστός ἦν, that is, Christ, or He to whom his Followers, who are call'd Christians from him, have now every where affix'd that Name, was this Person, this Jesus, this Wise Man, this Worker of
§ 16. Nor, by this Advantageous Description of our Lord, do's Josephus seem to mean that his Religion was true, it is only a general Character of his Integrity; for he might not so far acquiesce in the Faith, which Christianity espous'd, as to think our Saviour was the Messiah, and the Redeemer of the World; and yet might believe Him to be a more sincere and exact Teacher of the Jewish Doctrines than any before Him; namely, without the false Glosses of the Scribes, or the vain and unwarrantable Traditions of the Pharisees, to which Sense the Original directs us; since it do's not say he was a Teacher of the Truth Emphatically, but of true things τ' αληθή, which do's not suppose him infallible in all that he deliver'd, but that he was, at least, a Person who was not to be byass'd or prejudice'd in his Judgment, that his Instructions and Precepts were plain, ingenuous, and honest; and that he explain'd his Thoughts and Apprehensions of Matters, without any private Reserves or Designs.

§ 17. In this Account, Josephus farther adds, that He appear'd to his Disciples on the third Day, and that the Prophets
A Demonstration of the Divinity

phets had foretold that, and many other Wonderful things of Him, which it is natural and easy for an Historian to say, who has not entirely, perhaps upon some Temporal accounts, resign'd himself up to such a Belief, if he liv'd in those Times, as our Author did, when the memory of these things were fresh, when they were in every one's Mouth, and the impressions of them were lively and warm upon Men's Minds; and which Passages of our Saviour's Life, if true, it is evident, as any Jew might very justly acknowledge, were contain'd and foretold in the inspir'd Writings of the Prophets.

§. 18. And indeed, notwithstanding this Divine Character, which is given by Josephus of our Lord; there is such a Negligence in the other parts of it, which looks as if it came from an impartial hand; where he says, he was a Wise Man, it is true, and had those Principles of Integrity and Justice, that he must be confess'd to be a good and very extraordinary Person; but for any thing else, he was uncertain; this he knew, that he had several Followers; and that at the Time he wrote, there were a Sect of Men, that were call'd Christians from Him: this has as much of the Air and Spirit of one, who took notice of the thing, as an Historical
of the Christian Religion.

cal Matter only, and which he touch'd upon, as falling in with the Transactions he was then relating, without concerning himself any farther about it, as we can well suppose.

§ 19. Lastly, Those who are willing to think this an Interpolation, contend, that there is a perfect Connection betwixt that which go's before it, and that which follows, that this is a plain Interruption of the thread of the History, and therefore is deservedly to be rejected as false and spurious; which if at present we grant; was there never any Author who inserted an Account that was foreign to his History, into the Body of it, where the Occurrence was worthy a Remark, and of importance, and it had been a fault to omit it, and which happen'd in the time of which he was treating? If there has been such a Case, why may not that be the present? If not, it will be very unfortunate to them who deny it, that in the very next words to those, which are now contested, there is such a Case.

For the Story of Paulina and the Priests of Isis, which is immediately consequent upon the Description of our Lord, do's entirely interrupt the course of the Jewish Memoirs, and is only usher'd in, as having its date about the same Time.
A Demonstration of the Divinity

TOUS AUTAE XGOUS, SAYS JOSEPHUS, ΕΠΕΙΓΙ ΟΙ ΝΕΒΟΙ ΕΘΟΩΥΣ, TOUS IEOYAMEN, ΕΥ ΧΕΙ ΤΟ ΙΕΠΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΙΩΗΣ ΤΟ ΕΠ ΨΑΜΝ ΠΕΣΧΕΙΣ, ΑΙΧΥΝΑΝ ΟΙΝΗ ΑΣΗΠΛΑΓΜΔΗΝ ΣΗΛΨΗΑΙΝΗ, &C. About the same Time, he tells us, there was another unhappy thing, which troubled and perplex'd the Jews, and most shameful and villainous Practices were discover'd at the Temple of Isis in Rome: he adds, that he shall first speak of the abominable Action of the Priests of Isis, and then return to give an account of that which was another embar-rasment of the Jewish Affairs. Here it is plain, that the matter of the Priests of Isis at Rome, was no way connected either with the Sedition of the Jews, upon Pilate's designing to make an Aquaduct, which precedes the Character and Description of our Saviour, or with the Jew at Rome, who set up for an Interpreter of the Law, and by that means cheated his Proselyte Fulvia, a Roman Matron, of a considerable sum of Money, under a Pretence of sending it as an Offering to the Temple; which was what gave such a perplexity to the Jews, as being the occasion of their Disgrace and Banishment, and which follows the Story of the Priests of Isis: If therefore here is a plain Account inserted, which has no other Relation to the foregoing and following parts of the History, than that of falling out about the
of the Christian Religion.

the same Time; supposing there was no Connexion betwixt the Character of our Lord, and that which go's before, or succeeds it; Why has it not as just a Claim to stand in the History of Josephus, as a Genuine part of it, as the Account of Paulina and the Priests of Isis, when, in the present Supposition, they are equally upon the same bottom; and are introduc'd with much the same Reason, namely, their being Transactions of those Times, of which he then writ?

§. 20. 2ly, If nothing, however, will serve in a History, unless things are link'd together, by a certain kind of Connection and Dependance upon one another, which seems to be rather the property of Argument than History, we have also that at hand to justify the Truth and Genuineess of this Passage, that it is joyn'd with what go's before, is not only manifest from the καὶ τοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, about this Time, which (tho' in Annals, and the Memorials of things, it be the only Connection requisite) we shall not now insist on; it is like- wise evident from the Design of this Chapter, which recounts two Seditions of the Jews before, and as Josephus had not profess'd himself a Christian, it was natural for him, when he consider'd the shocks and violent Concussions in the Jewish
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Jewish Polity, to be carry'd in his Thoughts to that which gave it a greater disturbance, than any other Defection or Revolt in it, the Rise and Progress of Christianity; and which tho' he cou'd not fully approve, the Faith and Integrity of an Historian, yet led him to give a just Character of its Author, and the Important Reasons of the Sect of Christians prevailing, to the prejudice of his own Religion, and that of his Country.

§. 21. 'Tis likewise connected with that which follows in the Jewish History, where he says, ἦτε τὰς τρίτας Χριστιάνες ἐπιγόνοι παρὰ διον ἐξοφλητὶ τὰς Ἰσραήλ, there were some great mortifications to the Jewish State he had already mention'd, the Encroachments and Usurpations of Pilate upon their Religion and Liberties, and the Seditions consequent upon them, after that, the Proselytes Christianity and its great Author had made from them; and now ἐπιγόνοι παρὰ διον, another sad calamity succeeded, like one Evil upon the neck of another, the Banishment of the Jews, and their total Expulsion from Rome; so that there seems to be painted out to us a Natural, as well as Gradual Series of Afflictions falling upon the Jews, and so designa'd and contriv'd by this Accurate Historian: First, An Infringement of their
their Liberties, and a manifest Affront and Contempt offer’d to their Religion, by Pilate; then a new Religion advanced in opposition to it, which seem’d to carry several Characters of Divinity in it; and after all, to compleat their Misfortune, by an unlucky Accident, and upon the account of three or four ill-men amongst them, they were fall’n under the Displeasure of the Emperor, and that Power which was only able to support them, by being banish’d out of Rome, and sent to serve in the Roman Armies.

S. 21. But, lastly, there is still farther a Relation betwixt this Passage concerning our Lord, and the Account of the Priests of Jis, which immediately follows, for it is observ’d, that Josephus introduces the First with καὶ τῶν τῶν χριστῶν, but the Second with καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν χριστῶν, nothing therefore seems more reasonable than to suppose, that the Historian meant by the same time, or the αὐτῶν χριστῶν, that which he had particularly specify’d before by the καὶ τῶν τῶν χριστῶν, and consequently that the Expression in the latter Account, is relative to, and therefore a justification of the former; let this, notwithstanding, be as it will, there is sufficient reason to think, without any such additional Proof, that this Pas-
A Demonstration of the Divinity
Passage of Josephus is not forg'd, but that it has all the Marks and Characters of its being as Genuine, as any other Place in the same Author.

§ 22. Fourthly, Our last Argument for the Veracity of the Holy Writings, is, from the pretended Miracles of Simon Magus and Apollonius Tyanaeus; that they were not true ones is evident, the first from St. Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Trallians, who calls him the First-born of Satan, and who therefore could not be suppos'd to believe him any other than an Impostor; but St. Ignatius was undoubtedly a good Evidence in the case, who liv'd in the same Time, and suffer'd Martyrdom in this Faith and Belief, since he dy'd for the Testimony of Christ, against which Simon Magus wrote his Contradictorii. As to what concerns the Miracles of Apollonius Tyanaeus, besides the Falsity of 'em, even according to the representation of Philostratus, such as his raising one from the Dead, whom that Author is not certain was so; and his fore-telling the Lightning falling upon Nero's Table, in the Consulship of Telesinus; which from the Testimony of Tacitus, fell six Years before this Famous Prediction, by which Accounts we may guess at the rest; besides this, I say, it is ea-
for the Christian Religion.

§ 23. For had our Blessed Lord never appeared in the World, and wrought those Wonders, which drew such multitudes of Jews and Heathens after Him, we may rationally believe, there never would have been either of these two Deceivers: Simon Magus, it is most demonstrable, had a particular Eye to our Saviour, in affirming himself to be God the Father in one place, in another to be Christ, and in a third the Holy Ghost; and in order to justify this Character, pretended to work Miracles; Christianity began now everywhere to be propagated, by the Force of its Evidence, and to bear down all Opposition against it: This incens'd the Jews, no question, and it was therefore high time for them, and the Samaritans, one of whom Simon Magus was, to join, if possible, in overturning it; not only by Persecutions, but by Abetting any Impostor that thou'd set up in Contradiction to the Christian Faith, and upon this account it probably is, that we find Cerinus, a Disciple of Simon Magus, so strenuously vindicating the Non-Admission of the Gentiles into the Church, against St. Peter, and the Circumcision of the Jews against Barnabas and Paul.
A Demonstration of the Divinity

S. 24. This is farther confirm'd from Apollonius Tyaneus; for when Christianity had not only shook the Foundations of Judaism, but was found to strike at the very Heart of the Pagan Worship, when the Great Diana of the Ephesians was in danger, and the Temples of the Heathen Deities seem'd to be in a tottering State, and those who serv'd in them likely to lose their Employment and Gain; then it was that a Philosopher, a Pythagorean, was everywhere celebrated for a Miraculous Person, who cou'd do more than all the Predecessors in his Sect, or the Founder of it, had ever done; and the Raising the Dead, and Working other strange matters, was a thing common and easy to him; Again, whereas the Wisest Men, that went before him, in the Pythagorick Principles, cou'd draw nothing from 'em; unless perhaps some probable Conjectures, at the Reasons and Causes of things; he, it seems, saw and spoke of the Death of Domitian at Ephesus, at the same time that it happen'd in Rome; and, which is the most wonderful of all, lest he shou'd want any Qualification to make him truly prodigious, he understood the Language of Birds. It is indeed too manifest, from his being so highly careess'd by the Heathen Emperor, by the Consul Telesinus, by the parallel drawn betwixt him
of the Christian Religion. 99
him and our Saviour, and his being pre-
fer'd to him by Hierocles, and from the
other Circumstances, which are related
concerning him, that all this was nothing
more, than a Contrivance of the Priests
and Philosophers, to oppose Christianity,
and the Divine Author of it. For I wou'd
fain ask, Supposing our Saviour had not
been, whether ever we had heard of Ty-
anæus? And the same may be said of
Vespasian's Miracles, and those others,
which were trumped up in that Time, na-
mely, that they were the weak and last Ef-
forts of Paganism against Christianity,
till it had recourse to the more violent
Methods of Persecution, and the most
unheard of Barbarities.

§. 25. This Conclusion then we may
fairly deduce from these two Impostors,
That since they pretended to work the
same Miracles, which our Saviour did,
it is a Confession from them that He ei-
ther did, or appear'd to work those Mi-
racles, which they endeavour'd to copy
from Him; and since these Miracles,
which were false, have not prevail'd upon
Mankind, tho' encourag'd and counte-
nanc'd by the Jewish and Heathen World,
that our Saviour's have, tho' asserted and
maintain'd by fewer numbers, by weak
and defenceless Men, by his own Disci-
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A Demonstration of the Divinity

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of the Divinity

pies and Apostles only, is as great a Moral Argument as we can expect or desire that they are true.

§ 26. We shall therefore now finish this great and important Subject, of the Veracity of the Holy Writers, with our most devout Thanks to Almighty God, for giving us such a full and compleat Evidence of our Faith and Religion; and we are to adore his good Providence, even for the Enmity and Opposition that has been practis'd against it, by the works of Men, by the Emissaries and First-born of Satan. It is not at all unlikely but in those early Times, when these Impostors and Hereticks every where infested the Church of Christ, that good Men might have several Doubts and Scruples upon them, about the Methods which God was pleas'd to make use of, in Establishing his own Worship; it would seem to them very strange and unaccountable, how Dissentions from it, Persecutions of it, and apparent and open Contradictions to it, shou'd be a means of settling it upon sure and lasting Foundations; but God's Ways are unsearchable to us, who have only just a present prospect of things; those Difficulties with which they wrestled, and the Divine Intention of which they cou'd not then solve, now that they are

true.
of the Christian Religion.

are surmounted, are powerful Arguments for our conviction, and such which can't but perpetuate the Faith in the ever Blessed Jesus, and our most Holy Religion to all ensuing Ages.

DISCOURSE VI.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. Can we with pleasure enough, for give me leave to begin this farther Discourse upon so Divine an Argument, with some sort of Extasy, can we with a just and becoming Satisfaction reflect upon the strong and invincible Evidence, which it has pleas'd Almighty God to afford us for the Veracity and Truth of the Holy Scriptures, those Writings, which of all others do certainly propose to us the most solid Foundations of Comfort and Joy, namely, our own Immortality, and the most Blissful one that we can imagine, upon the slender, or rather the happy Conditions of our Piety and Obedience? And which are so well attested to us on all hands, that no History whatsoever has the like Marks and Characters of its sincerity, comes so universally acknowledged by all Ages, has been transmitted down G 3 with
with so many Eyes upon it, and with such a Moral Impossibility of its being falsify'd, as the Sacred one which we defend: and if so, how truly may we say, if we look on the Tenour and Import of these Writings, that *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God.*

§. 2. 'Tis the general Opinion indeed, that this refers to the Pen-men of the *Old Testament,* but no Reason has been hitherto given, why it shou'd not likewise respect some part of the *New,* & particularly some, as there were several in those Times of the *Evangelick Histories;* especially since this very Apostle, as St. *Ignatius* after him, speaking of the Sacred Canon, so St. *Paul* in like Terms, says, *We are built upon the Prophets and Apostles;* and that *God had given some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and Teachers,* for the *perfecting of the Saints,* for the *Edification of the Body of Christ,* to which if we add, that this *Epistle* is by all confess'd, to be written after many others, which are receiv'd as Canonical by the Christian Church, as well as three *Gospels* at least, and that St. *Peter,* in his *Catholic* one, mentions St. *Paul's;* I say, it is reasonable to think, St. *Paul* had not only a regard to the *Inspirations of the Prophets,* but of the *Evangelists and Apostles also.*
§. 3. That the Scriptures, and the Doctrine they contain, come from God; that is, that the Christian Religion is no Humane Institution, but had its Rise from the Divine Author of All Things, is manifest on several Accounts. 

First, Because the Scriptures themselves affirm it, which we have already shewn to be true. 

Secondly, Because the Genius and Temper of Christianity is such, that no other but an Infinitely good and All-wise Being could offer to us such Great and Noble Principles, as those which it enjoyns. 

Thirdly, Because it was propagated and confirm'd by those Miraculous Powers, which it was impossible for any one to have, unless by an immediate Derivation from God Himself. 

And Lastly, It is evident from that Wonderful Providence, which was observable in the surprizing Progress of the Gospel, without any Humane Means or Assistance that was in the least equal to the Effect which was produc'd, the
4. And First, The Scriptures are very full and express, in asserting the Divinity of that Doctrine, which they propound to our Belief. The Christian Dispensation is call’d the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of God; Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And in another place, But now is the Kingdom of God come unto you. In the 8 Chapter of St. John 40 Verse, But now you seek to kill me, a Man that hath told you the Truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham. And in the 52 Verse, Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God. And in the 46 and 47 Verses, If I say the Truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God, heareth God’s Words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. It would be infinite to multiply all the Citations from the Scriptures, which agree in the same Affirmations; since therefore it has been prov’d, that the Scriptures are True Memorials of our Blessed Lord’s Life, and the Discipline He instituted and preach’d; and since it is farther plain from them, that what he Taught and Publish’d to the World was from God, it is a necessary Consequence, that what they comprehend
of the Christian Religion.

prehend is so likewise; that the Contents and Matter of them are of Divine Inspiration, and owe their Original to the Sovereign Being of the Universe.

S. 5. And this we may say, abstracting from the Inspirations of the Holy Evangelists and Apostles; for tho' they shou'd be granted to write, without any particular Assistances from the Spirit of God, and shou'd be plac'd in the Rank of Common and Ordinary Historians; this wou'd not yet in the least diminish or derogate from the Sacred Authority of the Scriptures; they still wou'd maintain the Venerableness of their Character, as coming from God, tho' communicated and deliver'd to Men in a Humane way, and by the same Methods, as other Commentaries and Writings of a Civil and Temporal Composition; which we the more willingly mention, to shew, that there is nothing more requisite to convince us of the Divinity of the Scriptures, than the bare acknowledgment of the Truth of them; and those who deny the latter, must at the same time renounce the Belief of a Proposition, which as we have already evinc'd, has as many Moral Arguments for its certainty, as that there was ever such a State as Athens or Sparta, or such a War as the Peloponesian, or such an Historian as Thucydides.
§ 6. Nor yet, if that were necessary, do we want a sufficient and ample Conviction of the Inspirations of the Blessed Penmen of these Books; St. Matthew says, in the last Charge, which our Saviour us'd to his Disciples, in which he gave it in his Instructions to them, To teach all Nations, to observe whatsoever he had commanded them; that he assur'd them, he wou'd be with them to the end of the world. St. Mark tells us, that accordingly the Disciples went forth, and preach'd every where, the Lord working with them, τὸ Κυρίου ὄνεργον, which must be by his Spirit, and confirming the Word with Signs following: St. Luke, that he open'd their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; and gave them a Promise of a Supernatural Assistance from the Father: St. John, as an earnest of this, that he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive the Holy Ghost. And in the Acts we have a full and perfect account, of the wonderful Accomplishment, of what had been so punctually foretold to them; and There appear'd unto them cloven Tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. St. Paul assures us, he came not behind the other Apostles, that he spake with more Tongues than
of the Christian Religion. 107
than they all; and that himself also had the Spirit of God. So that there cannot be any Scruple concerning the actual Inspirations of the Holy Apostles; the only difficulty is, what the Nature and Manner of 'em was, how far they extended, and in what Sense they ought to be apply'd to the Holy Scriptures; these are real Problems in Divinity, and deserve our greatest Caution, as well as our best Attention to explain.

§. 7. As to the Nature and Manner of these Inspirations, it is very probable they were by a Divine afflatus; so it seems to be describ'd in the Acts, and Suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it fill'd all the House where they were sitting. Nor is it at all unbecoming the Majesty of God to illuminate Mens Minds, with the excellent Truths of Christianity, by the same Methods, by which he first brought Light into the World, to produce a new Order and Oeconomy in the Animal Creation, by the like Measures which he took in actuating and informing the Material; For when the Earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the Deep, the Spirit, or as the Original signifies, the Wind of God mov'd upon the face of the Waters; and God said,
§ 8. Thus we find in the 19th Chapter of the First Book of Kings, that a great and strong Wind usher'd in the presence of God, when he spake to Elijah, and gave him that remarkable Commission of appointing a King over his own People, as well as a Gentile one, namely, Hazael over Syria, and Elisa to be a Prophet in his room. It is therefore not absurd to suppose the great Embassy, on which the Apostles of our Lord were to go, and by which they were authoriz'd to make Kings and Priests unto God, both amongst Jews and Gentiles, and to institute those who shou'd succeed them in that Office, It is just to believe that such a Message, as it did not fall short of Elijah's in the Dignity and Importance of it; so that it wou'd be confirm'd and appropriated to them in as solemn a manner, and by much the same Divine Procedure.

§ 9. And that which still makes this the more conclusive, is, that the Heathen Oracles, if we may depend upon any Accounts of 'em, from Diodorus and Plutarch, were communicated to the Pythia in the same way; from whence it is evident, that not only those Demons made the Divine Inspirations the Measure and Pattern...
Pattern of their own, but that Mankind has likewise thought an Afflatus the most Natural Medium, by which one Spirit has, as it were, an Intercourse and Correspondence with another. For besides, let us reflect on those Means, which we ourselves make use of, to explain our own Thoughts and Intentions to those Beings which are distinct from us, is it not done by a particular Direction of the Aether, from the Voice, or the more silent Impressions of the Hand, the Eye, or any other Motion, by which we choose to signify our Pleasure or Designs? And may we not, or rather must we not imagine, that an Infinite and All-powerful Being can give such a certain Motion to the Air, or those minute and subtile Bodies which surrouns us, as shall infuse or inspire into us those Apprehensions of things, which he intends we should have, and upon extraordinary occasions, as this was one, the Reformation of the whole World, he is determin'd we shall receive?

§. 10. This do's not seem to contradict the most Natural Notions which Philosophy has hitherto advanc'd, and therefore those who have a more singular respect and esteem for that Science, may very rationally acquiesce in the present Account which has been given; we wou'd not,
not, however, be yet thought to confine the actions of the Deity to our own explanations, God's ways are not as our ways, and there may be other methods than what finite creatures can comprehend in his dealings with us; let us therefore with an humble reverence own, that as it is matter of fact there were inspirations, so it is no more necessary to give a mechanical account of 'em, in order to ascertain their being at all, than it is requisite to the existence of a plant or a tree, to give the just and uncontested laws of its vegetation, which the best inquirers into nature have not yet done.

§. 11. The next thing to be examined into, is, the extent of the divine inspirations, which in respect of the persons to whom they were imparted, were certain and universal, but in respect of the quality and degree of 'em, limited and various; as to the quality of these gifts, to one was given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another faith, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues, and all these, as the apostle says, were wrought by the self same spirit, dividing them to every man.
Man severally, as he pleas'd. What the Nature of these particular Gifts were, we shall make it our Business to examine, when we come to give an Exposition of them; and in general we may say, that they seem to be such, as were many of them attainable, in some measure, by our own Natural Abilities, as that of Speaking and Interpreting different Languages, that of Wisdom and Knowledge, Discerning of Spirits, Healing Diseases, &c. This is evident from St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, where speaking of them, he says, But covet earnestly the best Gifts, and yet shew I to you a more excellent way: By which it is plain, that, in some degree, it was in their own Power to determine themselves to this or that particular Acquisition.

§ 12. But as their Application to one kind of Perfection in the Christian Church, might be of Service to the Attainment of it, yet that Knowledge of Tongues, or of Men, or the Distempers incident to them, which they cou'd acquire by the use of their Faculties, was extremely disproportion'd to that which their Inspirations gave 'em; that is, tho' the Primitive Christians towards the latter end of the Apostolical Age, did probably make use of Means to the obtaining of those Ends,
112 A Demonstration of the Divinity
Ends, or those Endowments, which might
promote Religion; yet the Effects of their
Industry and Zeal, fell infinitely short of
those which were produc'd from the In-
fluence of the Divine Afflatus.

§. 13. And this shews the Wisdom of
Almighty God, in his Inspirations of Men,
that they were, in many cases, left to the use
of their own Freedom, which he wou'd not
create to be annul'd, whilst they were on-
ly assisted by a Divine Energy, so far as
to make the Faculties of their Under-
standing more lively and vigorous, and
yet subject and obedient to their Wills.
As for the Raising the Dead, and several
other Miracles, which were wrought by
the First Christians, and the Primary Ef-
fusions of the Holy Ghost, they were un-
deniable Instances of a Supreme and So-
vereign Power, and cou'd have no sha-
dow of the least Humane concurrence in
them; but afterwards it is not impossible,
but there might be, which was agreeable
to the wise Disposal of that Holy Spirit,
from whence all these Gifts were deriv'd,
that as those Persons which It inspir'd,
were left to their own Liberty, in choosing
that way in which they expected the more
particular Assistances of the Deity; so it
might appear, that these extraordinary
Operations, upon the Minds of the Di-
sciples,
Sciples, were produc'd by an Almighty Energy, the same which enabled them to cast out Devils, and to raise the Dead: By which means God was pleas'd at once to demonstrate, how desirous he was of acting with us according to our Natures, and how such a Condescension, notwithstanding, was reconcileable and consistent with the Majesty and Dignity of his own.

§. 14. From this Account, it is also easy to infer the difference in Quality and Degree of the Primitive Inspirations; for otherwise, since all were wrought by the same Spirit, how should it come to pass that one Christian exceeded another in the same kind of Excellencies; as St. Paul in the multitude of Tongues which he spake? The reason of which might, in all likelihood, depend not only on the Will and Pleasure of the Inspirer, who distributed his Spirit in what Proportion he pleas'd, or found meet and necessary for the End he propos'd, the Propagation of Religion; but likewise on the Capacity and the peculiar Genius and Faculties of the Inspir'd, and their various Applications to the acquiring those Gifts, of which they were ambitious; we yet propose this with that Distrust, and that becoming Submission, which is due in such Punctual and Critical cases as these are.
Notwithstanding, however various and confined these inspirations were in respect of their quality, it is plain they were yet universal, in respect of the persons, to whom they were communicated. Thus it is said in the second chapter of the Acts, And there appeared cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost: So in Acts the 10th, while Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word; and indeed in the very first rise and beginnings of Christianity, when the world lay in heathenism and idolatry, the designation of a Christian was a sort of consecrating of him to the sacred employment of being a preacher of righteousness to it; and therefore it was requisite each single person should be endow'd with those preternatural aids, which might render him capable of discharging so solemn a function; but as the number of professors increas'd, and that in the apostles days, it is as evident that there were presbyters appointed, and men set apart, and ordained to minister in holy things, amongst christians themselves, who were to bear the same character and relation to christians, which the original converts to christianity had done to the infidel and unbelieving world; which is
of the Christian Religion. is abundantly manifest from the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and the 9th Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

§. 16. The last thing to be consider'd, is, in what sense these Inspirations are to be apply'd to the Holy Scriptures: And first, we may say, it is not necessary for us to believe that ev'ry word and syllable in them was dictated by the Spirit of God; for if so, every various Reading, every Omission, or Interpolation wou'd be an Exception against their Divinity: Besides, there are several Citations from the Prophets and the Old Testament; but to transcribe one Passage of Scripture, and insert it into another, do's not seem to require a Supernatural Assistance; I do not mean the Application of it to the convincing from thence the important Doctrines of Christianity; for that sometimes may, we speak only of the bare Words and Syllables which are quoted and transcrib'd.

§. 17. Farther, since Almighty God had already inspir'd the Evangelists and Apostles with the Knowledge of Tongues, it had been superfluous and needless to make an immediate Impression upon them of ev'ry word they shou'd write, and wou'd have contradicted and superseded the very Intention
Demonstration of the Divinity

tention of his inspiring them with that
Knowledge; for to what end was it, unless
that they might be capable of propagating
the Christian Religion in the World, that
they were endu'd with a Power of speaking
or writing in different Languages? And
when they were so far qualify'd for their Of-
fice, of being the Promulgators of the Gospel
to all Nations, what occasion was there
for any fresh or additional Inspirations of
Language and Stile, to make what they
preach'd intelligible to Mankind? And
therefore, tho' the Primitive Christians
arriv'd at that Perfection, which they had
in several Tongues, by the immediate In-
fluence of God himself; yet it is justly
to be presum'd, that the peculiar Me-
thods of attaining them, did no more hinder
them from making the same arbitrary use
of those which they understood, than if
they had been acquir'd in the more com-
mon way of Study, and by a plain Dili-
gence and Industry; and consequently,
tha' the Language in which they writ was
inspir'd, yet the particular choice of the
Words and Proprieties in it, were left to
the Discretion of the Writer: and from
thence it is, that we find such a variety
and Distinction in the Phrases and Ex-
pressions of the Holy Pen-men, accord-
ing to their several Genius's and Com-
plexions, as betwixt those of St. Luke and
St.
of the Christian Religion. 117

St. John, and betwixt those of St. Paul and St. James, and the rest, which cou'd not be otherwise well accounted for.

§. 18. And as the particular Stile, so the Method of these Writings, seems to be resign'd to the Will and Pleasure, or the Natural Faculties and Powers of the Compilers of them; since nothing of this enter'd into the main Design of Religion, its general Reception by Man-kind: for if Matters of Fact, and the Miracles were true, which were deliver'd in them, it was not of the least importance to recount them in the exact order in which they were done, it might be at the liberty of the Evangelist, as his own Memory or Abilities suggested, to give the World a Relation of them.

§. 19. But then this was necessary in the Inspirations of the Holy Writers, that as they shou'd be furnish'd with Language to express their Knowledge, so likewise that they shou'd not want that Knowledge which they shou'd express, both of the Essentia! Doctrines and Mysteries of Christianity; this Inspiration we may be assur'd they had in the highest and utmost Perfection, and those who had a Promise from our Blessed Saviour, that they shou'd be led into all Truth, by the Holy Spirit, which
which was to guide them, cou'd not be capable of falling into the leaft Error, in any of the Precepts which they propounded for our Practice, or in any of the Articles of Faith, which they offer'd to our Belief; or lastly, in any of the Actions or Miracles of our Saviour, which were wrought to confirm us in the one, or induce us to the other.

§ 20. We shou'd now proceed to the second Argument for the Divinity of the Scriptures, namely, from the Excellent Temper and Doctrine they contain, which is above any thing Humane Reason cou'd invent; and yet when known and consider'd, the most agreeable to it, but of this in the following Discourse. Let us still, however, conclude with abundant thanks to Almighty God for this Evidence, and pray, that as this ought to be convincing to us, so he will pleaie of his infinite Grace to make the succeeding ones effectual to that End.
The second Argument we propos'd, to prove the Divinity of the Holy Scriptures from, was after the Ascertaining their Veracity, and the Inspirations consequent upon the Acknowledgment of it; the Genius and Temper of the Doctrines they advance, which tho' agreeable to Reason, yet we said were such as no Humane Faculties cou'd arrive to.

§. 1. It will perhaps be necessary to explain what I mean by that Distinction; which is only this, that as even in Natural Sciences, Men may be able to comprehend a Demonstration, which they had neither the Application nor Sagacity to find out, so in Religion, there may be those Propositions in it, whose Truth when discover'd and reveal'd, may seem plain and obvious to conceive; and yet had we been left to our selves, and to the pursuit of our own unassisted Reasonings, we might possibly have never attain'd: And if we seriously reflect upon the Precepts of the Gospel, we shall be oblig'd to confess very evident footsteps of a Reason superior to any thing, which can be call'd
A Demonstration of the Divinity call'd Humane. That there is a great and Divine Sense in them, beyond what we can with justice suppose, Man consider'd in himself, was capable of suggesting to the World. We shall instance in two Particulars only, tho' several others might be alleged; the one concerns our Faith, and the other our Practice, and which make up the Sum and Essence of Christianity, as distinguish'd from all Religions Mankind has hitherto embrac'd.

§. 3. The first, is the Satisfaction of Christ for the Sins of the whole World, in the Redemption of it, by his Death and Resurrection; and the second, that Universal and Disinterested Love, even of our Enemies, which is enjoyn'd us by it: Religion always affirm'd (under different Denominations indeed,) a Wise and Sovereign Disposer of all things, and that this Almighty Being was infinitely just and good; that he had an abhorrence and necessary detestation of every thing that was Evil, as contrary to the Purity and Perfection of his Nature; this was easy to collect from the Works of the Creation, and the exact Order and Disposition of them; but here was a Difficulty to be solv'd, which all the Wisdom of this World cou'd not do: it was manifest in Experience, that the best Men had very great
great Failings and Infirmities, that they were subject to the Violences or the easy Impressions of their Natures; what excellent Vertues they were endow'd with, or even their Repentance, cou'd not make amends for the Faults they committed, since it was impossible the doing a plain Duty at one time, which was requir'd from us by the Law of Nature, shou'd attone for a Duty, which we had transgress'd at another, such a Satisfaction cou'd signify no more, than in our common Concerns, the paying one Debt, wou'd be a discharge for a preceding. On the other hand, Almighty God had created us, and submitted us to these Conditions of our Being, and therefore it did not seem consistant with his Goodness to take a severe notice of such Crimes, which were in a great measure complexional, and yet it was unsuitable to his Justice and his Holiness, to connive at and overlook them.

§. 4. In order therefore to appease the Divine Displeasure, Sacrifices were thought of, and other voluntary Performances invented, by which it was hop'd the Deity might be made propitious to us; but alas, what cou'd all this avail? It was not possible that the blood of Bulls and of Goats shou'd take away Sins; we offer'd no more to Him, than what was already his own; For all
A Demonstration of the Divinity

all the Beasts of the Forest were his, and the Cattle upon a thousand Hills. Nor was there any Natural Efficacy in these first of Oblations, to purge or cleanse us from our Guilt; our Offences against God cou'd never be expiated by any Exercises of Cruelty upon our selves, or his Creatures; this, instead of wiping off our former Debt to the Divine Justice, was the way to incur and contract a new.

§ 5. In so dark a Maze and Perplexity of things, what Human Reason, what Wit or Contrivance or Sagacity of Man cou'd find a way to extricate the World? That Religion therefore, and those Scriptures, which can give a Solution of so mighty a Difficulty, and which, when once duly consider'd, shall be in every part agreeable to the most Natural Apprehensions we have of the Deity; we must, we cannot but confess such a System and Adjustment, to be laid out and effected by an All-wise Mind; and what else, what less than this is the Mystery of our Redemption?

§ 6. Mankind was continually offending against the Laws of its Sovereign, to have punish'd these Transgressions with necessary and unavoidable Torments, had been an Impeachment of the Divine Good-
of the Christian Religion.

Goodness; and to pass them by, without expressing his Resentment of them, had been an Argument of Negligence and Injustice: But in this merciful dispensation of sending his own Son into the World, to redeem us; we behold the Almighty Being shining in all his Majesty of Severity and Compassion, it creates such excellent and becoming Notions of him, so exalted and sublime, that as they far exceed any which Reason only cou'd furnish us with, so they seem to carry the Native Characters of a Divine Impression in them: When we see the Blessed Son of God dying for our Sins, and the Great and Sovereign Lord of the Universe, condescending to make Him a Sacrifice for us; what ardent Affections, what humble Adorations, what extatick Devotions do's it not inspire! How do we abhor, and with what detestation and regret do we look upon those Vices and Crimes, which were the occasion of such an undeserv'd condescension in Almighty God, and such an humble Patience and Submission in our Lord!

§ 7. Again, when Almighty God dealt so severely with his own Son for our Sins, what Terrors and dreadful Apprehensions do's it raise in us of offending Him! and really, if we compare that pious and reverential sense
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Sense of a Deity, which a good and truly considerate Christian has, and which the Primitive Ones rejoiced in, under the greatest Sufferings and Persecutions, and upon the most deliberate and coolest consideration of things, with that which bare Philosophy imparts; the vast difference betwixt them, will give the one an Infinite Preference to the other, and will make us conclude, if the one is Rational, the other cannot be less than Divine.

§. 8. It is something like what we experience in Nature, this of the Author of it; where all our abstracted Reasonings and Hypotheses about it are flat, and imprint those Ideas of it in our Minds, which are lifeless and heavy, in respect of the sensible and feeling Representations made to us from an actual Contemplation of the Divine Workmanship; there is no account of Colours, or Heat, or Vegetation, or any Affection of Matter, which causes half those delightful and vigorous and noble Sensations in us, as those which are produc'd from our Perceptions of them, and from Nature itself, which is another kind of Revelation of the Deity, and is an Argument, that what proceeds from God, may be in general thought to strike us with a greater force and energy, than any thing our Reason can dictate to us; and consequently the Christian Religion, which
which gives us the most strong and pathe-
tick Notions of this Sovereign Being, is de-
servedly to be esteem’d a Divine Revelation
(as it impresses the truest and most abso-
lute sense) of him: for what can be more
agreeable, than to suppose a Mind in-
du’d with all imaginable Perfection, must
be infinitely Merciful and Just? But
these Attributes no other Religion so fully
asserts as the Christian; which is manifest
from plain Matter of Fact, since no Age
or Time had the like awful Fear and Re-
verence of the Deity on the one hand, or on
the other, entertain’d such an intense, such
an ardent and affectionate Zeal for his Wor-
ship and Service, as the Primitive ones of
the Gospel did; and therefore, if we cou’d
prove no other way that Christianity gives
us the truest Apprehensions of God, this
alone wou’d be a sufficient Conviction of it.

§. 9. But as we before, so we now con-
tend, that in Reason and Speculation like-
wise, the Satisfaction of Christ gives us
the clearest Notions of the most Essential
Properties of an All-wise and All-perfect
Being, his Justice and his Clemency: for
it is in vain for the Adversaries of Chris-
tianity, the Men of Reason, or rather
the Pretenders to it, the Socinians, to tell
us, That it was either unjust to make an
innocent Person suffer for the guilty, or
absurd
absurd to suppose Almighty God should contrive a Satisfaction to be made by Himself, to his own Attributes.

§. 10. The First is a Charge, that is altogether unreasonable, since whatever Sufferings our Saviour underwent, they were voluntarily undertaken; and where there is no violence done to the Will, there can no Injustice ensue; or if they had not been voluntary, it would not have been unjust in God to inflict them, seeing what our Lord in his Humane Nature bore with Patience and Magnanimity, was infinitely rewarded, by its being united to the Godhead, and the weight of those Afflictions he felt for the Sins of Mankind, was light and inconsiderable, compar’d with that wonderful and transcendent Glory, to which he was adopted; or lastly, had neither his Sufferings been voluntary, nor yet rewarded if inflicted, there still had been no injustice in Almighty God, to demand any Penalties he was pleas’d to lay upon that Humane Nature, which he had assum’d into his own; ’tis true, for one being to do a Violence or Injury to another, is contrary to the Laws of Equity and Reason; but when we consider the Humane Nature of our Lord, as joyn’d and united to the Deity, what Pretence can the Adversaries of Christianity have to pro-
of the Christian Religion. prohibit Almighty God from acting as arbitrarily and freely, in the Punishment or Affliction of it, which will not debar us from the Freedom of Will, and using any Part or Member which belongs to us at our own pleasure? If the Socinians affirm, this is all solv’d upon the Hypothesis of an Union of our Blessed Saviour with the Godhead; we answer, That if they say, to make an innocent Person suffer is unjust, which is so upon their Supposition, and we prove it is not so upon ours, we should hope it might be an Argument to them to disclaim what they have so falsely espous’d, or at least not to press us with Difficulties, which depend upon Principles we disown, and are properly of their assuming, and for which therefore they, not we, are accountable.

§. 11. And this leads us to the Second Objection, that it seems inconvenient and disagreeable to assert, That Almighty God shou’d make a Satisfaction to, and from Himself, for the Offences committed against his own Laws; in order to give a Solution of this Difficulty, we must take the same Method as before, to shew this is no ways inconsistent with the Christian Faith, if it is with the Socinian, they are to answer for Objections they raise against themselves; for, as we apprehend it,
it, we are not oblig'd to reconcile them

with a Doctrine we cannot own: It will

be therefore just to enquire and know,

what is meant by making a Satisfaction
to, and from Himself: Is Humane Nature
the Godhead? do's not all Mankind own
the difference? do's it not acknowledge
an infinite disproportion betwixt the one
and the other? how then, (for let us be
certain) how do's the Deity assuming
Humane Nature to make satisfaction to
the Deity, infer, that the Deity without
such an Assumption makes a satisfaction
to it self; but if the Assumption of Hu-
mane Nature was necessary and essentia-
to this satisfaction, and Humane Nature
is not the Godhead; the satisfaction
which was made to the Divine Nature by,
and from the Humane was not made by,
and from the Divine to its own.

§. 12. 'Tis true, Almighty God prepar'd
this Humane Nature of Christ, and gave
and united it to his Son, which was only
an Act of his own Sovereignty, as He
was Lord, and Creator, and Governor
of his Creatures, and if the Adversaries of
our Religion will refuse the Exercise of
such a Power to the Wise-disposer of all
things, they may with an equal Modesty,
as they strike at his Authority, and the
high Prerogative He has over us, dethrone
Him.
of the Christian Religion. 1 2 9
Him likewise from his very Being; and, as we before said, deny us a Freedom and Liberty of acting according to our own Wills.

§ 13. And now, where lies the Absurdity? The best and most innocent Men had offended against God, as our First Parents had formerly done in Paradise, the eternal Punishment of any of these, cou’d have only satisfy’d for their own Transgressions against the Divine Law; and if it had not been contrary to the Justice, it wou’d scarcely have been reconcilable with the Infinite Mercy and Love of our Creator. Had the Angels, or any of those spotless Beings which are above us suffered, it wou’d have been unjust, nor wou’d the same Nature have undergone the Punishment which had committed the Crime. Amidst these hard and miserable Circumstances of Mankind, was contriv’d the Great and Wonderful Mystery of our Redemption, by the Union of our Nature with the Divine, the punishment of which was just, because it was advanc’d to that surprising and astonishing State and Dignity, which it had not otherwise merited, in Compensation for the Mighty and Unspreakable Sufferings it endur’d, it was sufficient, because it consisted in the Humiliation and Death of one, who was exalted in
A Demonstration of the Divinity
in Honour and Greatness infinitely above
all the Sons of Adam, and therefore by
that near Relation which it had to the
Deity, equal to the whole collective Mass
of Humane Nature, it was proper and ad-
apted to the Offence, because we being
the Criminals, that Person who was equi-
valent to us, bore the Iniquities of us all,
and pay'd the full Price of them: It was
lastly a Merciful and Gracious Dispensa-
tion, in our being deliver'd from the Ven-
geance due to our Transgressions and Sins.

§. 14. This Account Christianity gives
us of those Divine Attributes, the Justice
and Love of God to Mankind; and if
any Exceptions can be made against it, (as
there is no Truth so evident, which some
Men will not dispute) we dare at least af-
firm, that Natural Religion never pro-
pos'd so consistent a Scheme for reconcili-
ing the one with the other, as the pre-
sent we have mention'd; it wou'd be te-
dious to set all the Arguments on both
hands in one View, we have only there-
fore in short endeavour'd to shew how
deficient Humane Reason was in solving
this Difficulty, and how clearly Revela-
tion do's.

§. 15. Notwithstanding, left we shou'd
be intangled and perplex'd in our Reason-
ings,
of the Christian Religion. 131

ings, which in such reserv'd and abstruse Speculations too often happens, it has pleas'd God to give us Matter of Fact for our Conviction; for let us argue, and be as lavish of our Subtleties and Distinctions as we are willing to be, this yet, as we have already observ'd, we cannot with any Justice disown, that the Primitive Christians, of all that have succeeded them, had the truest Sentiments of the Justice and Love of God to them, as is evident from those Principles which guided their Lives and Actions; their extraordinary and affectionate Zeal and Devotion to Almighty God, and their Fear of offending him, which diffus'd it self also into their extreme Love, and that exact Piety and Justice they practic'd to one another; from whence it is plain, that the Redemption of Mankind, which the Holy Writers so often mention, gave them at least very strong Impressions of a Just and most Gracious Being: Let us once therefore see the same Noble and Primitive Spirit reviv'd, amongst the Modern Reasoners in Christianity, and it may go far to make us believe, that as they seem to be very solicitous about the Attributes of God, in their Arguments concerning them, so they really have as true and as just a Sense of them.
§ 16. But if the Christian Doctrine affords us the most Rational Contemplation of the Divine Attributes, and the Foundation of that Reason is the Union, or Assumption of Humane Nature to the Godhead, we appeal to the Sense of Mankind, when we ask, Whether all the Great Genius's that ever appear'd in the World, had they bent their Studies and Applications this way, cou'd have imagin'd, or cou'd presume to think of such an Expedient, so miraculous and amazing? And yet when found out, how do's every thing seem to come forth, and display it self in a Natural Beauty and Order! a perfect Harmony and Concord cements the Divine Attributes of Justice and Love, and we are suitably transported with the most awful Reverence, and the most humble and devout Adorations: This, therefore, is the first Instance of the Divinity of the Scriptures, that they propose to us a Doctrine which is superior to any Humane Reason, and yet agreeable to it, and consequently must owe its Original to a Divine.

§ 17. The second Instance respects our Practice, and is that Universal and Disinterested Love even of our Enemies, which Christianity enjoyns us; Natural Religion, it is true, furnishes us with many very excellent
of the Christian Religion. 133

cellent Precepts, for our Regular Behav-
our and Deportment, as those of Justice
and Sobriety, of Temperance and Chastity,
of Fortitude and presence of Mind,
under any Affliction or Calamities which
shall befal us; all which, tho' they are really
to be esteem'd and valu'd as the Dictates of
a Rational Nature, yet seem to carry a sort
of Interest and Selfishness in them; both
as they contribute to our Health and Eafe,
and as they are punctual and just
Decencies of Life, which procure to us a
due Regard and Observance from others.

§. 18. But the Vertues of Christianity
and Religion are of another strain, and
are deriv'd from the Passion and Suffer-
ings of our Lord for our Sins; that as our
Faith is distinguish'd from that of other
Religions, so the Morals and Discipline
of it might be so too: Christ humbled
Himself, and became obedient to Death,
even the Death of the Cross; that he might
reconcile us to God, whilst we were yet sin-
ners; and he has given us a New Command-
ment, that as He lov'd Us, We also shou'd
love one another: From whence it is ap-
parent, that our Christian Profession was to be
the Foundation of our Christian Practice;
and the Vertues we shou'd be oblig'd more
particularly to pursue, were to be consonant
to those our dying Saviour propos'd to our
imita,
A Demonstration of the Divinity

imitation, which were, in the first place, an universal Love to Mankind, not excepting even those which had offended us in the highest manner, which were enemies to us, and contemners of our Faith and Religion; and to this by a certain kind of Connexion, as well as from their being more especially conspicuous, in that wonderful Act of our Redemption, were joyn'd the utmost Condescension and Humility, the greatest Meekness and Gentleness, the most entire Patience and Submission, and the most compassionate Zeal and Concern for all others, with an absolute Contempt and Disregard of our selves; this seems to be the very Essence and Spirit of our Holy Religion, as it was the Example and Practice of the Divine Author of it, in relation to our reciprocal Duties amongst one another.

§. 19. Let us now be inform'd, what Human Reason cou'd have ever furnish'd us with such Principles of Generosity and Kindness? Self-defence, or a Provision for our selves, is the eldest Law of Nature; this Doctrine yet teaches us something greater than that, and commands us to prefer the Interests of others, before our own; and instead of reckoning our selves the first, to place our selves the last in the Creation; to be humble and to self-deny, and at
of the Christian Religion.

the same time to procure all the Happiness and Satisfaction to others that can possibly lye in our power, every Man’s particular Temper and Complexion would be too indulgent to itself, to advance such a Reasoning as this; we do not find any of the most rational Heathens before the Times of our Blessed Lord, to have entertain’d the least Notion of such a System of Morality; and those, I mean the Socinians and Deists, who tread in the same delicate paths of their own Sense and Wisdom, have not out-gone them.

§. 20. If yet the World would conform to these Sacred Injunctions of our Religion, what could be more conducive to the Happiness, and more perfect of the Reason of Mankind? For by this means all the Miseries, unless those which our Natures and Constitutions bring upon us, all the voluntary Miseries which are induc’d amongst Men, would be effectually cashier’d, and the Reproaches which ly upon our Understandings or Wills, would find a Remedy in our Candour and good Nature: Poverty and Ignominy also, or Want and Meanness, are the other great Afflictions of Humane Society, which of our own accords we introduce into it; none of the Vertues of Natural Religion can give us
A Demonstration of the Divinity

136

a Cure for these Evils: Sobriety, Temperance, Chastity, Fortitude, and the like, only or chiefly respect ourselves; Justice may secure us in our present circumstances, but cannot relieve them; on the other hand, the Divine Love and Munificence which the Gospel inculcates to us, the preferring others to ourselves, the doing good to those that hate us, and praying for those that despitefully use us, wou'd give those, who are rich in this World, the advantage of making others so in preference to themselves, and those who are in the highest Stations, the Noble and Exalted Pleasure of Condescension, by which means Poverty and Disgrace wou'd be banish'd out of the World. Thus our Blessed Lord did, who, When he was rich, he became poor, and when he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal to him, took upon him the form of a servant.

§ 21. Nor wou'd this Practice be more conducing to our Happiness, than it wou'd be a Commendation of our Reason; for what is the Foundation of all Rational Virtues, unless that they promote our real Interest and good, which this do's in a very singular manner: Besides which, were that Christian Humility, that Meekness and Submission, which the Scriptures require of us universally embrac'd; we shou'd
of the Christian Religion. 137

Shou'd endeavour to palliate the Vices and Faults, the Mistakes and Errors of our more enormous or our weaker Brethren, which wou'd make our Natures appear less irregular, and our reasonable Faculties more amiable and beautiful, and more becoming the Great and Wise Author of 'em. How happy wou'd this Temper make us, how affectionate, how kind and obliging to each other, this which our Religion propounds to us! Covetousness and a selfish Temper, that root of all evil, Ambition, Pride, Malice, Revenge, all the ill Properties and Affections of our Natures, wou'd be lost and vanish by the prevalence of so Blessed a Principle; this Earth wou'd be chang'd into the delightful Seats of Happy Spirits, and nothing but Immortality wou'd be wanting to make a Heaven here. All the Invention and Sagacity of Man cou'd never have found out so Noble and Divine a Scheme, by which all Humane Actions might be guided and adjusted, as that which naturally results from the Death and Passion of our Lord, from the Crucifixion of the Son of God, for the Sins of the whole World; for such an Example of Infinite Love and Humility, of an unparallel'd Generosity and Goodness, must needs infuse such a Spirit into the Christian Religion, and inflame the Pro-
A Demonstration of the Divinity
Professors of it with such fervent and undisssembled Affections, such pious and rapturous Thoughts, such an absolute Contempt of this World, as the wisest and best Philosophers cou'd never rise to, with the strictest and the most elevated use of their Reason. And this is the second Argument for the Divinity of the Scriptures, as they offer to us a Systeme of Morality, distinct from, and superior to any thing that was ever before known to us, which is highly agreeable to our Reason, and yet above it.

§ 32. If therefore we now compare these two Arguments together, which we have separately consider'd, it will be a farther Demonstration to us of the Divinity of the Holy Writings; since we cannot but acknowledge it to be worthy of the Infinite Mind, to calculate and concert the Method of our Redemption in such wise, that it shou'd at the same time give us true and regular Apprehensions of his Justice and Goodness, and inspire us with better Rules and Standards of our Actions, than any Reason or Philosophy had propos'd, or cou'd propose to us; that our Devotion to Almighty God, and our Piety to one another might take like steps, and make equal advances to their utmost and last perfection; all which is done by the

Union
of the Christian Religion.

Union of Humane Nature with the Godhead in our Lord, and his voluntary submitting with all Lowliness, and Patience to the Death of a Malefactor, for the Sins of Mankind: so just was it that such a Religion as this shou'd be usher'd into the World, with that Holy and Angelick Anthem, Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men: for surely we may say, the Worship and Homage of the Divine Being was never so pathetically taught, nor the good and kind Offices to one another so strongly enforce'd, nor cou'd be from any Reason, or from any Religion, as the Christian.

§. 23. Let us then take care of falling into that Error, which is too generally propagated amongst us, and which I mention'd in the beginning of these Discourses, namely, That the Morality of the Christian Doctrines, is a proof of the Divinity of our Lord's Miracles; and they consequently of the Truth of our Religion: No! there is no reason to have recourse to such Arguments, which if they are not circular, yet, as we before prov'd, are inconclusive. The Veracity of the Scriptures has been already demonstrated; and if they are true, they are likewise Divine, the Doctrines they contain are not as the Patrons of Reason wou'd make us imagine, good whole-
wholefome Institutions only, for our Conduct and Acting, for our Worship of the Deity, and paying that Natural Homage, which is due to Him; but are in themselves sublime and great above the highest stretch of our Faculties to find out, and yet when found out, extremely adapted to them, and therefore owe their Original to a Divine Information. Here then we shall rest, till we come to evidence the same Truth from a distinct and independent Argument, the Miracles wrought in confirmation of the Scriptures, by our Saviour and his Apostles, which we shall do in our following Discourse.

**Discourse VIII.**

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

§. 1. From the Doctrines which the Scriptures affirm, we shall proceed to the Miracles wrought in justification of them, by which it will evidently appear, that their Authority is unquestionably Divine. In treating upon this Subject, there is one thing only necessary to be consider'd, namely, what the true Account and Notion of Miracles is, and whether there are any which do not come origi-
§ 2. In answer to which, it is plain, that that cannot, with the least propriety of Speech, be call’d a Miracle, which it is within the reach and verge of Humane power to effect, and therefore, tho’ several things have been with great Artifice contriv’d, to impose upon the Credulity of Men, which seem very admirable and surprising, none of these will fall under that Denomination. Thus an Image, as amongst the Romanists, may be so adjusted, by a particular Mechanism or movement of the parts, as to shed Tears, to sweat Blood, or the like; but this is no more than what may be done by a common Art or Skill.

§ 3. All the Question that can lie here therefore, is, how far it is possible for Humane Abilities to extend; and whether they cannot arrive at several things which are suppos’d Miraculous; since it is plain, they produce to us those which are very strange, of which we can give no account, and which in general may seem as stupendous and as impracticable, as any thing else we can imagine: Numerous Examples of this might be had, both from the Mathematicks and Philosophy.
§. 4. We may therefore in the present case affirm, that tho' we cannot be to certain in drawing the exact lines, and fixing the just limits betwixt the Force of Humane Policy and Invention, and what is superior to it; yet we may easily know what is manifestly and palpably above it; so for instance, tho' it will be hard and difficult for us to pronounce decisively what are the real Boundaries of Vertue and Vice; that is, where the one ends, and the other begins; yet this, notwithstanding, is obvious, that evident and plain Vertues are not the contrary Vices. And it is the fame in the present Circumstance, we do not fully know, in some respects, the utmost pitch of our Faculties, how far they may go in finding out in Theory or Practice, what is at present undiscover'd, and appears unsurmoutable to us; we may be however affur'd of this, that there are several Instances in which the best Abilities we can make use of can never serve us, since all our Sagacity and Parts cannot cure a Distemper, by a word or a shadow, or raise the Dead when they are in their Graves, without any more than the voice of bidding them come forth; Men cou'd never by any Art imaginable inspire an immediate Knowledge of Languages, or impart a Power to others of healing all manner of Diseases, by a bare commissiion only, or change
change the Nature or Essence of any thing into the contrary, and turn *Water* into *Wine*: These are Attributes which do not belong to Humane Nature, and whatever large Concessions we make to it, are infinitely above it; and we cannot therefore, with the least pretence of Reason, suppose that Men were capable of working the Miracles, which the Gospels assert, and which are those we defend, but if we may justly conclude, that what Christians properly call *Miracles*, are superior to any Human Power, much more are they so to any stated or fixed Laws of Nature.

§ 5. The next Enquiry is, Whether these *Miracles* could be wrought or produc'd by any other Beings distinct from us, either good or bad Angels, without the Intervention of the Supreme Disposer of all things, and his particular Approbation and Concurrence, which we shall endeavour to evidence they could not be, and upon this plain Account, because Almighty God in his Intercourses with Men wou'd not, (nor is it rational to think that He wou'd,) *He wou'd not* allow without His own Commission and Denigration, that any Beings above us shou'd act under his Name what he did not absolutely approve, as they wou'd, if they were permitted the liberty and power of Miracles,
A Demonstration of the Divinity
to propagate a false persuasion in the
World: We have already shewn, that tho' it is not easy for us to determine what is exactly plac'd within the extent of our own Faculties, or those of Nature, yet it is not hard to know what is extremely above them, if therefore in what is above them, it was in the power of Beings superior to us, to concern themselves in Humane Affairs, unless for good ends and purposes, which Almighty God foresaw, and was desirous and provident of their Being effected, it would be consequent that we shou'd be abus'd into a Belief of Doctrines and Works proceeding from God, which really did not, without any possibility of avoiding it. But if we acknowledge a Sovereign Being, that is infinitely kind and beneficent to his Creatures, as Natural Religion do's, and at the same time confess that there were Miracles in the Christian beyond the force of Humane or dead Nature to perform, which is certain from the Evangelick Histories, whose Authority we have no reason to dispute; it is a Demonstration that Christianity, as it is contain'd in the Scriptures is of a Divine Original, and that no other but Almighty God is the Author of it.
§ 6. This therefore which we have propos’d in gross, will lead us to enlarge on the two following Particulars, namely, 

First, That God do’s not permit either good or evil Angels to interpose in Humane Affairs, by working of Miracles, properly so call’d, without his immediate Commission and Instructions; and by consequence, where any thing is perform’d in a Miraculous manner, above the settled Rules of Nature, or our own acting; that is, where an Effect is produc’d, which is apparently disproportion’d to the Cause, we may reasonably conclude, it is done by the particular Finger and Direction of God, and by a manifest appointment and designation of the Divine Will.

Secondly, That if so, it is of no Importance to us to know (which has been a late Contest amongst Divines) Whether Evil Spirits can naturally work Miracles, or not? since upon the supposition that they can, the Truth of our Religion will be fully asserted; and if they cannot, it is then plain, they are the Efforts and Actions of the Supreme Mind.

§ 7. In speaking to the First, it will not be amiss to distinguish Miracles into two sorts, both which are equally above any powers of Nature, or any Humane force to accomplish; that is to say, first those K which
which are superior to our own Abilities, and yet do not necessarily conclude them to be wrought by any other Beings, than such as exceed us in some definite Measures of Sagacity and Strength; thus to remove Mountains, to make Iron swim, without any apparent support of it, is beyond our Faculties and Skill; tho' at the same time, in the real Constitution of Natural Beings, it is no way certain, because it is not impossible, but there are Spirits more strong and active than we are, who may produce these, or such like Effects: But then, what is the Design of them? not to propagate any new Religion, they are only to shew us the Extent of the Creation, that there are Spiritual Substances distinct from us, and another World besides our own; and therefore such Occurrences are admirable and strange, and upon that account may be call'd Miracles; yet in the strict sense of them, they will not admit of so Sacred a Character; and if any of them are made use of, to advance or confirm a Religion to Mankind, we cannot but be assur'd, they are Authoriz'd by an Almighty Being; if not, that they are only the Effect of a Superior Nature to ours, without any other Conclusion that can be drawn from them.
The Second sort of Miracles are those which Christianity proposes, and may be properly and particularly term'd such; as the Raising the Dead, the Changing one Essence into another, as Water into Wine, the Healing all kinds of Diseases, apart from any external applications, and the Inspiration of Tongues, these all concern the Nature and Being of things, which Almighty God wou'd not leave to the Caprice and Humour of subordinate Spirits to alter and diversify at pleasure, and by that means to break in upon the Establish'd and Fundamental Laws of the Creation: His Prerogative, we may justly imagine, is too tender a Point with Him (who is jealous of his Honour, and is cautious how He gives it to another) to suffer it to be infring'd by any, tho' the highest and most exalted of his Creatures; as it wou'd seem to be, if either good or evil Spirits had the power of rescinding or annulling any of those fix'd Rules of existing, which were in the first Formation of all things prescrib'd to Nature, and by which it was to be afterwards govern'd and directed. This wou'd be to commit the Empire of the Universe to Spirits independent of Almighty God, and therefore 'tis absurd to suppose it.
§. 9. Besides, there is no Religion which do's not acknowledge this World was made and constituted by God Himself, or by an immediate Deputation from Him; and the Creation of the World, as well as the Government of it, has been always esteem'd by the Wise Men, to appertain to the Deity; but to change the Essences of things, to make the Fire not burn, as in Moses's Bush, which amidst the flame was unconsum'd; to make a dead Person live; to cause that the Blind shou'd see, and the Lame shou'd walk; by a Voice only, to produce a Knowledge of Languages out of an Ignorance of 'em; and the Strength of Wine out of the weakness of Water, by a Word or a Sign, are manifest Instances of a Creating, and consequently of an Almighty and Superintending Power.

§. 10. Farther, supposing it did not contradict two of the Attributes of God, consider'd as He is Creator and Governor of the World, that Spirits shou'd work those Miracles which the Scriptures recount to us, it would notwithstanding be inconsistent with His Goodness and Veracity, to allow those Creatures, which are above us, to interest themselves in Humane Affairs, so as to have the Liberty of promoting an Imposture by such strange
Strange and miraculous Performances, as we have no way of distinguishing from those which carry the most evident tokens of Divinity in them; and therefore, if Angels or Evil Spirits wrought the Miracles of Christianity, if we cou'd imagine or believe such a thing, yet since we cannot with any reason think, that Almighty God wou'd permit them to insult the Natural and necessary Weakness of our Faculties and Understandings, from that Advantage they have over us; it wou'd not from thence follow, but that our Religion was from God, and that it was appointed and determin'd by Him, that we shou'd receive and embrace it as his own.

§. 11. 'Tis objected indeed from Matter of Fact, that Evil Spirits may of themselves work Miracles, as the Magicians of Egypt by their Assistance did, in opposition to Moses, the Heathen Oracles in prejudice to the true Worship of One God, and Simon Magus and Apollonius, in contradiction to Christianity; and therefore we cannot depend upon Miracles only for the Confirmation of our Religion, without some respect had to the Doctrines they assert.

§. 12. If granting therefore this Conclusion is just, yet since we have prov'd the Do-
Demonstration of the Divinity

Doctrines of Christianity independant from Miracles, to be deriv'd from a Divine Original, and that they are not only bare Moral Rules for our Conduct, it would likewise follow, that those Miracles we defend are so too, seeing they were wrought in Confirmation of such Doctrines, which have evident Characters of Divinity in them: But intending to make a distinct Argument for the Divinity of the Scriptures and our Religion, from their External Evidence; namely, Miracles separate and apart from the Internal, that is, the real and intrinsic Matter and Doctrines they comprehend, we shall consider whether what is objected imports any Force against what has been already props'd on this Head.

§. 13. As to the Egyptian Magi, it is certain by their Inchantments they perform'd several Miracles, which were wrought by Moses, it is notwithstanding as evident, that they were inferior to him in diverse respects: First, in his having the Superiority over them in the same Miracles, which were joyntly perform'd by both; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became Serpents, but Aaron's Rod swallowed up theirs, Exod. 7. 12. and in their other Miracles we likewise find, that whatever the Magicians did,
did, it was only in the power of Moses and Aaron to annul. Secondly, In performing those Miracles, which the Magicians cou'd not; thus Exod. 9. 18. And the Magicians did so with their Enchantments to bring forth Lice, but they cou'd not. Thirdly, In inflicting those plagues, which the Magicians themselves cou'd not avoid; as in Exod. 9. 11. And the Magicians cou'd not stand before Moses, because of the Boils, for the Boil was upon the Magicians, and upon all the Egyptians; so that this is so far from being an Argument against any thing we have said, that it is a Confirmation of it.

§. 14. Had the Magicians perform'd equal Miracles, or superior to those of Moses, we had been uncertain from Fact, (tho' our Reason wou'd have recoil'd) whether Almighty God had not given Evil Spirits a power to impose upon Mankind, but where they cou'd only work some certain Miracles, and cou'd not do others, which in the Nature of 'em had nothing more difficult than those they wrought; what Inference can we draw from such an Account, unless that Almighty God set very Arbitrary Bounds to their Power, and that they did nothing without His Approbation as well as Permission, that He was willing to shew not only His Absolute
A Demonstration of the Divinity Dominion and Prerogative over the Visible Creation, but over those Spiritual Beings, which were in a much higher Class than our selves, and which He commanded with as supreme a Sway, as the rest of His Creatures; that He was determin'd from this Instance to give all succeeding Ages an assurance, that whatever Apprehensions they might have of being deluded by those Beings which were above them, notwithstanding all their Caution, they might have an Assurance from thence, that He wou'd not suffer them to be cheated by any real Miracles from Evil Spirits, into a Religion He did not design them. These seem to be the Natural Consequences deducible from those Miracles, which were perform'd by the Egyptian Magi; and therefore, as we said, are so evidently not a proof that Evil Spirits can work Miracles, without a Delegated Power from God, in confirmation of any Religion, that they evince the contrary, viz. that they cannot do it, without such a Divine Power and Commission.

§. 15. The Second Objection is founded upon I know not what Miracles, or Predictions at least, which are reported and handed down to us, concerning the Heathen Oracles: But the Obscurity and Ambiguity of the latter, and the Uncertainty of
of the Christian Religion. 153
of the former, make it rather credible, that
they were the Artifices or Contrivances
of the Priests, to bring a Reputation to
the Shrines of their Deities, than that they
are Instances of Fact, which deserve an
Answer; and we may more reasonably
think, that Almighty God was pleas'd to
send a Lying Spirit into the mouths of their
Prophets, than believe that He endu'd
them with any such Power or Knowledge,
as is pretended.

§. 16. If this is not a sufficient Reply,
and it shall be still urg'd, that those Mi-
racles are real; we say yet, that in com-
parison with the Christian, they were far
short of them, as those of the Magicians
were, in respect of the Miracles wrought
by Moses; and therefore when they are
consider'd together and compar'd, there
may be the same Inferences drawn from
them, as are express'd in §. 14. and
that in the interval, till they cou'd be
compar'd, for wise and good Reasons,
G O D thought fit to wink at the times of
Ignorance, as the Apostle tells us.

§. 17. Lastly, Till these Miracles are
produc'd, which are presum'd to have been
wrought by the Heathen Deities, it is not
evident that they do not fall under that
fort, which the Romanists at present lay
claim
Demonstration of the Divinity

claim to; as the Weeping or Sweating of Images, (for we have likewise accounts of that Nature from the Heathens) and which we have said may be done by an Artificial Mechanism and Contrivance, or else, that they may not be resolv'd into what we may easily imagine Beings superior to our selves are capable of, and which can only rationally give us these Impressions, that there are Spiritual Substances distinct from us, and which kind of Miracles or Actions Almighty God might justly permit, to convince us of it. Notwithstanding which, we cannot but be apt to conclude, that most of the Heathen Miracles were forg'd and impos'd upon the World, out of particular Aims and Designs; since those of Simon Magnus and Apollonius, which is the third Objection we are to consider, most evidently were, tho' they have a greater Reputation for their Truth, than any others that the Heathens can boast of.

§. 18. The Intention of these two Impostors we have already explain'd, by whom they were set up, in opposition to our Religion, and their vain pretences to rival its Miracles; we shall therefore only add in respect of the First, that according to the History which the Acts of the Holy Apostles gives us of him, he was
was so far convinc'd of the Truth of the Christian Miracles, and the Falsohood of his own, that he believ'd and was baptized; and wonder'd, beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done, that when he saw that thro' laying on of the Apostles hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offer'd them money, saying, Give me also this Power, that on whomsoever I lay Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost; Acts 8.13, 18, 19. From which passage, it is easy to collect, that he was conscious to himself of his own Impostures, and that they wou'd not bear the Test of true Miracles, when compar'd with those of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord. He is also said to have bewitch'd the People of Samaria with his Sorceries, ἐξαίτησεν αὐτοῖς, that is, he had put them besides themselves, and amus'd and deceiv'd them out of their Senses by his Magick and Collusions.

§ 19. As to what concerns Apollonius, besides what has been allieg'd against the notorious Falseitv, as well as Impossibility, of what the Writer of his Life relates of him; that History was writ 100 Years after Apollonius's Time, from the Commentaries, or rather Fictions, of one Dares, an obscure and unknown Author, to oblige an Empress, whose Inclinations led her to admire any Romance, by Philostratus,
A Demonstration of the Divinity

... who would be glad of an Opportunity to gratify so Powerful a Princess; and all this was probably done, not without the Instigation of the Heathen Priests, who found their Religion in danger, and just upon the Article of expiring; and is such an Authority as this to be regarded? What Opinions or Notions can we entertain of it, but such as must make us, if not abominate, yet despise and scorn it?

§ 20. All that can be farther said in this Case, is, that it is plain, it has pleas'd Almighty God to permit Men to be misguided in Matters of Religion, that the Heathens, that the followers of Simon Magus and Apollonius were; and so it is evident it must be for the same Reason, that one Person may deceive another in the common occurrences of Life. This, however, is no Impeachment of the Divine Veracity; because he leaves every Man to judge for himself, and if he is imposed upon by these Miracles, which it is in the power of superior Spirits to perform, or by those which Humane Abilities may arrive to, he is only to thank his own Rashness in believing, and if Men have been deluded by these Impostures, they only are blamable for it; but on the other hand, if the Miracles which Christianity proposes, are true,
true, in the Accounts we have of 'em, as has been prov'd; if they are not likewise Divine, and deriv'd immediately from God, our Error is invincible, because we cannot guard against an Evidence, which is above any Humane power to give us, and has not been known in Fact, and cannot in Reason reside in any Created Being, without a particular Commission and Delegation from God: And this indeed would be an Impeachment of the Divine Veracity.

§ 21. We shall therefore now in the last place observe, as we design'd, that whether Good or Evil Spirits can work true Miracles or not, it is not material, since if they cannot, and true Miracles are wrought, it is very necessary for us to acknowledge they must be from God; if they can, yet since we have endeavour'd to shew it is no otherwise than by His Concurrence and Designation, by his own Order and Appointment, we may as fully depend upon what is meant and intended by them, as if Almighty God Himself was the Immediate Author of them.

§ 22. And what can be more reasonable for us to believe, than that God has the Superintendance and the Absolute Command of those Beings which are above
A Demonstration of the Divinity

above us, that He directs and guides them according to His own high Wisdom and Pleasure, in limiting their Actions to certain degrees of Power over us; what is more just for us to think, than that He do's not suffer them to act in the Important Points of Religion with us, as they please; 'tis very manifest in the Christian Dispensation, that they are there represented to us as Ministring Spirits only, subservient to our Lord, that the best and greatest of them stood as admiring spectators of the wonderful Work of our Redemption, and were desirous to be informed of the Mysteries of it, and that the worst were obedient to his Commands, and humbly implor'd, from possessing of Men, His Permission to enter into a herd of Swine. However, therefore, Heathenism had exalted those Evil Spirits, which they worship'd by the pretended Miracles that were wrought by them, so as to make them approach very near the Deity it self; we find our Excellent Christianity gives us another Description of them, they are apparently under a Discipline not unbecoming the Great Ruler of the Universe, and under those Laws and Restraints, which his Justice, Veracity, and Goodness to Mankind, as we have shewn, wou'd necessarily prescribe from Him.
§. 1. Having gone thro' Three of our Arguments, to evince the Divinity of the Christian Religion, as it is propos'd to us in the Holy Scriptures, there remains one more, namely, from that Wonderful Providence, which was observable in the surprizing Progress of the Gospel, without any Humane Means or Assistance, that was in the least equal to the Effect produc'd, the Conversion in a manner of the whole World.

§. 2. 'Tis sufficiently known, that Christianity was spread to the farthest parts of the World, even in the Apostles Days; that the first and principal Preachers of it were not Men of Politeness or Learning, and, in respect of Languages, only understood their own Native Hebrew or Syriack; that they were but a handful in number, and made use of no other Methods to convince their Adversaries than the giving a reason of the hope that was in them, with meekness and fear; they did not embrace any violent means to ascertain or establish their Religion, but depended on the good Providence of God, to
to justify their pious Endeavours of promoting what they were fully assur'd came from, and was Authoriz'd by Him. This was all the Humane Assistance given towards infusing new and unheard of Principles into the World; and if Effects are answerable to their Causes, (as all Mankind owns) that of Christianity's so universally prevailing, had been impossible, from the weak and incompetent Measures we have mention'd, which were taken to advance it.

§ 3. For can we imagine a few Men, without any Knowledge of Languages, excepting their own, shou'd understand all others besides their own, so as to be capable of preaching to all Nations of different Languages, the great Doctrines of their Religion? This in it self is a Contradiction; can we suppose a few Men, in these Circumstances likewise of Illiterature and Meanness, able to stem the Torrent of Greatness and Power, of the Learning and Philosophy of those Times, that lay hard against them? We do not find this (not even) in the present Age, when Christianity, tho' supported by the Secular Arm, is scarcely sufficient to defend it self against the trifling Pretences to Reason, and the Mighty, and I may say, Wise claims to Philosophy, made by
of the Christian Religion. 161

its Adversaries, much less can we think it was able to do it, when the Magistracy and Authority of the World oppos'd it, if it had not been asserted by a most apparently Divine Power.

§ 4. Lastly, Is it reasonable to believe, that Meekness and Patience shou'd be a means to propagate a Doctrine, which is the only Humane way to make it insulted? Did Mahometism so prevail, that can boast of more Proselytes than any other Religion, besides the Christian? None of these Causes are any ways proportion'd to the Effects we evidently perceive were in reality produc'd.

§ 5. If not, what account can be given from this Humane way of procedure, to solve those other insuperable Difficulties, which wou'd ly against it? that is to say, the prejudice of Education, and more particularly the Strangeness of the Christian Doctrines, in Relation to its Mysteries, and the Disagreeableness of them, in respect of our Practice; the first seeming to thwart and contradict our Reason, and the last evidently opposing our Inclinations, cou'd these also be surmounted by this gentle and pacifick Method of Patience and Submission, which in a manner resign'd the first Christians to the Caprice

and
§. 6. Let us now allow the utmost to what might be expected from such Means, what, I pray, wou'd at this present time ensue from the best use of them? They might perhaps work upon a few easy and harmless People, as we find in experience they now sometimes do; but have we any one Instance, except in Christianity, where they have converted Nations, and made the most powerful Monarchies and Empires truckle and submit to the Doctrines they affirm'd? Shou'd ten or twelve Persons go now about to tell the World of some strange and wonderful Appearance, that seem'd to be very difficult to apprehend, as that one certain Person was in their view, and in less than a moment transform'd into another certain Person, with all the Individual distinctions of Body and Mind belonging to him, (and yet Christianity gives us an account of stranger things than this) shou'd these Men solemnly declare this upon their word and knowledge, and endeavour to make others believe it by patience and meekness, practic'd towards their Opposers; how many do we think wou'd be prevail'd upon to side with and abet the Forgery? Not perhaps twenty Men of any common sense thro'

A Demonstration of the Divinity
and Pleasure of that very World they were
to subdue.
of the Christian Religion. 163

throu' the whole Kingdom, if we can suppose that even one Proselyte wou'd be made to such a Fiction; but if a hundred or a thousand cou'd be so weak as to fall under the Delusion, what wou'd this be towards the Conviction of an entire Nation? If this cou'd be done, wou'd not there be another Task as great behind; wou'd France or Italy, wou'd Europe, Asia, or the whole World immediately follow the Example of such a Credulity?

§ 7. But why do we speak at large? Is there not matter of Fact before our Eyes of a Pure and Holy Religion, I mean that of the Reformation from the Church of Rome, which for several Ages has been struggling against the gross Errors and Superstitions of a Popish Enthusiasm; and how much has it gain'd all this while? only a few Provinces of all the vast Extent of the Roman Empire: It is yet the same Christianity, which was Taught in the First Ages, has been endeavour'd to be promoted by the same Humane Methods, namely, Patience and Submission, and Just and Rational Arguments; it has had likewise the Glory and Advantage of thousands of Martyrs to die in its Defence; and the worst Enemies it has had to conquer, have neither been Jews nor Heathens, but only Christians of another Denomination.

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On the contrary, this same Religion, when its Humane Assistations were equal, and the Oppositions to it greater, upon its first Rise, spread and diffus'd it self to all parts, and, like a quick and sudden Light from Heaven, reach'd from one end of the Earth to the other; of which it is altogether impossible to give any account, if we do not allow Almighty God to have interpos'd his particular Power, and by Miracles and Inspirations to have given that surprizing Progress to Christianity, which, where the Humane Probabilities have not been less, it has not since experienc'd.

But, granting the Disciples of our Lord to be furnish'd with the Gifts of Tongues, of Healing the Sick, and Raising the Dead, all is explicable enough, and there is no wonder; there is nothing admirable in the Conversion of so many different Nations to the Faith of our Saviour, by the gentle ways of Humility and Mildness, and by a few Unlearned and Mean Persons; this was a Cause indeed able to produce so mighty an Effect, to which the other was wholly disproportion'd.

§. 8. I know (for I shall not dissemble any Objection, which I'm aware of, that can seem to ly against what we have said) I am sufficiently convinc'd, that the Strange
Progress of Mahometism will here be thought of, as what must evidently weaken the Force of the foregoing Argument, which it is so far from doing, that it abundantly confirms it; for as that is confess'd by all to be propagated by Arms, and, as the Author of that Religion owns, he was sent to reform the World by the Sword, as he affirms, the Art and Discipline of War was what he pretended to, and nothing of Miracles. It is plain to a Demonstration, that if we find the greatest Violences us'd upon Mankind, had a Natural, and indeed a necessary Effect, to determine Men in their Persuasions, or at least in their Acknowledgments of a Religion propos'd to them, the greatest Humility and Meekness cou'd not, unless it had been enforce'd and supported by a Miraculous and more than Humane Power.

§. 9. Nor can it be here alledged, that the Success of the Saracen Arms was in itself greater, or carry'd any thing in it more Divine, than what is commonly known to attend such Enthusiastic Principles; Predestination and an Imaginary Paradise, have not made Victories peculiar only to Mahomet and his Followers; we have the same History from the Goths and Odin's Palace, and the wonderful pleasure of drinking in the Sculls of their Enemies.
A Demonstration of the Divinity

mics; and yet what Divine Power will
any one call in to justify the Effects of
so palpable an Illusion? Alas! these
things are only Natural, and bear the same
face and appearance, as if ten or twelve
thousand mad Men shou’d be let loose
upon the World, with an unanimous De-
sign to be (as they already possess them-
selves with the Imagination that they are)
superior to Mankind; and in such Cases
what great Effects may not be produc’d,
even in a Natural way; when we see any
one Person in the like Circumstances equal
to the Force and Strength of several put
together, this is not unaccountable in Fact
or Reason. But these were not the Me-
thods of Christianity, Submission and Pa-
tience, Kindness and Humility, a calm and
even Temper, a generous and noble Beha-
viour to its Adversaries, a sedate and Man-
ly, a Solid and Judicious Reasoning were all
its Supports, excepting what was more
and greater, the Providence of God, in
maintaining it, and his miraculous Atte-
station to the Truth of it.

§ 10. We have therefore now finish’d our
Demonstration of the Truth and Divinity
of the Christian Religion, and the Scrip-
tures it propounds to our Assent; the
chief of what we design’d to insist upon
is consequently discharg’d, and there is
little
little more remaining, unless that we speak to those other two Particulars we mentioned in the Beginning of these Discourses; the first of which is, the Aptness of the Holy Writings, to furnish us with the best Directions for our Faith and Practice; for we are told, that as they are of Divine Inspiration, so likewise, that they are profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: For Doctrine, that is, for informing us in the important and weighty Truths and Mysteries of Religion; for Correction, or ἀρετέος ἐπανόρθωσις, that is, for giving us the best System of Morality, for Reproof, namely, for convincing us of our Errors, in relation to the First; for Instruction, or ἀρετέος παιδείας; in reforming and repressing our Offences against the Latter. The Original is, ἔ ὁ Φίλιμος ἀρετέος διδασκαλίας, ἀρετέος ἐλεημον, ἀρετέος ἐπανόρθωσις, ἀρετέος παιδείας: suitable to which I would take the liberty to make two Distinctions, in the Sense of these Words, which are generally resolved into four; so that ἀρετέος ἐλεημον, should depend upon διδασκαλία, and ἀρετέος παιδείας upon ἐπανόρθωσις, and the Import of 'em will be this, The Scriptures are profitable for Doctrine, to the reproving our Errors, ἀρετέος ἐλεημον, and for a right and due Notion of things, which in the Original is ἐπανόρθωσις, to the Chastise-
§. 11. First, That Christianity, and the Scriptures which assert it, are the best and truest Measure of our Faith and Belief; and consequent upon that, the justest Standard to exact our Opinions to, so as to preserve us against our Errors, or reform us from them.

Secondly, That Christianity and the Scriptures, in which it is contain'd, afford us the Noblest and Divinest Rules for our Conduct and Practice; and consequent upon it, the severest Reproofs of our Deviations from, or Transgressions of them. For when we say, the Best and the Noblest, the ἀφέλμος, or profitable, here mention'd, do's infer it; if we compare ποιεῖν τὸ ἄνθρωπον ἀρχαγγέλου τοῦ ἡλίου, with οὐ δὲ μενεῖν οτι ἔμαθες, and that with Ἐστίν ζησε, which is immediately join'd with it; the whole Connection of which is, that there were evil men and deceivers, who only grew worse: But do thou, says St. Paul (speaking to Timothy, to whom he address'd this Epistle) do thou continue and persist in that which thou hast learned, in that inspir'd and profitable, or best Doctrine for ev'ry good Man to believe or practice; nor is it unfrequent with the Sacred Pen-
Penmen to call that which is evil, only idle and unprofitable; of which several instances might be produc’d, and therefore it is as reasonable for us to conclude, the ἀφέλμένος, or profitable here, has a greater and higher sense belonging to it, than what is in our propriety of Language generally acknowledg’d to be signify’d by it; as it is plain it has from a bare Consideration of the Intention and Meaning of the Apostle.

§. 12. But to omit this, it is argu’d by some from this place, that the Scriptures here taken notice of, respect no other than those of the Old Testament, and by consequence Christianity is excluded from being any sharer in the Encomiums given of them; the Reason all’d is, because St. Paul in the 15th Verse says, that Timothy from a Child had known the Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto Salvation, thro’ the Faith which was in Christ Jesus; but Timothy was not instruc’d from a Child in the Christian Writings, and therefore the Apostle refers to the Jewish.

§. 13. Nothing can be more inconclusive than such an Argument, since it supposes the ἐκ γέγονα γεγομένα to be the same with the πᾶσα γεγομένη, whereas it is more natural
tural to think, that the Apostle in ἃποκρατικῶς, All Scripture, do's not only comprehend the ἅπλος γέγομένως, The Holy Scriptures, which Timothy had learn'd from his Youth; but the εὐαγγελία καὶ ἐπιστολάς, those things which he had learn'd, and with which he was entrusted, to wit, not barely what he had personally told him, but the Gospels, which were already extant, and the Epistles he had writ, as well as this also, which were all committed to him, being a Bishop and Pastor of the Church, as a Sacred Depositum, and in which he therefore enjoyn'd him to continue stedfast; for All Scripture, ἃποκρατικῶς, as well the Holy Scriptures, in which he had been educated from his Childhood, as those which he had since receiv'd, all was given by Inspiration of God.

§. 14. Besides, can we imagine that St. Paul shou'd say, that the Old Testament, exclusive of the Gospels, at least of the new, was given by Inspiration, that the Man of God might be perfect, throughly furnish'd unto all good works; when in the eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, at the latter end of it, it is said, And these all having obtain'd a good report through Faith, receiv'd not the Promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us might not be made perfect. For how
how cou'd Men be perfect, and thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works, by the Jewish Dispensation; when they cou'd not by that be so without the Gospel, that better thing, which was provided for us Christians.

§. 15. Moreover, abstractive from this place of the Epistle to the Hebrews, how cou'd either Perfection in general be ever deriv'd from Judaism only? since, if it cou'd, there had been no occasion for Christianny; or how cou'd a Christian Bishop in particular (the Man of God, which is here intended) be one, and sufficiently qualify'd for all parts of his Office, by being only acquainted with the Oeconomy and Religion of the Jews? unless a High Priest in one Case, was to all intents and purposes the same with the Bishop or Pastor in the other.

§. 16. To conclude, In the 15th Verse of this Chapter, the ἁγία γραμματεία, or the Holy Scriptures, which Timothy was educated in, are said to be able to make him wise unto Salvation, thro' Faith in Christ Jesus; but πᾶσα γραφή, or All Scripture in the 16 and 17 Verses, will make him perfect, thoroughly furnish'd unto all good works, and by consequence will make him wise unto Salvation also; therefore the
A Demonstration of the Divinity, or all Scripture, must likewise include the Christian Doctrine or not; if it do's not, it cou'd not make him perfect, and throughly furnish'd unto all good works, that is, wise unto Salvation; seeing Faith in Christ is requir'd to that, according to Verse the 15\textsuperscript{th}; if it do's, either the Scriptures of the Old Testament are the Scriptures of the New, that is, Judaism is Christianity, which is impossible, since the Jews profess the one and deny the other; or else the Scriptures of both are joyn'd together in the \textit{πᾶν \textit{ττημα}}, and are the same with the \textit{τὸ \textit{εἴσα \\textit{γελμα}}, or the Jewish Writings annex't to \textit{τῆς \textit{Xe ν\\textit{Iησω}}, which includes the Christian, and is that for which we contend.

§ 17. Let us therefore, after this long Interruption, and after clearing the Difficulties that seem to encounter the plain and evident Design of this place, upon which we are now discoursing, let us proceed to the first Proposition we mention'd, which was, that Christianity, and the Scriptures that assert it, are the best and truest Measures of our Faith and Belief: For, how is it possible it shou'd be otherwise, since we have already evinc'd them to be Divine? What comes from God must surely deserve our highest Esteem and Veneration, and will be infinitely to be preferr'd before any Human Systems, how rational...
rational soever they may appear: Reason is but a dim Light in comparison with Revelation; and like the Eye in respect of the Body, so it, in respect of the Mind, only or principally serves us in the gross Occasions of Life, to judge what is necessary and convenient to be done, in order to its support, it cannot reach far into the Nature and Conditions of that which we are to lead hereafter; this Deft & Revelation abundantly supplies, as it furnishes us with all those mighty Truths which concern the Blessedness of a future State, and teaches us the way to obtain it.

§. 18. Nor are the Deists, and the Men of Science and Affectation here alone justly blameable, who set up their admir'd Talent of Argument and Syllogism, in opposition to their Religion, which yet in a thousand Instances often proves to be, as the Apostle says in a like case, fallly so call'd; we have also from hence good reason to condemn the Church of Rome, who errs on another, tho' a better Extreme, as Superstition is better than Atheism; or to give them the most favourable Names, as Christianity, tho' with some additional Errors, is more to be valued than plain Heathenism: We have, I say, just grounds to condemn that Church, which makes its Traditions of an equal
A Demonstration of the Divinity Authority at least with the Holy Scriptures, in ascertaining and determining the Rule of our Faith in its full Extent.

§. 19. I call the Church of Rome a Christian one, whose Errors are rather to be pity'd and commiserated than insulted; and we cannot but think, tho' its inveterate Persecutions of us, and the Cruelties it has been too sadly guilty of, in suppressing, if possible, the growing Reformation, might (if any thing else) give us not altogether unjust Suspicion of its being Antichristian; yet we cannot but be persuaded, that it is not altogether so bad as some Men wou'd make it, who under the Odium it has contracted by such unwarrantable Methods, as well as by its Errors, wou'd endeavour to banish all Religion out of the World; by affixing the Name of Popery and Superstition to it; we shall therefore against such Men be so bold as to affirm, that however the Reformation has suffer'd from the Church of Rome, it has that true Christianity as to forgive the Injuries that have been done it, and that it firmly believes, notwithstanding the ill usage it has met with from her, and the Errors she maintains, which rather than reproach her with, we most compassionately lament; that she professes the Faith of Christ, that she has been
of the Christian Religion. 175

a means of preserving it to us; that tho' her Foundations are charg'd with an unweildy bulk of Ceremonies and Superstitious Rites, which might be omitted, or of soul and palpable Mistakes, which might be easily redress'd, the Foundations themselves are yet safe and untouch'd; that at the worst, she is Christianity Unreform'd, which is much better than none; as Episcopacy, Presbytery, and the other present Denominations of Christianity, are no other than the Church of Rome, unless in Reformation.

§. 20. But some are so mad, and so exceedingly rage against her, spirited with a furious and passionate Zeal, for themselves and their own Atheism, that they seem to be very willing to prefer the Sacrifices of the Heathens, or the Alcoran of Mahomet, or even Irreligion itself (as one modestly says) before her; but far be it from us to subscribe to the Opinions of these Men: O my Soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their Assembly let not us be united. We freely own there is more Sense and more Religion in Popery, let its Errors be as many as they please, than not only in Atheism, but which is the same, than in any pretended or vain Systems of Reason, which these Triflers in Philosophy can propose: for if the Church of
A Demonstration of the Divinity of Rome embraces the Scriptures, and all the Essentials of Christianity, and we have prov'd them to come from God, whatever has been superadded cannot diminish, only envelop and obscure this Divine Religion.

§. 21. And Pity it is but that Holy and Apostolical See, which once shone amongst the Churches of God with an Eminent Brightness and Purity, which was the great Bulwark of our Religion, against the continual Shocks and Attempts of Heathenism and Idolatry; which by the Piety and Illustriousness of its Examples, and the Sincerity and Truth of its Doctrines, gave, as we may justly imagine, a strong impression of the Valuableness and Esteem of our Christianity, upon the whole Roman Empire; Pity surely it is, that such a See is not restor'd to its Native Beauty and Perfections, that it do's not wipe off the Stains and Blemishes it has gather'd, by an universal Reformation; and in particular, by making once more the Holy Scriptures the Compleat and Absolute Rule of their Faith and Practice. This wou'd revive its Antient Glory, and make it a Terror to, as it is at present the Scorn of the common Adversaries of Religion.
§. 22. Lastly, are not our Brethren of the Reformation, who dissent from us, to be justly blam'd, who withdraw themselves from a Church, and from an Episcopacy, in general, which asserts the Sufficiency of the Scriptures, to direct us in what we ought to believe; which makes the Word of God, and those Divine Books, whose Authority we have endeavoured to prove, the Measure and Standard of their Faith? It is not to be doubted but there are several Good and Excellent Men amongst them, whose Piety and Morals, as well as Learning, we have great reason to esteem and value; and if our Difference in Opinion disjoyns us, our Christianity ought to produce some kind of Union, at least, in our Affections; but they would do well to consider, whether it is not a causeless Separation from us, which they encourage; we propose the Scriptures for the Rule of our Faith, they are read publickly in our Churches, and we are desirous to appeal to them in all our Doctrines, which are deliver'd from the Pulpit; what manner of Objection can be against such a sincere and open Profession of the Christian Religion?

§. 23. On the other hand, in the Assemblies of our Brethren, who separate from us, the Scriptures are not alike publickly and
constantly inculcated, unless in Humane Compositions and Discourses upon them, which, whilst they are made exclusive of the Scriptures themselves, what is it but preferring our own Commentaries to the real Word of God; and if it is not locking them up in an Unknown Language, it is at least confining them to speak in our own, and not permitting them to explain themselves in their Proper and Genuine address to our Thoughts and Understandings; and if such a Practice shou'd universally obtain, what wou'd become of these Holy Oracles of our Religion, when Men wou'd seldom or never hear them in their purity, but shap'd and contriv'd into Doctrines, suitable to the Temper or Pleasure of the Expounder; a way that wou'd not fall much short of the Romanists, since this likewise wou'd oblige their Followers to judge of the Sense and Meaning of the Scriptures by a kind of Oral Tradition.

§. 24. Such a Usage as this, therefore, we cannot but highly condemn, under the same Head, with that of the Church of Rome; in which respect our Brethren the Dissenters do more essentially agree with that Church, than we do in any Instance that can be nam'd, however warmly the Charge of Popery has been pursu'd against us.
us; but God forbid that we shou'd al-
ledge this by way of Recriminating upon
them; the extreme Charity of our Church
induces it to forgive those Indignities,
which have been offer'd it, instead of re-
senting them; and we rather bring it as
a just accusation of the Practice of our
Dissenting Brethren, in Vindication of
these Sacred Writings, than with any De-
sign of multiplying Charges against them,
and likewise as an Argument to them to
think more candidly of the Primitive and
Apostolical Discipline, which we exercise
in our Publick Worship of God, and
with less partiallity and prejudice of that
which they have so zealously, but with
less Reason espous'd.

§.25. The Second thing in relation to the
Scriptures was, that they afford us the no-
bliest and justest Rules for our Conduct
and Practice, and this also is evident from
their being Divine: Besides which, what
were all the Systems of Ethicks before Chri-
tianity appear'd? They were little more
than Collections of the several Topicks,
under the general Heads of Honesty or Ho-
nour, which was divided into what was
right, and what was commendable: the
first of which contain'd the four Cardi-
nal Vertues, of Prudence, Justice, For-
titude, and a Moderation of our Ap-
M 2 petites,
petites; and the last, all those things which by Custom and Prescription, or any other way, had gain'd the Repute and Applause of the Times: to make a Comparison betwixt which and the Christian Institution, we only need to take two different Examples, of which the Age on the one hand gives us too many Instances. Let us conceive an exactly temperate and sober Person, who is prudent, courageous and just, according to the Tenour of the foremention'd Vertues, who complies in other Respects with the humour and bent of the Times, takes up their Fashions, and in all Cases conforms himself to the Carelesses of those about him; who will not suffer any Blemish to taint or fully his Reputation, but is ready to demand a full Satisfaction for any Injuries that shall be offer'd him in that kind, which is all comprehended under what they call Com- mendable. This seems to be a true Representation of what the World now-a-days terms a Person of Honour, as it was what the Heathens formerly meant by Morality.

S. 26. Let us now on the other hand consider a temperate and sober Person, and strict even to the practising the utmost Austerities and Mortifications, who denies himself the innocent Freedoms of Life,
Life, that he may do good to others, and even relieves the Necessities of his indigent Brethren, by sparing something from his own Enjoyments; who is likewise prudent, not for his own Interest, but that of his Fellow Creatures; who is just, by being more than that, Charitable and Merciful; who is courageous and resolute, not in vindicating his own Honour, which he disregards, but that of Almighty God and Religion; not in revenging the Injuries that shall be done him, but in forgiving them, and supporting with Firmness and Constancy any Afflictions which shall befall him in the Discharge of his Duty; who do's not make the Opinions or the Applause of the Times the Measure of his Actions, but looks up to Heaven for his Direction; who, in short, spends his Life betwixt his Charity and his Devotions, the one prompting him to do all the Good which lies in his Power, and the other to prostrate himself before the Author of his Being, in the several Duties of his Religion, with the humblest and profoundest Adoration. This seems, tho' an imperfect, yet a Character ample enough for us to distinguish a Good Christian, from the foregoing Description of a Moralift or a Heathen.
§. 27. Let any one now judge, when these Two are compar'd together, which of them deserves our greatest Love and Esteem; whether the Person of Heroism and Morality, who in a great measure makes himself the Idol of his Devotion, or the true humble and modest Christian; who has nothing more intimate to his Affections, than the Worship and Service of Almighty God, and the real Good of Mankind; if the last do's, what can we conclude, but that the Christian Ethicks are extremely superior to any Systems of Reason the Enemies of Religion can, or even to those wiser which the Heathens have propos'd.

§. 28. And we may justly call them Wiser, since they were form'd by Men, upon a cool Sense of things, and upon a deliberate and unprejudic'd use of their Reason, which tho' it cou'd not carry its Deductions beyond its own Limits, or farther than it self extended; yet those Systems appear to be unpassionate, and without any other Design, than to be as good Conclusions as cou'd be made from it. But the Adveraries of Religion give us new Schemes, as it is manifest, not out of any real love to Truth, tho' they often professit, but purely out of Envy to the Authority of the Old, as might be evinc'd from
of the Christian Religion. 183
from several places, which it were easy
to cite out of those kind of Authors;
but where an inveterate Prejudice, where
a confirm'd and settled Malice and Re-
sentment lies at the bottom of Men's
Writings, is there any just Reasoning to
be expected from such Systems and Com-
positions? I'm afraid not, and we may
therefore deservedly prefer the Offices of
Tully, or the Ethicks of Aristotle, to any
such New and Upstart Pretences, which
in effect and reality have more solid Judg-
ment and Sense in them: and if Christia-
nity and the Scriptures have prevail'd
against those more Celebrated and Noble
Writers, we believe, and hope, the Pro-
vidence of God, and the Great and Su-
blime Doctrines of our Religion, will be
able to justify them against the weak Ef-
forts of a few impotent and designing
Atheists.

§.29. To finish these Discourses, which
we have had upon the present Subject;
the last Particular mention'd in the Pri-
mary Division of our Argument, was the
Design and Intention of these Writings,
That the Man of God might be perfect,
throughly furnish'd unto all good works: 'tis
true, what is here call'd the Man of God,
by the scope and drift of the Apostle, seems
more especially to respect Timothy him-
self, and in him the Rulers of the Church;

but
but we shall take this Expression in a larger sense, to signify every Christian in particular, as well as the Bishops and the rest of the Clergy; since no one will say, that the Scriptures were only written for them; if they were, they have from hence a good Claim to keep them out of the hands of the Laity, contrary to the receiv'd Doctrine of the Reformation; if they were not written for the Governours of the Church only, then their Design and Intention, that the Man of God might be furnish'd to all good works, was not limited neither, but must necessarily be suppos'd to extend to every private Professor of Christianity.

§. 30. We have yet to do with a sort of Men in this Age, who think themselves excus'd from any Duties of their Religion, by putting the whole Practice of it upon those who preach and inculcate it to the World; and suitable to this, how often do we hear Men of the vilest and most profligate Lives, who seem to have no regard to any thing that is good and vertuous, intemperately calling for the Severe and Regular Conduct of the Ministry, as if the Scriptures, or the Injunctions they give, did not appertain to them? Whereas, if they believe these Divine Oracles, and that their everlasting
Salvation depends upon a due Observance of them; what will it avail them, that other Men, or that even the Affer tors and Preachers of the Gospel are not so perfect as they wou'd desire? Will it satisfy their own Obligations to the Precepts the Scriptures bind upon us? Or are they the better themselves, because others are not so good as they might be? 'Tis a vain Affectation of Vertue and Religion, and will not prove of any Service in the end, at the Great Day of Accounts, (whatever Impressions it may make upon weak Minds here) for us to imagine we are really more conscientious and good in our Actions, by being able to calumniate and disparage any Order of Men whatsoever, much less the most Sacred our Religion owns; but how heavy will our ill Actions and Principles fall upon us, when to palliate them, (and with no other Design) we traduce much better?

§. 31. Again, If the Holy Scriptures were intended for the Reformation of ev'ry particular Person, those who are the more immediate Dispensers of 'em to others, shou'd take at least an equal, if not a greater care to exact their Lives according to the Doctrines they prescribe: The Pastors of God's Church (and the Bishops of it) still in a more transcendent manner
A Demonstration of the Divinity
manner) are surely oblig’d to the highest Acts of Piety and Goodness, to propose nothing to themselves but the Glory of God, and the tenderest regard to their Fellow-Creatures; to devote themselves of every thing that is selfish, and only to consult the true Genius and noble Spirit of their most Holy and Divine Religion; this, if all of us wou’d endeavour to do, in our several Capacities, it is not to be doubt-ed, but by the Blessing of God, it wou’d rise to its Ancient Grandeur and Esteem; and as it put on its Primitive Purity, so it wou’d likewise shine, with the same Glorious Luftre, to the confusion of its most inveterate Enemies and Opposers.

Which that it may do, God Almighty grant, for the sake of our ever Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, Three Persons and One God, be all Majesty and Dominion, Power and Obedience, now and ever.
A DISCOURSE,
To prove that Matters of Faith are equally, if not more demonstrable, than those of Reason.

HEB. II. VER. 1.
Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen.

§. 1. One would be apt to admire, considering the several Humours and Fancies in the World, which pass for Sense and good Argument, that Men shou'd be so very ambitious to distinguish themselves from all other Orders of Creatures by their Reason, rather than their Religion; especially since we find so many Beings, much inferior to us, endu'd with those Faculties, and performing those Actions which do powerfully persuade us they have a Principle within them, which makes very near approaches to the one; whereas they do not convince us, by any thing we can observe, that they are at all concern'd, or in the least acquainted with the other.

§. 2. And yet Men have carry'd this point so high, and have seem'd to value themselves so much upon this Distinction of their being Rational, that they have in a manner made it their Plea to jufte
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Religion out of all its Pretensions, and will scarcely allow it any right or privilege of Jurisdiction in our Natures, they are so extravagantly pleas’d with their wonderful knack of marshalling of Propositions, and ordering of Syllogisms, that it is a hard matter now-a-days to make ’em relish any thing else; every one almost sets up for a Man of Reason and Science, whereas few take care of, or seem to be any ways concern’d for, their Faith and Religion, they are extremely cautious to avoid the Imputation of Ignorance and folly; but if they are too modest to be proud of their Vices, they are at least much at ease as to their being profane and wicked; too many think it no scandal, and there are not those wanting who esteem it matter of Glory.

§. 3. In short, Reason has usurp’d by its Artifice and Cunning, and its subtle and plausible Insinuations, an unwarrantable Power and Authority and (as Ambition never stops at the most tyrannical and the most unjustifiable Actions, where Empire is the Quarry in view) that it may Lord it with a more Unlimited and Arbitrary sway, Religion and Morality are depos’d and suspended from their governing Influence, are made to submit to the pleasure of this new Pretender, and, we have occasion to fear, an Act is pass’d with some
of the Christian Religion.

some of its Votaries for the perpetual banishment of 'em out of the World.

§. 4. To bring therefore what succours we are able to Religion and Morality, in so sad an Exigence, and under so injurious a Treatment, to restore them to their due Prerogative and Esteem, and defend them from the outrage and violence of so bold an Invader, we shall draw a parallel betwixt Faith, and what is generally call'd Reason: We shall to that purpose consider the Nature and Meaning of both, we shall shew the vast preference there is of one to the other, even in respect of certainty, and prove that we have Demonstration for our Religion in the strictest Sense, namely, that Faith is the substance, or as the Original signifies, the assurance of things hoped for, and the Evidence of things not seen.

§. 5. But before we proceed any farther, it will be necessary to establish a true Notion of certainty, and what may properly be term'd Demonstration; this, as plain as it appears, has exercis'd two very Celebrated Pens in a tedious Dispute about it, and what we ought to understand by it; whether the Person who oppos'd that Reverend Prelate, has spent more Wit or more Judgment upon his Cause,
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Cause, whether he has been more lavish of his Fancy or his Argument is not very difficult to determine; for Personal Certainty which we distinguish from a real, (name it as we please) whatever difference some have thought fit to make between it and Assurance, cannot be reasonably discern'd from it, since it is nothing else but a Conviction or Persuasion of the Mind, that a thing is what we apprehend it to be; a Demonstration to us is likewise such a Persuasion; and if Assurance can be any thing less, it wholly proceeds from a Compliance in the Name, and not in the Subject, to be what we are resolv'd to call it.

§. 6. But if Men will not change, and mint words at pleasure, and are only ready to submit to the Laws and Properties of Speaking, they must own that all these signify the same Act of the Mind; nor can the ways by which Certainty is convey'd, tho' very different, make any alteration in the Impression, either we must be convince'd or not convince'd, certain or not certain; and it is in vain to think of trimming up a Middle Assent to the Mind, and then name it Assurance, which shall not infer our Certainty, and yet shall not be a proof that we are uncertain; this is to sham and abuse us out of our Reli-
of the Christian Religion.

... by a wise Method indeed, and to make us renounce the Certainty of our Faith, by endeavouring to make us believe a Contradiction; that we may not be certain of our Religion, and yet shall not be uncertain of it, or which is all one, that we may be certain and uncertain of any thing at the same time; these Men grant, that we may be assur'd of our Religion, so far as to exclude all Doubt concerning it, and yet will not allow us to be certain of it. Let the World judge, whether this is not a nice and curious Distinction, and to all appearance as much without a difference as perhaps the subtilest we shall meet with.

§. 7. We are told indeed, that a Certain Belief is impossible; it is by those Persons notwithstanding, who, it seems, can very well understand what the meaning is of a probable Assurance or Certainty; and why not a Certain Belief? Are we incapable of being sure or certain of what we give our compleat and unreserv'd Assent and Credit to? Did none of us ever meet with a Person in the World, the Truth of whose Affirmations we cou'd be as well satisfy'd of, as that we heard them; to whom we cou'd say, we absolutely and entirely believ'd him, that we had not the least doubt concerning what he allieg'd, and that we cou'd...
192. *A Demonstration of the Divinity* could stake our Lives, or any thing else, upon the Assurance and perfect Conviction we had of his Fidelity, that we were peremptory he did not deceive us, and we could no more distrust him than the positive and undoubted Informations of our own Minds or our Senses?

§. 8. These Men are much to be pity’d, if it was never their good fortune to meet with such a one; when, God be thank’d; Mankind is not so far sunk in its Reputation for Integrity, but we can firmly and confidently believe one another in most things, which belong even to the ordinary management and conduct of our Lives. We can build Ships, and be at the Expence of their Freight, and hazard all we are worth upon the Seas, in the belief that there is such a Country as Spain or the Indies, but will any one say, this is not a Certain Belief? That we are not as much assur’d of it, as if we were actually upon the place; and that we run a venture after all our cost and preparation of ever finding either, tho’ we shou’d make use of as prosperous a Voyage, as we cou’d desire or wish? Are we not as certain, and do’s not the persuasion stick as fast, and ly as deep in our Minds, that there are such places as York or Edinburgh, as if we our selves had seen them; as if any one shou’d propose to us the most infallible Truth.
of the Christian Religion. 193

Truth, and the most indisputable Proposition in the Mathematicks? And yet this Certainty is founded upon our Belief; and our full acquiescence in the Veracity of others. But to render this still clearer, and to put it beyond all Contradiction, we shall consider the Nature of Faith, and afterwards that of Reason, and prove that there is more certainty to be expected from the one than the other.

§ 9. Faith then is, as the Apostle calls it, the Evidence of things not seen; it is not a Belief in that sense which some Men apprehend, but in that which we have already explain'd; however, seeing they have thought it worth their pains, instead of pursuing true Knowledge, which they pretend to prefer, the Critick and Chicaning upon words, which they would seem to disregard, we shall not call Faith a Belief, but a Perfect Assent of the Mind to things which are not seen, a full Assurance and Conviction which we have receiv'd, and an undoubted certainty which we have of those things, which we were never Eye-witnesses of, which we cannot prove by Lines and Angles, and only depend upon the Credit and Report of others, for our Information. That Men do give such an Assent, that they actually lye under such Convictions, we do and
must take for granted; since we will appeal to any one, Whether he is not as really assure'd, and as certain, that there are other Men in the World besides those, we will suppose, whom he now sees, who live and breath, and act as if they were present to his Senses? Whether he is not as much satisfy'd and as infallibly convinc'd, that there is such a place as Italy or Rome, as France or Paris, as if he had liv'd and receiv'd his Education there? This therefore is the Evidence of things not seen, and this is the Apostle's Definition of Faith, which we shall endeavour to maintain.

§. 10. As for Reason, in opposition to Faith, it is the Evidence of things which are seen; it is the same Assent as to the Mind with the other, but to that which lies within every one's View, which his Thoughts or his Senses contemplate and behold, and in which he thinks he cannot possibly be deceive'd; if our Thoughts are employ'd in the search, and we rest in the Notices they bring us, it goes by the Name of Knowledge, if our Senses, of Perception; so that in respect of the Impressions made upon our Minds, either by Faith or by Reason, it is manifest they are the same, and only disagree in the Methods and Ways of producing
of the Christian Religion.

cing our Assent, which we shall now examine.

§. 11. The First, they will tell us, is founded upon Probabilities, and the Second proceeds upon plain Arguments and Demonstration; the Question is not, therefore, Whether we are convinced by either; but whether we have reason to be so, personal Certainty is the Result of both; but a Man may be certain of a thing for which he has no good grounds; he may find his Assent wholly determined from very false and precarious, or from weak and incompetent Motives; he may be confident he sees and knows what perhaps he really does not: and therefore, it will, in the Third place, be necessary to enquire, Whether the real Certainty of Faith, or that of Reason is preferable, upon the account of the Premises from which it is drawn; that is, whether the Mind may more reasonably assent to those matters which are well attested, or to those which are recommended to us from our own Knowledge or Perception; and from thence we shall learn, Whether Faith or Reason depends most upon Probabilities; and which of them puts in the better Title to Evidence and Demonstration; and I am apt to think upon a view of the whole, it will be granted, that it belongs to the former;
§ 12. All the Objection that I know of, which lies against our being certain from the Testimony of others, is, because there is a possibility of our being deceiv'd, either by the Mistake or the Dizingenuity of those who challenge our Assent, or by their want of Power and Capacity, or of Will to inform us; which is the same as to say, because Men may be designing, or because they are fallible, therefore we cannot in any case be sure that what they affirm is true; if this then is sufficient to destroy our Certainty from Faith, it will equally hold against that of our Senses, and our Reason; for do they not impose upon us in a multitude of Instances? do they not deceive our Caution, and baffle our strongest Guards and our strictest Watches; and continually sooth and flatter us into Error, and ensnare us into some false and undue conclusions or other, in spite of all our Care, and all our Diligence and Pains to avoid 'em?

§ 13. As to our Senses in particular, their Impostures are great and notorious; they are continually practicing upon our Easiness, and take a pleasure, as it were, in
in playing upon and abusing us: if any Man were to form his Judgment according to what he sees, who wou'd think the Sun several Millions of Miles above us, or that it was bigger than many of our Earths put together; were our Sight alone to be advis'd with, it wou'd tell us the quite contrary; and had there not been Methods found out to convince us what ill Reasoners our Senses prove, we might, upon their views, have been perhaps as positive of their being in the Right, as we now know they are in the Wrong: and thus it is in our Reasonings, or at least in those of the Persons who pretend most to 'em, in opposition to our Religion, they judge according to what they presume they see and apprehend, they are clear and determin'd in their decisions, and will not allow it is possible for them to be mistaken; whereas they do not consider that all this Certainty, which they so much cry up and applaud, is only the Consequence of their own Principles, which tho' they may believe they see and discern never so distinctly, may after all appear to be the Effects of too narrow a Sight, and too cramp't and contracted a Comprehension.

§. 14. This is plain in Fact, that the greatest Wits and the most industrious Inquirers into things, have been misled into
A Demonstration of the Divinity into an Assurance, which has afterwards only given them the Shame of repenting it: how many Books have been writ; how many Disputes maintain'd, how many Contests rais'd and carry'd on, and with what Heat and Vehemence, as well as at other times, with what Calmness and Sobriety; and on both hands, with what a Mien of Confidence and Satisfaction that they are each in the right, tho' they are as different in their Opinions, and as widely distant in their Positions and Assertions, as they can well be?

§ 15. That this is so, is more particularly evident in the Controversies, the several Doctrines and Hypotheses of Men, who resign themselves wholly to the weak and glimmering Light of Reason; who make high claims to the Knowledge and Science of Nature, and believe themselves the only understanding Men in being, and that the rest of Mankind are little better than Fools or Ideots; and yet I wou'd be glad to be inform'd of any Arguments almost, which they have assure'd to us, that do not depend upon Surmises or bare Suspicions, or disputable grounds, or plain Falshoods; where is there now one Sage Possessor of Theorems and Axioms amongst them, who is not positive of a void space in the Universe? And notwithstanding this
of the Christian Religion.

this firm and invincible persuasion which they have, there is nothing more demonstrable than that all their Arguments for it, are only so many Affirmations of what was intended to be prov'd; and these yet are the Men, who by the same trifling and ludicrous way, and with much jangle and insignificant proofs, endeavour to pervert and ruin our Faith; and after all this huge pains and labour which they take, they will find at the bottom, that their best Evidence against Religion, is their saying there is none.

§. 16. But let us leave these Arguers of an Hypothetick and supposing Head, and carry our searches even to that part of Knowledge, which has all along had the Character of Demonstrative, and we shall perceive, that there likewise something else reigns than pure Conviction; 'tis true it is a retir'd Study, and skreen'd by its obscurity and Reservedness from common Eyes, and so is not so liable to the Observation and Animadversions of others; nor sometimes of its own Professors; this indeed is sufficient to palliate its Fallacies and Vices, to hide its Failings and Imperfections, and to keep them from being expos'd to publick contempt and scorn: but it is no more excus'd from Defects, for their not being

N 4.
A Demonstration of the Divinity vulgarly known, than a Man is without Faults or Blemishes, who has the Art and Skill to dissemble them. What are the Famous Disputes concerning the Angle of Contact, the Diameters of certain Curve Figures, the Doctrine of Fluxions, and the Arithmetick of Infinites, with several other points in that Science, the harshness of whose sound will make me forbear to mention them? What are the several fruitless Attempts upon some Questions and Problems, which have been hitherto unresolv'd and unanswer'd; in all which cases, the different parties have appeal'd to their Arguments for their Justification? What are they, I say, but undeniable Examples of the Fallibility even of that which is pretended to be no less than Mathematick and uncontrollable Evidence? Not to say (which we shall prove upon another occasion) that the greatest part of that Knowledge rests as much upon Authority, as perhaps it do's on Reason; and that it is rather suited to our use, than to the Truth and Reality of things, and rather to our present, than possibly to our future, and our more finished and more exact Conceptions.

§ 17. In conclusion, what we generally call Certainty and Demonstration, is in other terms nothing but Fancy and Opinion,
of the Christian Religion. nion, and to be convinc'd that a thing is such, is not always a proof that it is such; we may be certain of being in the right, even when we are in an Error, and doubtful, tho' we have Truth on our side; and there is nothing more than Temper and Complexion requir'd, to make us sure on the one hand, and unsatisfy'd on the other, where there is a peculiar Boldness and Forwardness infused into our Natures, or a mixture of Credulity, and an Aptness to believe, or an extreme Devotion, and an unreasonable Deference to the Sentiments and Authority of other Men, or to our own Parts and understandings, we are likely enough to be carry'd into a Confidence, that we have nothing less than Demonstration to support us; when, perhaps, in the end it may be a fond Conceit of our own cherishing: on the contrary, a Man that is naturally timorous and modest, whose Inclination and Genius leads him to Distrust his best and his closest Reasonings, may fear the worst, and be apprehensive of a Mistake, even where his Arguments are conclusive, and his Notions found and agreeable to the unalterable and essential Qualities of things.

§ 18. From whence it follows that Personal Certainty is not always, and per-
haps very seldom, the Measure of Truth, but of our own Apprehensions; and when some call for it so strenuously, in Matters of Religion, it is not because it is really wanting, but because it is not fitted to their Taste and Relish, to whom that seems forcible and valid, which falls in with their Interest and Humour, not which agrees with their true and unprejudic'd Reason, whose Faculties lye more in knowing what pleases and what obliges them, than in any accurate and solid thinking, and whose Demonstrations or their Notices, are only the Effects of mere Whimsy and Imagination.

§. 19. But if Certainty is many times an Assent of the Mind upon false Appearances, it will be probably ask'd, Whether we can ever know what is true and what is not, in matters of Argument and Persuasion; since our strongest Convictions sometimes serve only to put the cheat upon and amuse us: to which we answer, That it is one of the most difficult things in the World to do it, but that it is not impossible; that we may steer as prudently and as cautiously as we are able betwixt the Atheist or the Deist, which are in truth the same, who takes ev'ry thing for good Sense, which agrees with his own Conceits, and the Sceptical Person
§. 20. For, _First_, it is evident we must be well assured of the Grounds and Principles upon which we proceed; that is, of the several single Conceptions which we make use of in any Demonstration, that they are just, and in all respects answerable and proportion'd to the things we intend to consider; and in consequence of this Rule, we must be careful that they are not Impressions either deriv'd from Authority, or produc'd by any Chymical Fancies, or palm'd upon us by long Custom and Familiarity; they must exactly, and to the utmost Nicety, and the smallest Distinction, correspond with the subject of 'em; which cannot many times be known that they do, unless where our Conceptions are abstracted from any thing foreign to 'em, and consequently, are the Standard and Measure of themselves; that is, where the Mind argues not upon things as they are, but as they are conceiv'd; and which is founded upon this one plain Proposition, that what we see and apprehend, we do see and apprehend; so that all the Arguments made use

of the Christian Religion. 203

son, who will not allow any thing to be so; it is therefore, we affirm, the most difficult thing in the World to arrive at the knowledge of what is real Truth in our Conclusions from Reason.
§ 21. But then, over and above, it is
Secondly requir'd, that we always keep our
first Notions steady, that we do not change
nor alter them by any Carelessness or Inadvertency
in the progress of our Reasonings;
that we maintain their Respects and Relations
firm and immutable, and guard against
all their several Interferings; and this is so
hard a Province, that few Men, even of the
best Geometricians, have been in all Cases
sufficient for it; they have frequently lost
themselves in the Perplexedness and Obscurity,
or in the Length and Prolixity of
their Demonstrations; and it is very often
that they make use of a Proposition as
prov'd in general, which they have evinc'd
only upon certain Suppositions, and so many
times apply it in other Demonstrations,
where the Suppositions are either very
different, or directly contrary: And this is
a Fault which runs thro' the greatest part
§ 22. And thus we see how difficult it is in some Cases, and how impossible almost in others, to attain at any true and infallible Inferences from Reason; we must be sure that we are wholly unprejudic'd, either from our Complexions and Natures, or our Educations; we must be satisfy'd that we have not too overweening an Opinion of any Man's Authority, or our own Parts and Sagacity; we must only carry our Eye level at Truth, and suffer nothing to interrupt or divert that Prospect; we must consider withall that Truth is only the Measure of it self, and not our Certainty; and, therefore, where we design our Notions shou'd ly parallel with it, we must confine them only to what are usually call'd Identical Propositions, and to the several Relations and Proportions of them; in the comparing of which, we must be well appriz'd of our Abilities, and the Firmness of our Thoughts, that they do not relent or recoil, that they do not vary or change shape in the whole process of our Arguings; and whether our Adversaries in their Disputes
s. 23. Let us now therefore examine, whether we are not furnish'd with as good or a clearer Evidence for what we believe upon the Report and Credit of such, whom we have not any reason to suspect they wou'd deceive us, and first, we can be as sure that those Actions which we see done, we see done, or that that Person or Place, or Thing which we see, we do see, as we can be of our own Thoughts, that what we think or apprehend, we do think or apprehend; the Ground therefore of our Faith is as positive and certain as that of Mathematicks themselves; so that if we can prove an Action, when it is well attested, is as demonstrative, as that which we have been witnesses of; it will be consequent from thence that we have a greater Evidence for Religion, than for the plainest Proposition in Geometry; since we can be surer of the Grounds and Principles of a Science, than of any Deductions or labour'd Inferences from them (which, as we have already shewn, are many times false, and never true, but under a world of Cautions) and much more there-
S. 24. There are then two cases, in which we may be as certain from the evidence of others as from our own sight and perception; namely, either when it is deriv'd to us from those who are capable of informing us, and can harbour no designs of abusing us; when the Reporters are Men who make a conscience of their affirmations, and are altogether unpractis'd in the base arts of imposing on others; who know not what it is to be guilty of a falsehood, and would not dissemble the truth from us upon any considerations; or else where the Informers are not always the most credible, yet the number of them is so great, and it comes so universally witness'd on all hands, that it were madness to disbelieve it.

In the first case, it is no more than for us to assent to this proposition, that he, who will not deceive us, will not deceive us; and in the second, where a multitude of attestators of different inclinations and opinions, and of different aims and interests, agree in the affirming any certain thing, that thing must as necessarily exist, according to their apprehensions, as several lines of a different inclination falling into the same point must suppose a centre; but
but those Apprehensions in Matters of Fact must be agreeable to the Matters of Fact which are apprehended; upon the former Principle, which we mention'd, That what we see, we do see; so that Faith, or Belief, in these Cases, is as certain as the very Grounds of Mathematicks, and therefore more certain than those Demonstrations, which are deriv'd from them, which are sometimes erroneous, and do frequently lead us into sophistical and wrong Conclusions.

§. 25. And as the Principles of that Science, besides their Self-evidence, receive an additional Proof from the Rules which they furnish us with for our Practice; as Measuring and Accounting; so likewise do these hold in the Events and Conversation of the World; we find it plain in Experience, that we may believe, on either of these Conditions, with as much Certainty, as we can perceive or see. Where we are fully inform'd of any one's Probity, of his Integrity and Religion, we can as securely trust him as our selves, and in truth meet with no more Disappointments from such a Faith, than from the Convictions of our Senses. Again, when there is the concurrent Report of good Men, or of a multitude, even of ill Men, do we not find things answerable
of the Christian Religion. 209
to our Belief, whenever we are willing
to make the trial? Did ever any one miss
of seeing France or the Hague, if what
he had been so often told of, he was de-
finous to be convince'd of by his own
Eyes? So that our Reasonings, upon Be-
lief, are as much confirm'd by what we
experience in Fact, as our Arguments in
Mathematics are by what is consequent
in their Use and Practice.

§. 26. And under these Circumstances
is the Belief of our Religion; for the Au-
thors of it, upon whose Credit we de-
pend, cou'd not be sway'd by any In-
terest, unless Reproaches and Persecu-
tions, Disgrace and contumelious Usage,
Afflictions and Difficulties, and Hard-
ships, Poverty and Labour, Hunger and
Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, and encoun-
tering with innumerable Hazards and
Dangers, and at length the most grievous
Tortures, even unto Death it self, are real-
ly things desireable, and worth our Pur-
suit and Ambition; and if Men will not
venture to say, these might be so many
Incitements to the Apostles of our Lord,
to be the Promoters of an Imposture, I
will venture to say, they were so many
Arguments why they shou'd not enter
into such a Conceit of imposing upon the
whole World; they were Men un-
doubtedly, and cou'd not, no more than
O others,
others, be in love with their Miseries, and make it their business to effect and contrive their own Misfortunes.

§. 27. Besides this, they were Men in all respects of the most exact Honesty, and their Doctrine and Conversations turn'd wholly upon Piety and Vertue; they laid down their Lives in Confirmation of the Truth, which they had deliver'd; and if, after all this, such Men can be suppos'd to deceive us, without the greatest Absurdity and Contradiction imaginable, I must take the freedom to suppose there is no such place as Spain or the Indies, in the averring which truth, no one ever dy'd, no one ever gave the like Proofs with the first Christians of their Candour and Credibility; for we have not only the Testimony of the Apostles, but of all that Age and some following, to the Truth of our Christianity; which still retain'd the Spirit, deriv'd to 'em from their Forefathers, of suffering any Calamities, or any Torments, or any Death, rather than deny the Lord that bought them.

§. 28. And lastly, if this is not sufficient, we have likewise the concurrent Attestations of Persons, whose Inclinations, and whose Aims and Interests, were not only different, but contrary. The Jews, than whom no People were more superstitiously fond of the Rites and Ceremonies
remonies of their Ancestors, no People more zealous for their Worship, and more obstinately addicted to their Law, and the Religious Institutions, which they receiv’d from their Progenitors, and the great Founder of their Polity and Government, tho’ they perceiv’d Christianity wou’d rise upon the Ruin and Destruction of that, for which they had entertain’d the profoundest Veneration, which they accounted the dearest and most valuable Blessing they possess’d; tho’ they were aware how opposite it might be to their temporal Advantage, if it shou’d provoke the Romans to take away their Place and Nation: yet, notwithstanding all this, many of the Priests, and a great number of the Laity, believ’d in this Religion, profess’d their Faith in our Saviour and his Doctrine, and seal’d and confirm’d it with their Blood; and those who did not follow the same Methods with their Countrymen, cou’d not deny the Miracles that were done by the Christians of those Ages; St. Paul, who was a Persecutor of the Church, even to Rage and Madness, at length became a Convert to the Faith he had once destroy’d; and Josephus, one of their own Historians, a Levite, and who flourish’d not many Years after our Lord’s Crucifixion, if that Passage is genuine, which there is no more reason
A Demonstration of the Divinity
to dispute than any other in the same Au-
thor, gives a very full and significant En-
comium of our Saviour, and the wonderful
works he perform'd; from which the said
Historian cou'd not but think he was some-
thing more than Humane, as he himself
profesles.

§. 29. The Heathens, both Greek and
Barbarian, Elamites, Armenians, Mesopo-
tamians, all fell in with the same Belief of the
Blessed Jesus and his Miracles, and there-
fore it was that Christianity almost prevent-
ed the Apostles Preaching it; for it was
in a manner impossible, that they by their
own Affirmations shou'd bring so many
over to the Faith in so short a time, had
there not been a general Rumour spread
before of our Lord's Actions; which it is
evident there was, if we may credit Eufe-
bius, who tells us of a Letter written by Ab-
garus King of Edessa to our Saviour, with
an Invitation to him to come and shelter
Himself there, from the Malice and Per-
secution of the Jews. And amongst the
Romans particularly, both the Magistrates
and Philosophers, the greatest and most
inveterate Enemies the Christians had,
acknowledg'd the Wonders perform'd by
Him; the First by proposing He shou'd be
enroll'd amongst their Gods, which the Se-
rate refus'd only, because the Motion was
not first made by them; the Second, by set-
ting
of the Christian Religion. 213

ting up Apollonius Tyaneus in opposition to Him.

§. 30. The Valentinians made Him one of their Æons, or else deriv'd Him in a direct Line from them; and therefore, according to their Doctrine, confess'd Him to be of Divine Original. The Ebionites and Cerinthians never deny'd the Miracles He wrought; and Simon Magus, that great Impostor, who pretended to be God, wou'd at the same time take upon him to personate our Saviour.

§. 31. All the false Gospels and spurious Writings, which then swarm'd in the World, were so far from diminishing this Character, that they rather endeavour'd to raise it; and, as it is very common, when any Person has establish'd to himself a Reputation for Great and Glorious Achievements, whether a Hercules or a Theseus, to attribute those Actions to him which he never did; so it was not to be expected but that, here likewise, Forgeries wou'd be vented to the World, which yet do's not destroy or make void the Truth and Reality of those Actions and Miracles, which were confess'd and known, but builds and depends upon them, but confirms and supposes them.

§. 32. Here therefore is the Confession of all sorts of Men, driving at different Ends, and pursuing contrary Interests;
A Demonstration of the Divinity

and now, whereas any one of these Conditions, which we have nam'd, were enough to make a thing credible, even to Demonstration, we have every one of 'em; we have the Probity of the Assertors, the Unprofitableness and Disadvantage of affirming such a Falsehood, and not only the general Concurrence of Persons, whose Designs were too different and disagreeing to be owing to any joynt or unanimous Concert, but whose Prejudices and violent Dispositions, and private Reserves, would have put another Bias upon their Acknowledgments, had not Truth and Matter of Fact carry'd them to own what was so universally known and believ'd.

§. 33. To conclude all, I will only put this Case; suppose our Saviour had been born in this Nation, and in the present Age we live in, had Taught that Doctrine which we preach, had wrought those Miracles in confirmation of it, which we affirm, had given those Proofs of his Divine Mission, which we contend; what had been the Consequences of it, but what we are inform'd were, that some would have written a true account of his Life, and others would have forg'd one; some would have believ'd, others not; some would have follow'd their Convictions, and others their Interests and their Prejudice; as to which, even in the greatest Con-
Concerns of their Religion, we find Men
now-a-days neither freer, nor less obno-
rious than those Antient Times, however
forward we are to condemn them; since
notwithstanding we have all these Evi-
dences for the Truth of our Holy Faith,
which are as great as ever the Jews had;
there are not those wanting amongst us,
who if it lay in their power, it is to be
fear'd, wou'd again crucify their Lord, and
put him to open Shame.

S. 34. And now, after this Demonstrata-
tion of our Religion, allow me to make
these Two short Reflexions.

First, Upon the Wisdom and Goodness
of God, who has provided for us a bet-
ter Evidence by our Faith of all the Do-
ctrines, which are reveal'd to us for our Af-
sent or Practice, than we cou'd possibly
have had from our Reason, as we have
endeavour'd to evince.

And Secondly, Upon the folly and hu-
mourousness of those Men, who plead so
incessantly for Demonstration, which at
last is no more than to be peevishly addi-
cted to some set of Notions or other, which
they have form'd to themselves, and to re-
quire that nothing shou'd be stamp'd with
the Image or Resemblance of Reason, but
what shall be found agreeable to them, as
if their own Opinions were the Rule of
right thinking, and Knowledge and good
Senfe
A Demonstration of the Divinity

Sense were confin'd to themselves, as if their Heads were to be a pattern for every one else, and no one might depart from the cast in which their own were molded.

Well then! shou'd Almighty God have propos'd our Religion to these Men, upon rational grounds, and demonstrated every part of it by just and competent Arguments, what Effects may we conceive you'd have follow'd from it? Wou'd they have been better persuaded of their Religion, or wou'd it not rather have furnish'd matter of endless Cavil and Dispute? And the plainest and most evident Principles wou'd, in all probability, according as Men were inclin'd to favour or discourage them, have met with their entertainment, and been suitably careless'd or oppos'd.

We, therefore, who are educated in so Holy a Religion, let us thank Almighty God, for the abundant Evidence we have of it; let not the Desertion of others from their Faith, be any inducement to us to relinquish it: God Almighty will judge them for their Apostacy; and as we need not be ashamed of our Assurance concerning things which we hope for, and do not yet see, so He will also reward us for our Perseverance.

FINIS.
ERRATA.

Pref. § 2. Read, Sufficiency of the Scripture Revelation.

§ 15. r. In this Subject.

Page 4 Line 4, dele who. p. 16 l. 3, r. those Books. p. 17 l. 5, r. 186. p. 63 l. 23, r. unnecessary. p. 70 l. 11, r. in those times. p. 70 l. 23, r. to suffer; if the Apostles of our Lord had a design upon us, can. p. 109 l. 19, r. surround. p. 146 l. 20, r. tho' such occurrences. p. 150 l. 12, r. Evidence, namely Miracles, separate. p. 150 l. 18, r. propos'd. p. 170 l. 5, r. imposs. p. 177 l. 26, r. Objection can there be. p. 190 l. 19, r. Proprieties. p. 190 l. 27, r. Assent of the Mind. p. 193 l. 18, r. which they pretend, to prefer the Critique, and Chicaning.
A T N A

oration of the Divine Revelation

1. In the Bible, the word "revelation" refers to the process of God's disclosure of Himself to humanity. The books of the Bible are considered as the inspired Word of God, which contains the messages of God's will and plan for humanity. The revelation in the Bible is progressive, meaning that as God's people went through different stages of history, He revealed more of His plan and character through various prophets and writings.

2. In the Bible, the word "inspiration" refers to the act of God's Spirit guiding the writers of the Bible, allowing them to accurately record His messages. The Bible is not only a collection of books but also a record of God's personal and specific revelation to humanity. The inspiration of the Bible is confirmed by the fact that the prophecies in the Bible were fulfilled through history, demonstrating God's personal involvement in human affairs.

3. In the Bible, the word "authority" refers to the belief that the Bible is the authoritative and infallible standard for Christian living and doctrine. The Bible is regarded as the final authority in matters of faith and practice, and any interpretation of its contents must be consistent with its overall message. The authority of the Bible is based on its claim of being inspired by God, and the belief that it contains true and reliable information about God's nature and His plan for humanity.

4. In the Bible, the word "progressive revelation" refers to the understanding that God's plan and purpose for humanity have been revealed in a progressive manner, with more information being disclosed as the people of God have gone through different stages of history. The revelation of God's character and plan for humanity has been gradual, allowing people to understand and respond to God's will in a more informed manner.

5. In the Bible, the word "inspirational" refers to the idea that the Bible is meant to inspire and guide people towards a closer relationship with God. The Bible is not just a collection of stories and teachings, but a living and dynamic resource that can provide comfort, hope, and direction to those who seek a deeper relationship with God. The inspirational aspect of the Bible is reflected in its ability to transform people's lives and help them navigate the challenges of life with faith and purpose.