

THE
CERTAINTY
OF THE
Christian Revelation,
AND THE
NECESSITY
OF
Believing it, Established.

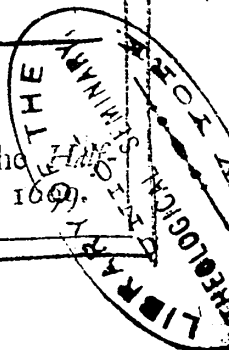
In Opposition to all the Cavils and Insinuations of such as pretend to allow *Natural Religion*, and reject the *Gospel*.

By FRANCIS GASTRELL B. D. and Student
of *Christ-Church, Oxon.*

Ye believe in God, believe also in me, John
14. V. I.

LONDON,

Printed for *Thomas Bennet*, at the *Hill*
Moon in *St. Pauls-Church-Yard*, 1699.



To the Right Honourable
Sir John Holt, Lord Chief
Justice of England, and
one of His Majesties Most
Honourable Privy-Council.

My Lord,

THE Design of the following Discourse being to prove the *Christian Religion* in the most unexceptionable manner I could, I was resolved to give the Enemies of our Faith as little Advantage against me in my *Dedication* as in my *Proof*: And 'tis for that Reason I have presumed to offer these Papers to your Lordship, as being well assured that your Lordship's Name and Character will not only Justifie this

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Address, but Recommend the Cause I am defending.

For to whom could an Advocate for *Christianity* better direct his Defence, than to a serious Believer, and a great Example, placed in a high Station; whose Profound Knowledge of Law and Government has fully convinced him of the *absolute Necessity of Religion in general*, and the *Reasonableness and Wisdom of the Christian Institution*; and who in a long, diligent, and impartial Administration of Justice, must be very well acquainted with all the *Ways and Methods of proving Matters of Fact*, and nicely understand the Force and Proportion of every Proof.

I shall not take upon me, in this place, to set forth all the Extraordinary Qualifications your Lordship is Master of; because, most of them being employed in the

The Epistle Dedicatory.

the Service of your Country, they have already procured you the just returns of Gratitude and Esteem from the Publick, which has received the benefit of them: But this I think my self more particularly obliged to mention, for the Honour of the *Christian Religion*, that it is to the Influence of that Holy Doctrine your Lordship owes the most advantageous Distinctions in your Character.

What other Account can be given of that Firmness and Steadiness of Mind which your Lordship has preserved in all the difficult and trying Circumstances that different Turns of State, and different Measures of Policy have engaged you in? When new Interests and new Dangers arose, and every thing chang'd about you, it must be wholly owing to *Christian Principles* that your Lordship always kept

The Epistle Dedicatory.

kept your Ground and your Posture.

To the same Cause it must be ascribed that your Lordship has never stained your Publick Character with private Immoralities. Notions of *Honour* and *Reputation* may preserve a Man's Dignity upon the Bench; but 'tis only a Just and Awful Sence of *Religion* that can make him Reverence himself at home.

And in a Corrupt Age, where Impiety is grown Fashionable, and has Quality and Title to Countenance it, 'tis no small Sign of your Lordships regard for Religion, that you judge it for your Honour to have it known, that you make *the Scriptures* the Rule of your own Life, and think it the highest Concern of all Humane Laws and Constitutions to support their Authority and Obligation.

For

The Epistle Dedicatory.

For all these Reasons, my Lord, it must be very proper for any Person that appears in the *Christian Cause* to Address his Endeavours to your Lordship; especially if it be considered that, besides your great Capacity to make a right Judgment of the Proofs alledged for it, you have no other Considerations to engage you in the Interests of *Christianity*, but those of Truth, and the Happiness of Mankind. It cannot be said of your Lordship, that the Credit or Advantages of your Profession are concerned in the Defence of the *Gospel*; you derive none of the Honour and Greatness you possess from the *Church*; and therefore your Lordship's Example is a very good Argument to Unbelievers, that those who are peculiarly set apart for the Service of God are not carrying on a separate Interest from the rest of the World; but are promoting

The Epistle Dedicatory.

promoting all they can the Universal Good of Mankind.

I might, among other Inducements to the present Dedication, reckon personal Favours: But I must own, that though I have all the Gratitude imaginable for the Honour of your Lordship's good Opinion and kind Intentions; and though I have no greater Obligations to any Man Living than to your Lordship; yet nothing of that Nature would have produced such an Address as this, if I had not been determined by more publick Considerations to interest your Lordship in the Cause I have undertaken. I am,

My Lord,

*Your Lordship's most Obliged,
and most Humble Servant,*

FRANCIS GASTRELL.

THE

THE
P R E F A C E.

W*Hen Christianity first appeared in the World, the Light and Influence of it were so strong, that it bore down all the Powers of Vice and Falshood, and made one of the worst Generations of Men, that perhaps ever lived since the Flood, a most astonishing Example of the greatest Vertue and Piety that Humane Nature has yet reached; but now the Spirit of Wickedness seems to have recovered it self, and to threaten Revenge to that Religion which has so often triumphed*

The Preface.

umphed over it : And Deism is employed by the great Enemy of Mankind, to do what Atheism, Superstition, and Idolatry, never could effect.

And indeed it has pleased God to suffer Irreligion, to spread so far under this new Title, that one would be apt to imagine it had, like the Lying Spirit we read of in the Time of Ahab, a solemn Permission from the Lord to go forth, perswade, and prevail : For what other Account can be given of the Original and Growth of such a Delusion, which has no manner of Foundation either in Reason or Fact to support it ?

'Tis true Deism is look'd upon as a more defensible Post than Atheism ; and when we observe with what seeming Calmness, and Serenity, some deny the Christian Religion, with what Contempt they treat the Holy Scriptures, and with what Boldness they ridicule the History and Doctrine of the Gospel, we are tempted to suppose that these Men must certainly have a great deal to say for themselves, or otherwise they

The Preface.

they durst not thus despise what they could not prove to be false, nor bear up against if it should be true.

But whoever has that regard for Truth and Happiness, as to consider the Pretences of Christianity, and to examine carefully the Proofs it stands upon, will be thoroughly and effectually convinced, that those who deny Revelation, have as little ground for their Infidelity, as those that disclaim all Religion ; and that the Confidence of the one, as well as the other, is only the Effect of a desperate, not a well-defended, Cause.

For if Matters of Fact are capable of any Proof, if we can have any Evidence of Things not seen or heard by us, the Christian Religion has as sure an Establishment as any other part of our Knowledge, which does not consist in pure abstract Ideas, or immediate Sensations.

This, upon the strictest Enquiry I have been able to make, is become so fixt an Opinion with me, that I dare venture to

The Preface.

affirm, not only that there never was any Imposture in the World, which had so many plain Marks and Characters of Truth upon it, as the Christian Religion is attended with, but that there never was any true History of Things whatsoever so well attested; That 'tis impossible for the united Wisdom of Men to contrive any Scheme of Events that shall be delivered down to Posterity, with so many certain Signs and Monuments of its Truth; and that there cannot be any Supposition invented, that will be fuller fraught with Absurdities, than that of the Christian Religion's being an Imposture.

These are Assertions I have endeavoured to make good in the following Discourse; and I hope I have in some measure performed what I undertook; but if I have not said enough to communicate the same Conviction to others, which I feel my self, the Fault must lie wholly in the Management, not the Proof. For, in the Pursuit of this Argument, I found my self

The Preface.

self on every side surrounded with so much Light, that I am sure there's Proof enough to be made of what I have here advanced, though the Evidence I have brought for this Purpose should appear to have been chosen ill, or applied wrong.

But, after all, there's no need of proving so much as this to Unbelievers: 'Tis a sufficient Answer to them if it can be shewn, that the Christian Religion has as just a Pretence to be believed as any other Matters of Fact not questioned by them; and that nothing they have to urge in behalf of Infidelity, can lessen the Credit of this Revelation; which is so easie a Task, that whoever engages in the defence of the Gospel, will find it much more difficult to meet with Objections than to answer them.

For my part I must profess, that in all the search I have had occasion to make into Natural and Revealed Religion, I never could meet with any one Objection to ei-

The Preface.

ther of them that would bear the Form of an Argument. Several new Plans and Models of Philosophy have been framed, and a great many new Hypotheses raised in all Parts of Learning; and every one of them has been ransacked to furnish Matter for Infidelity; but all to no purpose: There are no such grounds of Knowledge laid by any Man, but Religion may be proved from them; And I don't know of any Propositions whatsoever, advanced by any Philosopher, Ancient or Modern, which, if they are not such as plainly imply a Denial of Religion, can prove any thing against it.

Some have openly declared for Irreligion, and have made a Philosophy on purpose to maintain their Cause; others have covertly, under false Pretences, thrown out several Opinions and Doctrines, with a Design to weaken some or other of the main Principles of our Faith; but in vain are all these Fiery Darts of the Wicked, and the Arrows of those that
shoot

The Preface.

shoot in secret; no Philosophy or Humane Wisdom can prevail against the Almighty. In the open Attempts of impious Authors, the Force they make use of is unsupported, and often recoils upon themselves: And as to those dishonourable Writers, who endeavour to wound Religion by Hints and Insinuations, nothing expressed in their Books is sufficient to make good what they mean. Epicurus and Lucretius may affirm that there is no Providence, and no Future State; but no other Propositions in their Philosophy will prove there are none: Hobbs and Spinoza may intend to undermine the Common Faith of Christians; but there's nothing directly advanced by either of them, that, if it were allowed to be true, could infer any thing to the prejudice of the first general Principles and Proofs either of Natural or Revealed Religion.

The Preface.

For a through Confirmation of which Truth, I have in treating of both these Subjects, endeavoured to form my Proof upon such common unquestionable Principles, as every body, of what Sect soever in Philosophy, must needs grant. 'Tis true indeed most of the Notions imployed in the Cause of Infidelity, are false, as well as unconcluding; and upon both these Accounts deserve a particular Answer, in order to prevent the Mischief they might probably do among the Unwary and Unstable. But I looked upon that as the surest and most effectual Way of defending Religion, which would cut off all Objections at once, and put the Cause upon a general Issue; this is the way I have taken in both Discourses, and I am sure the Method cannot fail if the Performance be but Answerable.

If we are such Beings as I have described, and every body by consulting himself may find; and if there are such Appearances in the World, as every Man that

The Preface.

that will look abroad may perceive, then are all the Principles of Natural and Christian Religion certainly true: And if we are not such Creatures, that have such Powers and Capacities, and act for such Ends and Motives as we feel in our selves; and if we are not sure that the Frame of the World, and the Publick State of Humane Affairs do appear to us in such a manner as we imagine they do, then do we know nothing at all; and if the Inferences truly drawn from these Appearances don't hold, none do. And if we have no Knowledge, we are like the Beasts that Perish, and have no Pretensions to Happiness neither. Religion, Knowledge, and Happiness are all upon the same Foot, and are so closely united together, that there's no separating one from the other, without destroying them all.

But if Religion be built so strong, what support can Irreligion have? What Principles can the Atheist, Deist, and Libertine,

The Preface.

tine Reason or Act upon? What new ways of Knowledge have they found out? Can he that denies a God, or Providence, shew us how the World was Made, or has been Governed without? Or can he that disowns a Future State inform Mankind what and why they were, or resolve them that Question, Whether it were not better they had never been? How can he that denies the Christian Religion prove, that we were not of Yesterday, and know nothing but what we have seen our selves, or our immediate Forefathers have told us? And how can he that thinks both Natural and Revealed Religion to be Imposture, persuade himself to believe any thing else?

The most reasonable thing that such Men as reject all Notions of Religion can do, is to believe nothing: But Scepticism and Suspence are so very difficult and disagreeable to the Mind of Man, that every body must have something continually to believe; and we do all of us give up our assent

The Preface.

assent in abundance of Instances, without staying for the utmost conviction we are capable of: But none have been more remarkably distinguished from the rest of the World for their Credulity, than the Irreligious; it being commonly and truly observed of them, that they believe as unreasonably and absurdly as they deny, and that is what no body else does. What can be more extravagantly ridiculous, than to see an Atheist telling Fortunes, a Deist in quest of the Philosophers Stone, and a Libertine venturing all his present Pleasures and Injoyments in a Rebellion for the good of his Posterity? And yet such is generally the Conduct of the Irreligious; and 'tis a just Judgment from God upon them, that they should be given up to believe Lyes, and to act against their own Interest, to throw off the Principles of Truth, and not make the best of their Errors.

Upon which account I think, if the Enemies of God and his Christ, are so far resolved

The Preface.

solved upon the ways of Unrighteousness, that they will not consider the Proofs of their Duty in order to be reformed, they would do well to betake themselves for Refuge to Ignorance and Amusement, rather than Learning and Reasoning: For all the Improvements of Knowledge do only furnish new Light and Strength to Religion, and administer fresh occasions of Shame and Confusion to Unbelievers; and therefore 'twould be more advisable for them to keep up their Infidelity to themselves, than to let it loose to the disturbance of others: They had much better Intrench than Attack. For, besides that, all attempts upon Virtue and Piety annoy the rest of the World without any Advantage to their Cause that make them, 'twould be more for their Ease to lie quiet. For arguing and objecting against Religion, and making Profelytes to Infidelity, are not only certain Signs of present uneasiness, but will very probably create them a great deal more. If they will be continually
disputing

The Preface.

disputing and pressing their Objections they will be sure to meet with something or other to puzzle and startle them; and this may awaken their Fears, and raise new Disquiets in their Mind, which may at last end in a just Despair, when they will be able to repent of nothing but this, that they were not content to enjoy the Fruits of Irreligion without offering to defend it.

I heartily wish such Advice as this to Unbelievers were needless, and that they were seriously disposed to imbrace a more reasonable and lasting Satisfaction, by entering upon an humble and impartial Examination of the Proofs of the Christian Religion. But this being to be lookt upon as an Effect of Extraordinary Grace, all that can be expected from the Endeavours of those, that undertake to set these Proofs in the best light they can, is to stop the Mouths of Gainsayers, and to prevent the mischief of Infidelity from spreading further than it has done: And 'tis
my

The Preface.

my sincere Prayer to God, that the following Discourse may have a share, with many other upon the same Subject, in contributing to so good an Effect.

All that I have to warn my Readers of is, that if any of them should be inclined to judge, that the Abstract I have given of the New Testament, and the Proof of the Common Matters of Fact there Related, either unnecessary, or too long, they would pass over these parts and leave them to be read by those for whom this Discourse was principally designed: Most of which I believe will know more of the Christian Religion, from that Abstract of it I have drawn up, than they did before. And I durst not presume so far upon them as to take the Common Matters of Fact for granted, because, if they are true, I look upon all the other as demonstrable from them; and therefore I was willing to lay the Foundation as firm and as broad as I could

The Preface.

could, that it might bear the weight of what I was to build upon it; and I persuade my self I have all along taken sufficient care not to overload it.

I have not been precise as to Time, and some other Circumstances relating to the History of Christianity, because what I was to prove is as fully made good within the Latitude allowed as if it had been more punctually determined.

THE

ERRATA.

In the Book.

Page 31. line 10. *know* read *knows*. p. 39. l. 14
measure r. *measures*. p. 41. l. 27. *him*, r. *him*; p.
 44. l. 5. *Discourses* r. *Discoveries*. p. 53. l. 19. *as r. a*.
 p. 59. l. 10. *too true* r. *to be true*. p. 62. l. 24. *happen'd* :
 d. : p. 67. l. 26. *of r. as*. p. 76. l. 12. *Year* r. *Years*.
 p. 79. l. 9. r. *countrey*; p. 99. l. 13. r. *must be*. p. 106.
instanced, in. d., p. 107. l. 6. *Words* r. *Records*. p. 109.
 l. 14. r. *Diocletian*. p. 110. l. 24. *sence* r. *force*. p. 112.
 l. last. *then* r. *there*. p. 115. l. 23. *designs* r. *design*. p.
 140. l. 22. r. *according to*. p. 160. l. 22. *Retarison* r. *Re-*
lators. p. 163. l. 26. r. *Perceptions*. p. 174. l. 12. r.
truth of. p. 192. l. 2. *execute* r. *excite*. p. 211. l. 14. r.
some such. p. 228. l. 3. *ever* r. *never*. p. 240. l. 6. *then*.
 r. *than*. p. 287. l. 10. ; r., p. 293 l. last. ? r.; p. 298.
 l. 19. at r. of. p. 304. l. 23. *to be d. be*. p. 316. l. 10.
Scheme r. *Scene*. p. 337. l. 11. *Motives* r. *Monuments*.
 p. 339. l. 5. *were* r. *are*. p. 353. l. 2. r. *frame of*.

The Certainty of the

Christian Revelation,

AND THE

NECESSITY

OF BELIEVING It.

Having in a former Discourse proved that there is a *God*; That this *God* has appointed us a certain Rule and Order of Life; That he has obliged us to Conform to his Will and Appointments, by annexing Happiness to our Obedience, and Misery to our Disobedience; That the Rule he has given us to go by, is whatever we can, upon our own Enquiry, or the Information of others, discover to be agreeable to our purest and most unprejudiced Reason; all which is comprehended

B

under

under the Name of *Religion*: Having likewise shewn that a general and exact Observance of all the Duties of such Religion, would advance the Happiness of Mankind to the highest degree, they are in this their Mortal Condition capable of; and from these Principles, together with the present Irregularity of things in the World, having made it appear that there must be a *Future State*, of Rewards and Punishments proportion'd to the different behaviour of Men in this: I have now farther undertaken to prove that, besides those Tokens and Indications God has given of himself, his Will and Designs in the Nature and Constitution of things, which are discoverable by right well-exercis'd *Reason*; he has in a more extraordinary manner, *viz.* by *Immediate Revelation* from himself made known his Mind to us; by which means he has given us a clear and intire view of the fore-mentioned rational Truths, render'd our knowledge of them more certain, plain, and particular, discovered a great many new Truths which the unassisted force of Human Faculties could not have found out, and established new Rules and Measures of Duty, over and above those

those our Reason was before, by its utmost efforts, able to inform us of.

All which extraordinary Discoveries I affirm to be contained in the Books which go under the Name of the *Old and New Testament*: from whence I infer that all the Doctrines, Precepts and Directions delivered in the *Old and New Testament*, are obligatory to us so far as they are there declared to be so; that is, they are to be believed and observed in the Way and Manher, and upon the Reasons and Motives there propos'd; and consequently, that at present, the true and adequate Rule of Human Life, is what we call the *Christian Religion*.

But because, as 'tis plain from the nature of all *Revelation*, the truth of what is pretended to be revealed must depend upon the proof of *Matters of Fact*; I shall take this Method of establishing the Certainty of the *Christian Revelation*.

1. Having premis'd some things concerning those particular Facts I design to insist upon; I shall give a short Abstract or Summary of the Christian Scheme, as we find it delivered in the *New Testament*.

2. I shall prove by such direct Arguments as *Matters of Fact* are proveable by, that all the principal *Matters of Fact* related in the *New Testament*, are true.

3. I shall endeavour to make good the same Proposition indirectly, by shewing the Absurdity of a contrary Supposition, and the weakness of all the Difficulties and Objections raised against the truth of those *Facts*, or of *Revelation* in general.

4. I shall shew the sufficiency of such a proof as shall be given under the former Heads to induce us to believe the *Christian Religion*, and to render us inexcusable if we do not.

As to what concerns those particular *Facts* I design to insist upon for the proof of the *Christian Religion*, there are these three things necessary to be observed.

First, I take all this for granted, *viz.* That there are such Books as those I call the *Old and New Testament*, that they are in the hands of a great number of
People

People of different Countries in the World, and are with a very little variation the same every where: That the greatest part of those in whose hands they are, who are called *Christians*, profess to believe that the *Matters of Fact* there Recorded are true, and that the Doctrines came from *God*, and are appointed by him as the Rule and Measure of their Actions; but more especially those delivered in the *New Testament*, which they look upon to contain a full Scheme of their Duty: That a large Sect of Men, called *Jews*, profess to believe the same of the *Old Testament* as the *Christians* do, but reject the *New*, and make the former only the Rule and Measure of their Duty; and that a great many of these, both *Jews* and *Christians*, do really and sincerely believe what they profess, and endeavour to order their Lives accordingly. All which *Matters of Fact* are such as I have no manner of reason to suspect any body will deny me.

Secondly, I insist wholly upon the proof of those *Matters of Fact* which are recorded in the *New Testament*; not only because the *Christian Religion*, the Certain-

ty of which I have undertaken to establish, is fully confirmed by the truth of those *Facts*: But because the *Old Testament* is supposed, and every where appealed to in the *New* as true and authentic, upon which account, a thorough effectual proof of the latter, will be of it self a sufficient establishment of the former. Besides, many of the same Arguments that I shall make use of to support the *Christian Revelation*, are in like manner applicable to the *Jewish*: And therefore I shall only consider the *Old Testament* as a Book that was extant long before the *Christian Religion* appeared in the World; and which was then, and had been long before esteemed by the whole People of the *Jews*, as a Book that contained the *Revelations of God*; and I shall concern my self no farther in the proof of these ancient Writings, than to defend them from the little Cavils and Objections raised against them by Modern Unbelievers, with a design to weaken the Certainty of *Divine Revelation in general*, and consequently to invalidate the proofs of the *Christian Religion*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I distinguish all the *Matters of Fact* observable by us in the *New Testament*, into *Common* and *Extraordinary*; such as are conformable to those *Facts* we have often taken notice of before, or to those Notions we have of the Natures and Powers of the Agents, which appear to be the immediate Authors of them; and such as exceed all our Knowledge and Observation of what we call *Nature* and natural Powers: which *Extraordinary Facts* mentioned in the *New Testament*, I distinguish further into two kinds; such as were immediately perceivable by some of the *Senses*, of those before whom they were done, and such as were knowable only by *reasoning* from the Natures of Things, and other concurrent or consequent *Facts*. Of the first kind, are *Prophecies* and *Miracles*; of the second, are *Divine Assistance* and *Revelation*. And thus I shall endeavour to establish the *Certainty of the Christian Religion*, by proving the truth of all the principal *Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament*, according to the Order and Distinction of them before mentioned, *viz. Common Historical Facts*;

Prophecies and Miracles ; Divine Assistance and Revelation.

I. But, for a better and clearer prosecution of my Design, I shall in the first place, before I enter upon this proof, give a short *Abstract* or *Summary* of the *Christian Scheme*, as we find it delivered in the Books of the *New Testament* : Wherein I shall consider the *Matter* and *Subject* of these Books, and the *Manner* in which they are writ ; with all the important Circumstances belonging to them, that offer themselves upon a careful and impartial reading. Which general view of all the *Christian Facts*, the truth of which I have undertaken to maintain, will not only prevent a great many inconvenient Repetitions, and shew the force of the subsequent Proofs in a stronger light, but give us such an Idea of the *Christian Religion*, as if carefully weighed and attended to, would render any further attempts to prove it unnecessary.

It is plain to any one that reads over the *New Testament*, that it contains in short, a History of the Publication and
Pro-

Propagation of certain Doctrines and Rules of living proposed to the Belief and Practice of Mankind ; together with an Account of the several Discourses, Actions, Writings, Sufferings, and other remarkable Circumstances in the Lives of the first Publishers, and some of the principal Propagators of those Doctrines and Principles which make up the New Scheme of Religion here delivered.

But to take a more particular Survey of the *New Testament*, according to the several Parts or Volumes into which it is divided : In the first Four Books of it, call'd the *Gospels*, we find a very large and particular Account of the Birth of *Jesus Christ*, the first Author, as is there affirm'd, of that *Religion* which is now term'd *Christian* ; and his Birth is related to have been after an extraordinary manner in all the Circumstances of it ; *viz.* That he was conceiv'd by the *Spirit* of God, and the *over-shadowing* of his Power ; That he was born of a *Virgin* ; That his Conception was foretold, and his Birth proclaim'd by *Angels* ; That his Coming into the World was signified by a *Star*, which brought *Wise Men from the East* to worship him ; That mighty Things were immediately before and after his Birth
said

said of him by Angels, and *Just* Persons, moved by the Spirit of God. From the Birth of Christ, 'till he was thirty years of Age, very little is mentioned of him besides some Discourse he held with the Doctors in the Temple at Twelve; but when he *began to be about thirty*, he was baptized by John, who is stil'd his *Fore-runner that prepared the way for him*; and at his Baptism the *Heavens were opened*, and the Spirit of God descended upon him like a Dove; and a Voice was heard from Heaven, saying, *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleas'd*. The principal Things that are afterwards recorded of him, are his *calling of Disciples and Apostles*, his *Sermons and Instructions* to the People, his *Miracles and Prophecies*, and his *Sufferings, Death and Burial*, with some other remarkable Passages that happened after his Death.

His *Disciples and Apostles*, but more especially *Twelve* of them, were favoured with a nearer and more intimate Conversation than any of the rest he directed his Instructions to. *These* were the constant Companions of his Labours, and Witnesses of his most private Behaviour; *These* he instructed in a more plain and open manner than he did others, and commu-

communicated several things to *Them*, which he kept secret from his *common Auditors and Followers*: To *these* he gave a Commission to teach and instruct the *Jews*, and to do mighty things among them while he lived, and to preach to *all Nations* after his Death, and propagate his *Doctrine* with Signs and Wonders.

He himself is represented as preaching and teaching throughout all *Judea*, and several of his Publick *Sermons and Discourses*, as also many things which he said in private to his Disciples, are every where throughout the several *Gospels* repeated; sometimes in short, and only the Substance of them, sometimes more at large, in the same Form and Manner in which they were delivered.

The *Miracles*, or wonderful Things, mentioned to be done by Christ, exceeding all the Observation and Power of Mankind, are these: Fasting Forty Days and Forty Nights together; turning Water into Wine; Stilling Tempests, walking upon the Sea; telling the secret Thoughts of Men's hearts; curing the Blind, Lame, and Maimed; healing all manner of Diseases with a word, or touch of his Garment; casting out Devils and unclean

unclean Spirits, and restoring Men possessed with 'em to their former state of health and sense; feeding vast multitudes of People with a few small Loaves and Fishes; by his bare Word causing a Fig-Tree immediately to wither, great numbers of Fish to be taken in a Net, and a single Fish to come to the Hook with Money in its mouth to pay his Tribute with; transfiguring himself before some of his Disciples, so that they saw the fashion of his Face alter'd, and his Raiment chang'd; raising the Dead, and rising himself after his Burial; appearing to his Disciples after he was risen, and conversing with them Forty Days, sometimes being known by them, and sometimes not, according as he pleased; and at last in their Presence ascending up into Heaven.

The Matters we find in the Gospels *foretold* by Jesus Christ, were his own Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Spirit or Comforter, with several particular Circumstances of them; the Persecutions and Sufferings of his Disciples; the Death of some of them, and the manner in which they were to dye; as also their future
Glory

Glory and Office at the end of the World; the Rejection of the Jews; Vocation of the Gentiles; Success and Continuance of the Gospel, or Christian Religion; the Appearance of False Prophets and Teachers, and False Christs; the springing up of Heresies, and falling away of Professors; the Destruction of the Jewish Temple, and Constitution, and Dispersion of that whole People, with many strange and terrible Signs foregoing; and lastly, the second Appearance of himself in Glory to judge the World, which is set forth in a very large and pompous Description of the whole Scene.

As to his *Sufferings, Death, and Burial*, and what followed afterwards, which are the next things that challenge our Consideration, we read that he was betrayed by one of his Disciples, denied by another, and deserted by all the rest; that he was taken, and carried first before the High Priest of the Jews, and afterwards before *Pilate* and *Herod*; that he was scourged, mocked, spit upon, reviled, and, at last, upon false and frivolous Accusations, condemn'd by *Pilate*, contrary to his Conscience, only to please the Jews; and then crucified between Two common
Malefactors,

Malefactors, one of which reproached him, the other believed in him; while he was upon the Cross, the *Sun was dark'ned, the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the Earth quaked, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were open'd, and many Bodies that slept arose, and came out of their Graves after his Resurrection, and appear'd unto many;* his Body being taken down from the Cross unbroken, was laid in a Sepulchre hewn out of a Rock, with a Stone roll'd to the door of it; and the Sepulchre was made sure, by sealing the Stone, and setting a Watch; notwithstanding which he rose again the Third day after he was buried, and appear'd to his Disciples, and many others: But the Soldiers that were appointed to watch the Sepulchre, being affrighted by the appearance of an Angel, who descended from Heaven, and roll'd back the Stone from the door, came into the City, and shew'd the Chief Priests all the things that were done, and had Money given them to say his Disciples came by Night and stole him away; after this, the Disciple that betray'd him repented of the Fact, brought back the Money he had received for betraying him, and hang'd himself.

This

This is the summ of what is contained in the Four Gospels. In the next Book, call'd *The Acts of the Apostles*, we find the Eleven, who are peculiarly stiled *Apostles*, after their return from beholding the Ascension of their Master, assembled together at *Jerusalem* with the rest of those who were more particularly distinguished by the Name of *Disciples*; where they make choice of another *Apostle* to supply the room of *Judas* that had hang'd himself. After which choice, the twelve being *all with one accord in one place*, they were *filled with the Holy Ghost*, and *spake with other Tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*; which wonderful Gift of divers Languages was conferred upon them with very strange amazing Signs and Appearances, *viz. a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty Wind, cloven Tongues like as of Fire, &c.*

Having received this extraordinary Assistance, we find them wholly employ'd in preaching the things concerning *Jesus*; interpreting the Scriptures of the *Old Testament* with relation to him; baptizing in his Name; converting People to the Belief of those Facts recorded in the Gospels, and the Doctrines built upon them;

them; exhorting Men to the Practice of the several Duties enjoin'd them by God, and delivered to them by the Ministers of the Gospel of Christ, and bidding them expect Salvation by Christ only; ordaining several Persons under different Characters to assist in the Ministry; healing all manner of Diseases; raising the Dead; and doing many other Signs and Wonders where-ever they come; and conveying the same Powers and Gifts to others they had received themselves: By which means we read that the Gospel was spread, and the number of Believers encreased, many Churches or Congregations were every where established, and the Members of them kept so united by those that were set over them; first in *Judea*, and *Samarina*, then in remoter Parts abroad where the Jews were scattered, afterwards in several Cities, Islands and Nations of *Asia* and *Europe*.

With the Progress of the *Gospel* or *Christian Religion*, we have an Account likewise of several Attempts made in many Places to hinder and oppose the Establishment of it, together with the Sufferings and Persecutions of the first Apostles, and others chosen afterwards to be Assistants

to

to them in carrying on the same Work; many of which were beaten, imprison'd, and many other ways afflicted and distressed, and some were put to death.

But a more particular relation is given of the Conversion, Travels, and Sufferings of *Paul*; all which appear to be very extraordinary. Several Discourses of *Paul*, and other Apostles and Disciples of Christ are set down at large. Some Prophecies also are mentioned of Holy Men, who are represented as being filled with the *Holy Ghost*, and speaking by the *Spirit of God*; and some remarkable Judgments of God upon wicked Persons are there recorded.

These are the principal Matters which compose the History of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

All the following Tracts or Volumes of the *New Testament*, are written in the form of Letters or *Epistles*, sent from such of the *Apostles* and *Disciples* of Christ, as we find mention'd in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, and directed, some of them to particular Persons, some to large Societies of Men, of several different Countries, who had embraced the Christian Faith.

C

In

In which *Epistles* are contained most of the same Rules and Precepts that are laid down in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, many large and particular Explications of several Doctrines there delivered; and several new Doctrines which we do not meet with in those Books, the Truth and Obligation of all which are frequently enforced by Arguments.

Most of the principal Matters of Fact recorded in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, are refer'd to in the *Epistles*, and alledged as Proofs of the Truth of the *Doctrines* there taught, and of the Authority of the Teachers. Here are likewise several new Matters of Fact incidentally mentioned which we do not find in those former Books; and some of the Facts there related are repeated here with new Circumstances.

All the *Epistles* do abound throughout with Exhortations to a steady Belief of those wonderful things said and done by Christ and his Apostles, and to a constant Practice of the Duties enjoin'd by them. In several of them there are some Prophecies too intermixed with these other Matters before taken notice of: And the last *Epistle* directed to the seven Churches in *Asia*, which

which is by a peculiar Title stiled The *Revelation*, is almost wholly prophetical. Some of them also conclude with Salutations to, and from several particular Persons therein named.

These are the most remarkable things that occur to a Man upon reading the *Epistles*.

Thus have I run through all the Variety of Particulars treated of in the *New Testament*. But in order to form a juster and fuller Idea of the Subject of this Book, 'tis necessary to add some farther Considerations not formally express'd in any one particular Volume or Chapter, but fairly and evidently collected from the whole Composure, or from several plain Passages here and there dispersed through the several parts of it: Such as are the Characters of *Jesus Christ* and his *Doctrine*; of those that *believed* in him, and that *assisted* him in the *publishing* and *propagating* his Gospel; and of those that *persecuted* him, and all that bore Testimony to him, and opposed the Establishment of his Religion.

As to the *Character of Jesus Christ*, so far as it can be collected from the several Writings of the *New Testament*, it is in

short this: His Birth, Life, and Death, were attended with extraordinary Circumstances of different kinds: Those who are called in Scripture his *Parents*, are said to be descended from the Family of *David*, the greatest King that ever reigned over *Judah* and *Israel*; but their present Condition when this Child was born, is set forth as very low, and the Employment that maintained them then, and afterwards, very mean; but they were Persons that feared God, and lived very conformably to the Law of *Moses*.

The *first Appearance* of Christ in the World, was prepared, accompanied, and followed by Prophecies, Visions, Signs, and Wonders, Ministry of Angels, Adoration of Wise Men, Jealousies and Fears of a Great King; together with the Doubts, Ignorance, Amazement, Necessities, and Flight of his Father and Mother.

His *Education* was suitable to the meanness of his *Birth*. Thirty years were spent at home in Obscurity and Retirement, where he was subject and obedient to his Parents; but at the same time he *waxed strong in Spirit, and increased in Wisdom, and the Grace of God was upon him*, to the Astonish-

nishment of all his Kindred and Countrymen, who could not imagine *whence he had that Wisdom*.

His whole Life afterwards was taken up in preaching, and instructing, and confirming his Doctrine and Authority by Signs and mighty Works, and by Arguments drawn chiefly from the Prophecies and other Passages of the *Old Testament*. He went about every where *teaching and doing Good*: He taught in the Temple, and other publick Places of *Jerusalem*; he passed through all the Cities and Villages of *Judah* and *Samaria*, and the Neighbouring Coasts, preaching and expounding the Scriptures to the People in their Synagogues: In the Fields, the Desarts, and upon the Sea-shore, we find him attended with great multitudes who *heard him gladly*.

Thus was he constantly employed, from the first discovery of himself and his Gospel to the World, 'till by Treachery and Malice he was apprehended and put to Death: In all which time that he publickly convers'd with Men, we have a great many surprizing things related of him, which do very much distinguish

his Character from that of any other Person.

He is represented as sensible of Human Passions, Appetites, and Infirmities; and yet free from all Sin, and endued with a Power of not feeling and relieving those very wants he suffered.

He loved, grieved, and was angry; but these Affections were occasion'd in him by a just Concern for the Glory of God, and the Success of that great Work he came about, the Salvation of Mankind; and they never exceeded their due bounds.

He felt Hunger and Weariness, yet fasted Forty days and Forty nights together, fed vast multitudes, and heal'd all manner of Infirmities by his miraculous Power; and, when his Disciples brought him Meat, he refused it, saying, he had Meat to eat which they knew not of, and that his Meat was to do the Will of him that sent him.

He lived in extream Poverty and Want: He had not where to lay his Head; and was destitute not only of the good things of this World, but of all the lesser Conveniences of this Life: And yet we see when he sent for an Ass and Fole to ride into Jerusalem with, the Owners let them go; and

and when he ordered to have such a room prepared for him to eat his last Supper in, 'twas presently got ready for him; and both upon the bare Saying of his Disciples that *the Master had need of them*.

His Meekness, Lowliness, and Humility, are very conspicuous throughout his whole Conduct and Behaviour; and in several particular Instances; as his conversing freely with Persons of the meanest Rank, chusing such to be his constant Companions, and most intimate Friends, declaring that he came to minister to others, and not to be ministr'd to, ordering those he cured not to publish what he had done for them, refusing to be King when the People would have made him so, washing his Apostles Feet, &c. Notwithstanding which, in many other Instances, he discovers himself in very signal Characters of Greatness, Majesty, and Power: For, not to mention what we have before rank'd under the Stile of Miracles and Prophecies, he taught as one having Authority; so that not only the People, but their Rulers and Teachers were astonish'd at his Doctrine; he reprov'd the Scribes and Pharisees with Boldness; he enter'd into Jerusalem with all the highest Solemnities of Triumph,

and drove out of the Temple all those that prophaned that Holy House, by applying it to common Uses; he spake the Word, and whoever he call'd immediately *left all they had, and followed him*; he took upon him to forgive Sins; and he gave his Disciples the same Power, as likewise a Power against unclean Spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Diseases, to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the Power of the Enemy, so that nothing should by any means hurt them.

Besides all which, and many other Marks of Greatness, Power, and Authority, that appeared in the Actions of Christ, the things which he declares of himself, and which are attributed to him by his Disciples, give us a much higher Idea of him.

He says of himself, that he is greater than the Prophet *Jonah* and *Solomon*; he proves that *David* call'd him his Lord; he affirms that *before Abraham was he is*; that *Abraham* rejoiced to see his day, that he is the *Christ, the Messiah* expected and prophesied of, the *Son of God, the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; that all things are delivered to him of the Father, who was Lord of
Hea-

Heaven and Earth, and that all things which the Father hath are his; that he and the Father are one, that he is in the Father, and the Father in him; that he came forth from his Father when he came into the World; that he is the *Bread of Life* that came down from Heaven; that this Bread is his *Flesh*, which he will give for the Life of the World; that he has overcome the World; that no Man took his Life from him, but that he laid it down of himself, and had Power to take it again; and that when he leaves the World, he goes to his Father: He owns that he is a King, but that his Kingdom was not of this World; He tells us that all Power is given to him both in Heaven and in Earth; that hereafter he should be seen sitting at the Right Hand of the Power of God, and that he will come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him to judge the World; that then he shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations, and receive their Sentence from him according to their Works. He assures his Twelve Apostles that he will send the Comforter to them, who shall teach them all things, and guide them into all truth, and show them things to come; that he himself will be with them always unto the end of the World; that whatsoever they

they shall ask the Father in his Name, that he will do; that he will prepare a place for them in his Fathers House; and that, when he comes to judge the World, they shall sit upon twelve Thrones judging the twelve Tribes of Israel. To all those that labour and are heavily laden he promises that they shall find rest; to those that sell what they have and follow him, that they shall have Treasure in Heaven; to those that love him, that they shall be loved of his Father, and that his Father and he will come and make their abode with them. Whosoever drinketh of the water that he shall give him, he says, shall never thirst, but that water shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and who so eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood, hath eternal life, and he will raise him up at the last day. He tells one of the Thieves upon the Cross, That he should be with him that day in Paradise; and in general to all those that believe in him, and obey his Word and Commandments, he gives assurance of Salvation and Eternal Happiness in another World, besides many other occasional Blessings and Assistances in this; and those that will not believe in him, and obey his Gospel, he threatens with

with Eternal Punishment in another life, and with many Troubles and Calamities while they continue here.

Agreeable to which *Declarations* made by himself, are the *Language* and *Practice* of his *Disciples* to him, and of him in his Life time and after his Death. They call him *Lord*, and *God*; Preach, Baptize, and Bless in his Name; and attribute a great many glorious things to him, which are in other places, in the same Manner and Expression attributed to the *One Only Supreme God*. They Worship him when alive, with all the external signs of *Divine Adoration*, and Pray to him after his Death, and expect all manner of *Grace, Assistance, and Spiritual strength* from him here, and an *Eternal Reward* of their Labours, Sufferings and Obedience from him hereafter.

And as these are all Evident Marks and Tokens of an amazing *Greatness* and *Power* in *Jesus Christ*, so are all his Sermons and Discourses, his manner of Preaching and Conversing, and the whole Scheme both of his Life and Doctrine; manifest proofs of an extraordinary kind of *Wisdom*.

It does not appear from the History of the Gospel, or any other parts of the *New Testa-*

Testament, that *Christ* had read any other Book but the *Old Testament*, or that he had had the advantage of being instructed in the meaning and sense of that by any Master or Teacher whatsoever: yet we find him *Teaching, Reasoning, Answering* Questions that were put to him, and *Expounding* the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament* in such a manner, that all that heard him were astonished at his *Understanding, his Doctrine* and *Answers*.

His usual way of *Teaching* the People that believed on him, and reproving the Scribes and Pharisees, and others that were unbelievers, and sought occasion to find fault with what he said, was by *Parables*, which were such familiar Resemblances of, or Allusions to the common and most observ'd accidents of Life, as were more easily apprehended by ordinary Capacities, better attended to and remembred, and not so liable to Censure and Misinterpretation as *plain* and *proper expressions* of the same Truths that were delivered this way, would have been: But sometimes he both taught and reproved openly without any disguise or reserve, and some of his *Parables* were such as were not understood even by his
Disciples,

Disciples, till he was pleas'd in private to shew them the meaning of them, and acquaint them with the reason of this part of his Conduct.

His *Answers* to those that accused him of any crime, as of *eating with Sinners, breaking of the Sabbath, Blasphemy*, and the like; or that *sought to entrap him in his Discourse*, and to find matter of Accufation against him, were very surprizing and unexpected; and such as always silenced and disappointed his Enemies.

His *Exposition* of some parts of the *Scriptures* of the *Old Testament*, and the *Inferences* he draws from them, seem'd wholly new to all the *Jewish* Teachers and Expositors that heard him, and yet we do not read that they confuted, or so much as opposed either his *Comments* or his *Arguments*.

And in fine, his whole *Behavior* and *Conversation* were so carefully and wisely ordered, that, though he was constantly watch'd and observ'd by cunning and malicious Men, of different Opinions, Designs, and Interests, yet no Man was ever able to convince him either of *Sin* or *Ignorance*, as is manifest from the *Answers* he gave to those who Censured,

or Despised him, or thought to puzzle him by difficult Questions, and from the whole Process against him when he was condemn'd to die.

Thus lived *Jesus Christ* a perfect Pattern and Example of the *Religion* he established, in all Holiness, and unblameableness of Conversation, shewing in all the Actions of his Life recorded of him an entire Submission and Resignation to the Will of *God*, and exceeding great Charity and Compassion towards *Men*.

And the same reason for which he came into the *World*, and was obedient to the Law of *Moses*; for which he published his *Gospel*, and upon that account endured the Contradiction and Persecution of Sinners, was that also which made him lay down his Life, and submit to all the Indignities and Torments that accompanied it; the only Cause, Motive, and End of all these Actions and Sufferings of *Christ* was the love of *Mankind*. As he came into the *World* to save Sinners, so he gave his Life a ransom for many. To free Men from Eternal Misery, render them capable of Eternal Happiness, and to direct and assist them in the way of Salvation, was his sole Work and Design. These

These are the largest and most remarkable lines in the *Character* of *Jesus Christ*, the first Author of that *Religion* we profess and defend.

In the next place I shall endeavour to give a short draught or representation of his *Doctrine* or *Gospel*; or, as we now call it, *The Christian Religion*, so far as it is plainly delivered in the Writings of the *New Testament*. But all Religion, as every one know, consisting of *Faith* and *Practice*, things to be believed, and things to be done in consequence of such Belief, I shall first consider the *Christian Faith*, and afterwards what concerns the *Practice of a Christian*.

The sum of the *Christian Faith* is to believe in *One God*, such as he is in the *New Testament* set forth to us, and in *Jesus Christ* his only begotten Son our Lord, according to the History and Character before given, or whatever else the *Scriptures* say of him: and by *Faith in him*, accompany'd with a *Sincere*, *Universal*, and *Persevering* endeavour of Obedience to the Rules and Laws prescribed by him; and a hearty *Repentance* for the Sins and Frailties we do at any time fall into, to expect eternal, inexpressible Happiness; or, in case of

of *Infidelity* or *Disobedience* attended with *Impenitency*, to be assured of suffering *Eternal, inexpressible Misery* in another Life.

The particular Doctrines which give us an account of these things more at large, may be considered under these three Heads, *God, Christ, and Man*.

The *God* proposed in the *New Testament* to be believed in, is represented as a *Spirit, Invisible, Incorruptible, Eternal, that is, that was, and is to come, Almighty, that knoweth all things, and yet whose Judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out; Creator of the World and all things therein, who upholdeth all things by his Power; in whom we live and move, and have our being; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things: Most Holy, Just, Righteous and Perfect; who is to be worshiped in Spirit and in Truth, and with purity of Heart; no respecter of Persons, of great goodness and forbearance, and yet who will render to every Man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory and Immortality, Eternal Life; but to them that do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: of whom it is further said, That he is the Father, the Father of our*

our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father; a Title he is frequently and peculiarly distinguished by, all over the New Testament: That he sent his Son into the World to die for us, and by him reconciled us to himself; That the Sins of Ignorance he winked at; but that now at the appointed time, when Christ came into the World, he calleth all Men every where to repent: That at sundry times, and in divers manners, he spake in times past by the Prophets, but in these last days hath spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed Heir, of all things, by whom also he hath made the World; that he foreknew, predestinated and elected some in Christ, and adopted them for Sons, to be Heirs of Salvation, and to obtain a Heavenly Inheritance: all which are said to be Sanctified by the Spirit of God, who is often called the Holy Ghost, or Spirit, and the Spirit of Christ and of the Son, in several places of Scripture is joined together with the Father and the Son; and frequently talk'd of as a Person acting after such and such a manner, as God is in other places represented to do; and many of the same Titles, Characters, and Attributes, are ascribed to him as are ascribed to the One Only Supreme God.

The principal things that are taught us in the writings of the *New Testament*, concerning *Christ*, besides what we have already mentioned in his History and Character, are, That he came into the World, took upon him the nature of Man, was obedient to the Law, offered himself a Sacrifice upon the Cross, was made a Curse, died, was buried, rose again, and is sat down at the right hand of God, that thereby he might redeem us from our Iniquities, and from the Curse of the Law, be a propitiation for our Sins, and reconcile us to his Father through his Blood, that our Trespasses might not be imputed to us, but that by his Obedience we should be made righteous: That he might become the Mediator of a new and better Covenant between God and Man, than that which God made with the People of *Israel* when he brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, and that he might abolish the Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances, and break down the middle Wall of Partition between Jew and Gentile, that so both might be united in one Building, of which *Christ* was the chief Corner Stone, and all of us be Members of one Body or Church, of which *Christ* is the Head: That he might be an Advocate with the Father when

we

we sin, and make continual Intercession for us, that so upon our Confession and Repentance, God might forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And lastly, That he might obtain a Kingdom, and by that means spoil Principalities and Powers, triumphing over them; destroy the works of the Devil, and put all Enemies under his feet; and, that when Death, the last Enemy, is destroyed, he might raise the Dead, and judge the World: Part of which he has already performed, and the rest he does, and will hereafter fulfil.

The most remarkable matters that occur in the *New Testament* concerning the Nature, Condition, and Circumstances of Mankind, are these; *Adam* was the first Man, *Adam* was first form'd, then *Eve*; the first Man *Adam* was made a living Soul, the last *Adam*, by which is meant *Christ*, was made a quickening Spirit, which two different Expressions are distinguish'd as Natural and Spiritual, Earthly and Heavenly; by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned: *Adam* was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived, was in the Transgression; notwithstanding she shall be saved in Child-bearing if they continue

36 The Certainty of the

in Faith, and Charity, and Holiness with Sobriety: Death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's Transgression, who is the Figure of him that was to come: A Man is the Image and Glory of God, but the Woman is the Glory of the Man; notwithstanding which, all that are of the race of Mankind, are filed and accounted in the Scriptures sinners, ungodly, enemies of God, dead in trespasses and sins, servants of sin and corruption, Children of the Devil, by nature Children of Wrath; of whom it is said further, That Sin dwelleth in us, and reigneth in our Mortal Bodies, that when we would do good, evil is present with us, and we find the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Mind, and bringing it into Captivity to the Law of Sin: The Jews are represented as subject to Ordinances, and a Law which had only a shadow of good things to come; and as in bondage to weak and beggarly Elements; and all other Nations are reckoned as Aliens and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World.

This is the State of Mankind considered without relation to Christ; but by Christ

we

Christian Revelation.

37

we are cleansed from our sins, we are made free, we are justified by Faith in him, and by his righteousness we are saved.

But the advantages which accrue to Mankind by the means of Christ, and the change that is made in our Condition by him, will be more fully understood from these following passages. As by one Mans disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, as sin hath reigned unto death, so shall Grace reign through righteousness unto Eternal Life by Jesus Christ.

Cursed is every Man that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them; the Man that doth them shall live in them; but this being impossible, 'tis evident that no Man is justified by the Law in the sight of God; if there had been a Law given which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the Law, but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of Faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe; In many things we offend all, but if we repent, and are baptized and believe, and shew our Faith by our Works, and persevere unto the end we shall be saved; but if we believe not the Truth, and have pleasure in unrighteousness, and repent not of the evils we have

D 3

committed

committed, we shall be damned. Those that have embraced and obeyed the Gospel of Christ, are said to have put off the Old Man with his Deeds, and put on the New Man, which is renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him; Thus through Christ only we are to expect Salvation, there being no other Name given under Heaven whereby we might be saved; which Salvation if we neglect, we shall be condemned by God at the last day, when he comes to judge the World in Righteousness by his Son, whom he has appointed Judge of the quick and dead. Then shall we be raised from the dead by Christ, and receive every Man according to his Works. As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive, and since by Man came Death, by Man came also the Resurrection of the dead. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, their mortal corruptible Bodies shall put on immortality and incorruption, and those which are alive at the coming of Christ, shall be changed in a moment, at the last Trump. As we have born the Image of the earthly Man Adam, so we shall also bear the Image of the heavenly Man Christ. Then shall they which have done evil be condemn'd to everlasting torment and misery, and they which have done good,

good, shall be rewarded with everlasting joy and happiness in the presence of God, and his holy Angels.

This is the substance of what is taught, and proposed to the Faith of Mankind in the *New Testament*; which I have express'd, as near as ever I could, in the very language of *Scripture*, as my design plainly obliged me to do.

The other Branch of the *Gospel*, or *Doctrine of Christ* which concerns the *Practice of a Christian*, and may properly be stiled *Christian Morality*, consists of such rules and measure of Action, as every one that believes in Christ, is obliged to conform his life to, and without which his Faith is dead and vain, he is still in his sins, and he must expect the Wages of them, *Eternal Death*.

The principal Heads of *Christian Duty* are these.

To love God, and the Lord Jesus, Christ with all our heart, and with all our power; to honour, praise, and worship God in Spirit and in Truth, with purity of heart and intention, to submit our Wills to his, and to acquiesce in all the dispensations of his Providence, with the

utmost resignation of Mind and Judgment possible.

To love our Neighbours as our selves; to do unto all Men as we would they should do unto us; to forgive, and love our Enemies; to bless, and pray for those that despihghfully use us and persecute us; to do good against evil; and to endeavour as much as in us lies to live peaceably with, to do good unto, and to promote the Salvation of all Men.

To deny our selves, and to mortifie all our Lusts and Affections, to take off our Affections from things on the Earth, and set them upon things above, and to have our conversation in Heaven; to live chastly and soberly in this present World, avoiding all manner of excess and intemperance; to bridle our Tongues, to take care that we offend not in word; and to bring every thought into Captivity to the Law of Christ; to think lowly of our selves, with all humility preferring each other; to humble our selves in the presence of God, and when we have done all that we can, to say we are unprofitable Servants; to take up the Cross of Christ, and not only to bear Afflictions patiently, but to glory in them, and rejoyce that we are thought worthy to suffer.

These

These, and all other the particular Duties derived from them, we are required constantly and sincerely to endeavour to perform, without a willful allowance of our selves, to offend in one point, or to do evil that good may come of it; and, whenever we have transgress'd any of these Rules of Life prescribed us to act by, we are immediately to break off our sins by repentance.

All which we are obliged to do for the Glory of God, in pure obedience to his Word and Command, in love and gratitude for all the Mercies we receive from him, and in hope and expectation of enjoying Eternal Happiness, and escaping Eternal Misery in another life, and upon no other account or prospect whatsoever; these being the only true Ends and Motives of Human Action, and the only Grounds of Duty and Obligation.

We have considered the Character of Jesus Christ, and taken a short view of the Gospel or Religion he taught and recommended to Mankind: In the next place, let us see who, and what sort of Men they were that first believed in him, who assisted in the publishing and propagating

pagating his *Gospel*; and who they were that opposed the Establishment of it, and persecuted *Christ* and all that bore Testimony to him.

Those that were any ways concern'd in the receiving, publishing, and propagating the *Gospel of Christ*, were *John* his *Forerunner*, his *Twelve Apostles*, other *Apostles* and *Disciples*, and such as were particularly set apart for the Ministry, and *Common Believers*.

John, who is stil'd *The Forerunner of Christ*, and one that was to prepare the way before him, was born of Parents who were righteous before God, and walked in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless; his Conception and Birth were attended with many extraordinary Signs and Wonders; then it is said of him, That he grew and waxed strong in Spirit, and was in the Deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel, and his Rayment was of Camels hair, and his Meat was Locusts and wild Honey; afterwards he came Preaching in the Wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, and many were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins: all he Preached to and baptized, he acquainted with the Character and near approach

approach of *Jesus Christ*, whom in a particular manner he prefer'd to himself, and and by that means satisfied them that he was not the *Christ*, which before they doubted of: Little more is recorded of his Preaching or Discourses, but only some particular advice to some Persons that enquired of him what they should do, and his reproof of the Multitude that came to him, and of *Herod*; for which last he was put in Prison by him, and afterward beheaded. He did no Miracles, but the Austerity of his Life, the Authority of his Preaching and Baptizing, and the Holiness of his Conversation, made him lookt upon by all People as a *Prophet*. *Jesus Christ* says of him, that he was more than a *Prophet*, and even *Herod* himself that beheaded him fear'd him while alive, and observ'd him, and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly, knowing him to be a just Man and a holy.

The *Twelve Apostles* were all of them Persons of a low Rank and mean Occupations; all the time they followed *Christ*, they seem'd not to be fully acquainted who he was, or what he design'd; several of his Discourses they understood not, but

but wondered what the meaning of them should be; they were several times by their Master reproach'd for want of apprehension, and knowledge in the Scriptures, after the plain Discourses he had made of himself to them, and for want of Faith and Courage, notwithstanding the many Miracles and mighty Works he had done before them, and they themselves had done by his Commission; they lookt upon him as a *Temporal Messiah* or *Deliverer*, who was to restore the Kingdom again to *Israel*, and they had several little Contests among themselves who should be greatest in the Kingdom they fancied their Master came to establish; they acknowledg'd him to be *the Christ the Son of God*, but they seem'd not to have rightly understood what they said; when he was apprehended to be put to death, one of them *betrayed him*, all the rest *were offended because of him*, and fled; but one of them that return'd after him, solemnly deny'd him, and immediately repented; and he that betrayed him *repented*, and *hang'd himself*: After his death we find some of them bewailing themselves as disappointed in all the hopes and expectations they

they had conceived of him; and, when it was reported that he was risen again, none of them would believe it till they saw him themselves, and one of them was more remarkably incredulous in this point than the rest, till he had received the satisfaction he desired.

But after the *Ascension of Christ*, and the choice of another *Apostle* in the room of him that had hang'd himself, we find *the Twelve Apostles* maintaining a different Character from what they had in their Master's life-time: Now they appear perfectly instructed in all things concerning *Christ*; whatsoever before seem'd strange to them either in his Actions or Discourse is all unriddled, and the *Scriptures* which before were difficult to be understood, are now made plain and manifest: And, as their Knowledge is enlarg'd, their Faith is strengthened; no doubts or distrusts are now entertain'd, but they Preach the *Gospel of Christ* with Authority and full Assurance, insomuch that we find many more converted at their Preaching, than at *Christ's*; they are endued with new Powers, which they had not whilst their Master lived, and which did not *shew forth themselves in Christ*; their whole lives

lives are taken up in Travelling and Preaching, and labouring with their hands to maintain themselves; their whole Business and Design is to persuade People to embrace the *Gospel of Christ*; many are their Troubles and Sufferings upon this account, all which they undergo very chearfully, and never shew the least sign of fear or regret for any thing that happens to them; they never decline an opportunity of Preaching the *Gospel*, or converting People to the Belief of it upon any prospect of danger whatsoever, and no Power or Authority of Rulers and Governors, no severity of Persecutors can discourage them in their Work.

The other Persons concern'd in the Ministry and Propagation of the *Gospel of Christ*, by whatever Names and Offices distinguished, whether *Apostles, Disciples, Deacons, Pastors, Teachers, Prophets, Evangelists* and *Presbyters, Bishops, or Rulers*, so far as we know any thing of them by the Scriptures, were, all of them, very near of the same Character with the *Twelve*, for meanness of Birth and Education, simplicity of Manners,
Steadiness

Steadiness of Faith, and adherence to the Doctrines they taught, Piety and Devotion, Self-denial and Disinterestedness, Constancy and Resolution under continual Sufferings, and a chearful preference of a future expectation in another Life, to all considerations whatsoever which this World could afford.

But one of them, named *Paul*, is represented to us under some particular Circumstances, which make his Character very different from that of the rest. He was Educated in all the Learning of the *Jews* at the feet of one of their greatest Doctors; and by some passages we find in the Epistles ascribed to him, we collect that he was acquainted with the Heathen Greek Authors; he was at first a zealous Enemy of the *Christian Doctrine*, and a fierce Persecutor of all that called upon the Name of *Christ*; but being in an extraordinary manner call'd by God, and by several wonderful Signs and Appearances converted to the *Faith of Christ*, he became a zealous Preacher of the *Gospel*, had a larger and fuller Commission of *Apostleship* granted to him than any of the *Twelve*, was exercised with a greater variety of Afflictions for
the

the sake of the Gospel, laboured more abundantly in the establishment of the Christian Religion in the World, and writ more for the Confirmation of those in the Faith, whom he had converted.

The generality of the first Common Believers, who were not call'd to the Ministry, were of the lowest sort of the People, and several of them scandalous and notorious Sinners before their Conversion; but some there were of the better and richer sort, and some Rulers and Priests that believed in Christ, though but a very few that we read of. The Character of which Believers after the Ascension of Christ, and first Sermons of the Apostles, was this; That the Multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common; neither was there any among them that lack'd, for as many as were Possessors of Lands or Houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles feet, and distribution was made to every Man, according as he had need. In other places it is said of them that believed, That be-
fore

fore they were Servants of Sin, but after they had obeyed from the heart that Form of Doctrine that was delivered them, they were made free from sin, and became the Servants of Righteousness; that in times past, they walked according to the course of this World, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and mind, but now being created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, did walk in them; that some of them, who were before Fornicators, Idolators, Adulterers, Abusers of themselves with Mankind, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, and Extortioners, were washed and sanctified by the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God; many of them that believed, came and confess'd, and shewed their Deeds; many also of them which used curious Arts, brought their Books together, and burnt them before all Men. But, in process of time, when the number of Believers encreased, tho' the greatest part of them manifested their Faith by their Works, turn'd from the Vanity of Idols to the Living God, renounced all the hidden Works of Sin and Darknes, and were ashamed of those things in which before they took pleasure; yet Offences and Heresies did spring up among Christians, notwithstanding all the care of those that
E first

first planted the Churches, and those that afterwards presided over them; and some there were that walked disorderly, that Preached Christ out of Envy, that taught other Doctrines than what they had received, that turn'd after Satan, that loved this present World, that put away Faith, and made Shipwrack of a good Conscience; but these bore no proportion to the numbers of the Faithful, whose Faith and good Works were spoken of throughout the World.

Such were the first Publishers and Believers of the Gospel of Christ. And the Persons who endeavoured to discourage the Belief, and oppose the Establishment of it, by all the means they could, but especially by Contemning, Disgracing, Reviling, and Persecuting those who were any ways concern'd in maintaining or propagating this new Religion, were among the Jews, their Kings, Governors, Chief Priests, Elders, and Chief of the Jews; as also the Scribes, Pharisees, and Saducees, who were the Men of greatest Learning and Authority in the Jewish Nation, some of which are represented as very wicked Men, and notorious Hypocrites,

pocrites, and others as disbelievers of a Future State: And among the Gentiles, the Magistrates, Rulers, and Chief of the Cities, Philosophers, Sorcerers, Craftsmen for Idolatrous Shrines, and certain lowd Fellows of the baser sort; most of which were stirred up, and moved to what they did by the Jews that lived among them.

This is the shortest and plainest account I could give of the Subject of the New Testament, or the Matters contained in that Book; which are such as every Body that reads it will find there, and consequently must subscribe to the truth of the Representation, however he may doubt of the reality of the Original.

The next thing to be considered in the New Testament, is the Way and Manner in which the several Matters before mention'd, are there related, with such other circumstances as refer to the Form or Composition of the whole Book, and the several parts of which it consists.

Now 'tis plain to any Man that reads over the New Testament with the same care, attention, and impartiality, as he does another Book, that it was not all writ by the same Person at one continued

time, but by several Persons at different times, and upon different occasions; and that in general, 'tis writ with great plainness and simplicity of Stile, without Art or Affectation, and with many extraordinary Marks of Sincerity and Truth.

But to be more particular; the four first Books, called *Gospels*, seem to have been Pen'd by so many different Authors, as appears, not only from several Ways and Manners of Expression observable in each of them, but also from the Subject; which being the same in all, and most of the same Matters of Fact being repeated in each *Gospel*, some of which are told with such a diversity of circumstances as occasions some difficulty to reconcile together, it cannot be imagined that any one Man would write so many accounts of the same Story, so little different from one another in the main Branches, and so much, in some lesser particulars.

The Narration in all the *Historical parts* of the *New Testament* is very short, naked, and simple, nothing but bare Matters of Fact being related just as they happen'd, without any interposition of the Author: There is no Preparation of Events; no artful Transitions or Connexions; no set Characters

Characters of Persons to be introduced, or Reflections upon past Actions, and the Authors of them; no Excuses or Apologies for such things as a Writer might probably foresee would shock or disturb his Readers; no Colours, Artifices, or Arguments, to set off a doubtful Action, and reconcile it to some other, or to the Character of the Person that did it: The Faults and Infirmities of those Persons, the Authors would seem to recommend, are fairly recorded without any mitigation or abatement, and the Crimes of their Enemies barely told without any aggravation.

The *Epistles* appear to be written with a great Air of Piety and Devotion; and the Authors of them seem to be acted by as warm and steady Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind; and to speak with mighty Assurance from a full Conviction of the truth of those things they so earnestly press and recommend. Whether any of them were written by the Authors of the *Historical Books*, and which of them were, and which not, we have nothing in the Writings themselves to judge by, but the difference of Style, which seems ve-

ry distinguishable in some of them; but I shall not lay much stress upon that, because it may be disputed by Pretenders to Criticism.

The last Epistle which goes under the Name of the *Revelation*, is plainly of a different Character from all the other Books of the *New Testament*, though said to be written by one who was Author of a Gospel and some other Epistles; which difference arising wholly from the Matters contained in it, and the manner of their Conveyance into the Mind of the Writer, upon this supposition, it may easily be allowed to belong to the same Author that writ some other parts of the *New Testament* in a different Style from that of the *Revelation*; which is altogether *Figurative* and *Mysterious*.

All the several Books in the *New Testament*, excepting the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, have Names of Persons prefixed to them as the *reputed Authors* of them; who are all the same that are mention'd in the *Gospels* and *Acts*, either as *immediate Apostles of Christ*, or such as were *chosen and directed* by those that were so: But neither by the *Titles*, nor by any thing said in the *Books* themselves, does
it

it appear, that any part of the *New Testament* was written by *Christ himself*, or that he writ any thing at all.

I have these things further to observe of the *Books of the New Testament in general*; that there are in divers places of them, a great many particular remarkable *Notes of Time*, to distinguish when the several Actions therein related happened; all which are within the space contained betwixt the *Death of Julius Caesar*, and the *Destruction of Jerusalem*: That there are a great many *Names of Persons* and *Places* concern'd in these Actions, the greatest part of which are *Jewish, Greek, and Roman*: And that most of the *chief Matters of Fact and Doctrines* mention'd in any of the Books of the *New Testament*, are supposed by the several Writers of them, to be *known and believed* before those Books were writ.

The two former of these Observations are very evident upon the first, and most transient reading of the *New Testament*; and a very small degree of attention will serve to satisfy us of the latter.

All the *Epistles* are very absurd and unintelligible without this Supposition; for first, the Arguments and Exhorta-

tions there made use of, with which they abound, are for the most part inferences from *Matters of Fact taken for granted*, and not *newly told*, as appears from the Way and Manner in which they are mention'd, the Facts being aluded to only, and imperfectly hinted at, not related with all the Circumstances necessary to inform those that had never heard of them before: Then the *Forms of Blessing and Salutation* we find there, and the *Titles* the Writers give themselves, and those they write to, all necessarily imply the samething: Besides there are several *direct Expressions* in many places of them, which do *formally*, and in *plain terms*, assert that the Persons these *Epistles* were writ to, had been before instructed in all the principal Truths of the Gospel.

'Tis plain also from the *Acts of the Apostles*, as well as the *Epistles*, that *Churches and Congregations* of Believers, are supposed to be established in several parts of the World, before any of these Books were writ; the manner and way of their establishment being the chief Subject of that Book called the *Acts*, as the fixing and confirming them in the
Faith

Faith, is the chief Design of the *Epistles*. Nor is it less manifest from the *Gospels*, that they all suppose the principal *Matters of Fact* related of *Christ*, and most of the *Doctrines* delivered by him, to have been *known* and *believed* by a great many, at the the time when these *Gospels* were writ, and in the places where they were published. The manner of beginning each *Gospel*, is a very good proof of this Truth: *St. Luke* plainly, in express Words, affirms, That the Person for whom he more particularly writ his *Gospel*, had been before instructed in those things he was about to give him an account of in order, and that those things which others had before him *set forth a Declaration of*, were such as were *most surely believed among them, even as they delivered them unto them which from the beginning were Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the Word*: And the *Writers of the other Gospels* begin so abruptly, and fall so immediately into the Story of *Christ*, without any Introduction or Preface concerning the *Character of the Person* whose History they writ, or the *time or design* of their writing, that it cannot be imagined they would address themselves in such a
manner

manner to Persons who were perfect Strangers to the *Name* and *History* of *Christ*. But, besides this way of beginning, we have several accounts in the Body of each *Gospel*, of multitudes of People that followed *Christ*, that heard his Sermons, and were Witnesses of his Miracles; of great numbers of Believers who were converted by his Discourses; and of a great many that opposed and prosecuted *Christ*, and objected several things to his *Doctrine* and *Miracles*; all which being told as happening in the life-time of *Christ*, most of the things concerning him must be supposed by those who pretend to have written presently after his Death (as 'tis plain all the Evangelists do) to be generally *known* and freshly *remembered* at the time of their Writing; which Supposition further appears from the *short* and disorderly Relation of several *Matters of Fact* in each *Gospel*; which, in such cases where we are not assisted with a fuller Account from the *other Gospels* or *following Books* of the *New Testament*, seem very obscure to us now, who are not acquainted with the rest of the Circumstances omitted.

This

This is what I thought fit to remark concerning the *Subject* and *Form* of that Book which we call the *New Testament*. And now that *this Book* does really contain *such things* as are before mention'd, and is writ in *such a way* and *manner* as I have here represented, I think, may be taken for granted, since whatever has been observed under this head, must necessarily appear too true to any one that will read over the *New Testament*, and is capable of making any Judgment of a Book.

II. Supposing then that I have given a just Account and Character of the *New Testament*, and the several Books or Volumes it consists of, I shall from hence advance to the main Design proposed; which was to prove, *That all the principal Matters of Fact related in the New Testament, are really true*; that is, did really happen out at the *Times* and *Places*, and in the *Manner* they are there recorded to have happen'd. This I shall endeavour, in the second place, to make good by a *direct Proof*, according to the distinction
of

of the several *Facts* to be enquired into before laid down, *viz. common Historical Facts, Prophecies and Miracles, Divine Assistance and Revelation.*

I. *The first Step then I am to make in the proof of what I have before asserted, is, to shew that the common Historical Facts mention'd in the New Testament are true. The principal of which are these following, viz. That there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, of such a Character, who taught such Doctrines, pretended to such mighty Works, and was executed in such a manner as is represented in the New Testament; That there were likewise certain Persons who were Followers and Adherents of Christ, who after his Death, profess'd to believe the Miracles we find now recorded of him, and to do as great themselves, who taught the same Doctrines he did in his life-time, and many other things which they pretended to have received from him while he was alive, and from the Spirit of God afterwards, and who made it their business to propagate the Belief and Practice of what they taught throughout*

out the World, whose Characters and Sufferings were such as are before described: That the Doctrine or Religion of *Christ* was accordingly propagated through all *Judea*, and most Parts of the *Roman Empire*; so that great Numbers of People every where own'd and profess'd it: And that all this happen'd within that compass of Time included between the Death of *Julius Caesar*, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem*.

Now these are such remarkable, notorious Facts, have been so well proved by multiplicity of Evidence, and so little contested by the several Enemies of *Christianity*, That I shall content my self by giving a summary Proof of them, without entring upon that great Variety of particular Arguments every general Branch of Evidence contains in it: Which Proof I shall cast into this Method.

First, I shall take an Account of the *Original of Christianity*; and shew, That this Religion must have came first into the World at the time assign'd for this Event in the *New Testament*.

Afterwards, I shall consider the state of *Christianity* at another Period of Time, when

when it will certainly be allowed, that all the principal Matters of Fact that stand now recorded in the *New Testament* were generally believed.

And then I shall prove, That the same Matters of Fact were likewise believed at, and immediately after, the Times in which they are said to happen, and so continually down to that particular Period fixed upon.

Which last Proposition I shall endeavour to make out.

From the constant Tradition of such a Belief, together with many sensible, infallible Effects of it.

And from many other extrinsick Signs and Monuments remaining at that Time.

From which *constant* and *universal* Belief among Christians, of all the principal Facts in the *New Testament*, both *common* and *extraordinary*, continued down to such a Period, from the very first Times in which they severally happen'd: I conclude, That at least the *common* Matters of Fact, such as I have just before instanced in, must be true.

First,

First then, as to the *Original of Christianity*; it is to be observ'd, That there is no Age of the World, no Portion of Time, since the beginning of Things at any great Distance from us, that we have a clearer, fuller, and more particular Account of, than we have of that which past under the Twelve first *Cesars*, or Emperors of *Rome*; both Learning and Empire being then at the highest Pitch, and furnishing abundance of Matter for the Pens of that and the succeeding Ages.

And as the History of that time is the truest and best known of any, so no Matter of Fact could happen within that Time which was more remarkable, or could more easily and certainly be conveyed down to Posterity, than the *first Rise* and *Propagation of the Christian Religion*. There's nothing so easy to be known of any Countrey, where we have the least Remains of History left us, as what Religion was profess'd there, and what considerable Alterations were made in it: All the Laws, Customs, and Policy of a Nation, are intermixt with their Religion; most of the Actions, Opinions, and Characters of particular Men, bear the Marks of it; and if we examin Things
more

more narrowly, and trace them up to their Original, we shall find that *Religion* puts a greater Distinction betwixt one Nation and another, than any difference of *Climate* can do.

But, not to pursue that Speculation any further, 'tis very plain from all History what the Religion of the *Jews* was, and what Religion they had at *Rome*, and in other Parts of the *Roman Empire*, under the Reign of *Augustus*. There were no such Persons then to be heard of as bore the Name of *Christians*; no such Religion any where professed as that which is now call'd *Christian*, the Plan and Model of which we find in the Books of the *New Testament*.

Tacitus But in the Time of *Nero* we find a great many Persons at *Rome*, call'd *Christians*, put to Death, and several other ways persecuted and tormented, for being so, by that Emperor; which Denomination, and whatever they thought themselves obliged to believe or do, upon that Account, was then generally acknowledged by themselves, and others, to be derived to them from one *Christ*, who was sometime before crucified at *Jerusalem*.

Now

Now the Time when this *Christ*, the first Author of this Sect of Men call'd *Christians*, began to publish his Doctrine to the World, is very particularly and circumstantially set down by *St. Luke*, in the Third Chapter of his Gospel, to be the Fifteenth Year of the Reign of *Tiberius Cesar*, *Pontius Pilate* being Governor of *Judea*, and *Herod* being Tetrarch of *Galilee*, and his Brother *Philip* Tetrarch of *Iturea*, and of the Region of *Trachonitis*, and *Lysanius* the Tetrarch of *Abilene*, *Annas* and *Caiaphas* being the High Priests of the Jews.

And in the Book call'd the *Acts of the Apostles*, said to be writ by the same *St. Luke*, it is affirm'd, That the Disciples, by which Word is there meant all those that believed in *Christ*, and embraced the Doctrines taught by him, were called *Christians* first at *Antioch*: Which Matter of Fact is, by the Consent of all *Christian* Historians, recorded to have happen'd at the latter end of the Reign of *Caligula*, who was the next that succeeded *Tiberius* in the Empire of *Rome*.

And that this is the lowest Point of Time it can be fix'd at, appears from the same Place of *St. Luke*, where immediately after the Words before cited, it follows,

F

lows,

lows, *And in these Days came Prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch, and there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great Dearth throughout all the World; which came to pass in the Days of Claudius Cesar.* From whence I infer, That this Relation of *Agabus*, concurring in Time with that other Account of the *Disciples being first call'd Christians*; and it being plain, from what is said concerning the Completion of *Agabus's* Prophecy in the Days of *Claudius Cesar*, That he first utter'd his Prophecy some time before the Days of *Claudius Cesar*, the Time when the Disciples were first called *Christians* must likewise be, sooner or later, before the Reign of *Claudius*; which *Claudius* being the immediate Successor of *Caligula* in the Empire, the Matter of Fact in question must happen in the latter end of the Reign of *Caligula*, or at some time before.

Now from the Fifteenth Year of *Tiberius*, when *Christ first published his Doctrine at Jerusalem*, to the last of *Caligula*, when his Disciples were first call'd *Christians at Antioch*, is about Twelve Years; from whence to the Tenth Year of *Nero*, when the *Christians were first persecuted at Rome*,

is

is a little above Twenty Years; within Five Years after which *Jerusalem was destroyed*, and an End was put to the Jewish Government and Policy: So that from the Fifteenth of *Tiberius*, when it is pretended that *Christ* first published his Gospel at *Jerusalem*, to the first of *Vespasian* when *Jerusalem* was destroy'd, is about Forty Years, and no more.

If therefore these Matters of Fact concerning the *Neronian Persecution*, and the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, are true, as is constantly attested, by *Heathen and Jewish*, as well as *Christian*, Writers; 'tis more than probable, that those mention'd by *St. Luke* are so too. For before the Fifteenth of *Tiberius*, no Signs or Footsteps of *Christianity* are to be found in the World, neither is it pretended by any of the Adversaries of this Religion that it was earlier; and the *Destruction of Jerusalem* falling in the First Year of *Vespasian*, the Propagation of the *Christian Religion* from thence to other Parts of the World, must needs have had as early a Date of that. And therefore, if we find great Numbers of *Christians at Rome* in *Nero's* Time, both the *Propagation*, as well as *Original*, of the *Christian Religion*, must

F 2

must have happen'd not only before the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, but some time between the Fifteenth Year of *Tiberius* and the Tenth of *Nero*, and consequently the Account before given by *St. Luke*, of these great Events, cannot well be imagin'd to be false; but 'tis certain the Mistake in Time, if there should be any supposed, cannot be considerable. From all which, I think I have reason to conclude, That the *Christian Religion* was profess'd at *Rome* in the Time of *Nero*, and was derived from one *Christ*, who was the first Author of it, and suffered Death at *Jerusalem* upon that Account, toward the latter end of *Tiberius's* Reign, as I find it recorded by *St. Luke*, and the other Writers of the *New Testament*.

The next view I shall take of the *Christian Religion* shall be under *Constantine*, another Emperor of *Rome*, who upon some occasion or other was disposed to embrace this Religion about 300 Years after the first Publication of it by *Christ*, at which time it is very notorious that *Christianity* was the prevailing Religion in all the parts of the *Roman Empire*, the

the extent of which was then very great,

This manifestly appears from all the accounts we have of the History of this famous Emperor, and the State of the World under his Reign; in the Twentieth Year of which, was held a *General Council*, which was a Meeting or Assembly of a great number of Bishops, who came from all the different Provinces and Cities both of the Eastern and Western Empire, and were Persons that in their several Districts, govern'd and directed in Religious Affairs; the chief design of that Meeting was by *Constantine*, who called them together, declared to be for the decision of a Controverſie, that had happen'd between certain Christian Professors concerning a particular Article or Doctrine of their Religion, which some affirm'd ought to be believed in one Sense, and some in another: These Bishops did meet accordingly to the number of about 300, decided the Matter they were call'd about, by appointing a Form of Words for all Christians to express their Belief of that, and several other particulars in, which was unanimously approved and subscribed by all but two:

Besides which *Form of Faith* they made several *Canons* or Rules, with Relation to *Discipline*, which concern'd the Qualifications of such Persons as were to perform Religious Offices, or to partake of the Effects of them; their manner of Acting upon such occasions, and their Behaviour to one another upon the account of any Religious distinction.

But, in order to take a more particular survey of the *State of the Christian Religion under Constantine*, from the account that is given us of this Council by *Eusebius* and *Athanasius*, who were present at it, and other credible Writers who lived at, or near the same time, I shall draw these following Observations and Reflections.

I. *Constantine* was the first Roman Emperor that profess'd the *Christian Religion*. There was no King, Consul, Dictator, Emperor, or any other, the chief Governour of the *Roman State* before him, that ever departed from the ancient Institution made upon the first Settlement of that Commonwealth, or publickly embraced a new Religion, of a different Character from that established by the LAWS of *Numa*.

2. There

2. There never was before this Council, any such *General Meeting* of Eminent and Learned Persons, who were Assembled together from so many different quarters of the World, purely to settle some Controversies in Religion.

Which two surprizing Circumstances must make this *Council of Nice*, one of the most remarkable Events that ever happen'd in the World.

3. The calling of this Council does plainly infer, that *Constantine* look'd upon the whole *Roman Empire* to have been at that time generally *Christian*: The Persons summon'd, the Places from whence they came, the occasion of their Meeting, do all prove this; For the Persons of which the Council was compos'd, were most of them Governors and Teachers of large Churches and Congregations, they came out of all the greater and lesser Provinces, and from the most Populous and Considerable Towns under the *Roman Government*; and the reason of their coming, was to give their Opinion concerning a particular Doctrine which did suppose an antecedent Belief of the whole Christian Scheme.

F 4

4. The

4. The whole behaviour of this Council of Bishops while they sat together, and the business they did there, is a certain proof, not only that they were *Christians*, and that the *Christian Religion* was publickly and generally profess'd in the Places from whence they came; but that they all agreed in some *common Faith*, and that the *Christian Religion* profess'd in the several Places from whence they came, was every where the *same*, without any other variation than what was grounded upon the *different Conception of some Articles* by particular Persons which were allowed by all alike in some general Terms, or *different application of some general Rules* about such Matters as Christians were, by the whole tenour of their Religion left at liberty so to apply.

5. The reason of this general Agreement of all Christians, separated so far from one another in place, and never before this time united under one common Head or Governor, was, as we find by what pass'd in this Council, a firm and constant Belief that such and such Books, which they all had amongst them, were
written

written by the immediate Followers and Disciples of *Christ*, and contained a true Account of his Life and Doctrine, and a full Scheme of their Religion. What ever was in any of these Books they lookt upon as Obligatory, and such they esteem'd the Authority of these Writings, That they were not, upon any Account, in the least Passage of them, to receive any Addition, Diminution, or Alteration whatsoever. In the Decision of the present Controversy before them, these were appeal'd to on both Sides, and the Authority of them allowed by all; and the particular Canons they made, were founded upon the general Rules and Orders of Discipline laid down in these Scriptures.

6. As we find by what was done in this Council, concerning the Matter of Faith they came to settle, That all the Bishops there assembled were acquainted with several of the same Books of Scripture, which we now have under the Name of the *New Testament*; and that they were perswaded they were delivered down to them from the *Apostles*, as a Rule of their Faith: So, by several of the
Canons

Canons they made, we are assur'd, That, in all the several Places from whence they were assembled, the Customs of *Baptism* and the *Communion* were universally and constantly used; That the *First Day of the Week* was observed as a Day set a-part for Religious Services, which were chiefly *Prayers*, and *Reading the Scriptures*; That there were a great many Men, in a particular *Way and Manner* appointed for the *Performance of Religious Offices*, in the Name and Presence of the People; And that some of these did, in a more eminent Degree, *preside over all other*, both Religious Officers and common Christians, in such a District, under the Title and Style of *Bishops*.

Now the Truth of this Relation concerning the *Council of Nice*, and the State of the Christian Religion at that Time being supposed; in the next Place I shall undertake to prove, That the *Christians* we find in *Nero's* Time, were of the *same Faith and Religion* with those that lived under the *Reign of Constantine*; and, consequently, That *all the principal Matters of Fact now recorded in the New Testament*, were generally believed at, and immediately

diately after, the Times in which they are said to happen, and so continually down to the *Council of Nice*.

This I shall endeavour to make out; First, From the constant *Tradition* of such a Belief, together with many sensible and infallible Effects of it.

From the *Neronian Persecution* to the *Council of Nice* is about 260 Years; which is so short a Period, That 'tis hardly possible to imagine the *Tradition* of so important a Fact, as the *general Profession of the Christian Religion*, in any considerable Country or Nation, should, in the main Branches and Substance of it, be defective or corrupted within that Time; though there were no other remaining Monuments of it, but what were obvious to every Man's own Observation at the Meeting of this Famous Council. And therefore since the Christians of this latter Period did look upon it as a certain Truth delivered down to them, That the Christians who lived in *Nero's* Time professed the same Faith they did, as 'tis plain from the Account before given of their Religion they must, we may very well conclude, That the Matter
of

of Fact was really so without further Proof.

But to remove all Doubts and Objections so general a Conclusion as this may be apt to create, the Truth and Credibility of the *Tradition* shall be more clearly made out in the following Manner.

Several of those who were present at the *Council of Nice* might, of their own certain knowledge, be fully satisfied, That, for *Fifty Year backward*, the *Christian Religion* had been the *same* it was *then*, in the Countries from whence they came; That all this Time they had had the *same Scriptures* among them; That these Scriptures had *constantly* been read, both in *publick* and *private*; and (as far as fell within humane Cognizance) *as constantly*, and *in the same manner* believed and esteemed, as they appeared *then* to be; That the Ceremonies of *Baptizing* and *Communicating* had been *always universally* used, at *such Times*, and upon *such and such Occasions*; That these, and several other Religious Performances, as *Reading the Scriptures*, *Prayers*, *Exhortations*, &c. had been *constantly* practised in *publick*, when Christians were assembled together;

ther; That *Meetings*, or *Assemblies*, for these Purposes were *very frequent*; That, besides other occasional Times, they always observed *the First Day of the Week*, as a Portion of Time which they thought themselves obliged to set a-part for the Performance of Religious Duties, and especially in Publick; That there were a *constant Succession of Men*, by certain Ceremonies peculiarly *appropriated* to the Discharge of some *Religious Offices*, which they did not think it Lawful for others, not so distinguished, to be concern'd in; That it was the particular Business of these Men to *teach* and *instruct* the rest in the Knowledge of the *Christian Religion*, and *exhort* them to a steady and exact Submission to the Rules of it; That there were some of these stiled *Bishops*, who were by some *different Marks of Distinction* known from the rest of their Brethren, and *presided* over all Christians, both Clergy and Laity, in such a District, *governing* and *directing* them all in Religious Affairs, and *exercising* certain *Spiritual Powers* of an *extraordinary future* Influence, in order to the *preserving* and *inforcing* the *Belief* and *Practice* of the *Christian Religion*. Such *Customs* and *Actions* as these,

in all which every Bishop must himself have bore a Share, must needs be infallibly known to those Bishops assembled at *Nice*, who were of Age enough to remember for so long together as Fifty Years, which may easily be supposed of several of them: And it may, with as much reason, be allowed, That these very Bishops might have, Fifty Years before their Meeting at *Nice*, convers'd with those who could have as distinctly remembered what was done for Fifty Years further backward, as they could remember what had happen'd since the Time we supposed they convers'd with them; from whom they might have been certainly inform'd, That all the foremention'd Matters of Fact had continued the same, for *Fifty Years* before they could have an *immediate Knowledge* of them themselves. And moreover, those who gave them this Information could have assured them, That they never saw, or heard of any Body, that lived since their Time, who knew it otherwise; and this, with the same Allowance as in the former Case, will carry the Thing *Fifty Years* higher still.

And

And so far, I think, however uncertain *Tradition* is justly accounted in the Conveyance of *Doctrines* and *Opinions*, the *Tradition* of such notorious Matters of Fact as these, so easily observed, so constantly present, so general, and so concerning, may be fully relied upon.

To make this plainer, by a like Instance in our Country, just about 150 Years ago, *Edward the Sixth* is reported to have been *King* of *England*; and the same History which tells us so, (which I will suppose to be but just now written) acquaints us, That, in his Time, the *Christian Religion* was generally professed through all this Nation, and much after the same manner it is now: But, particularly, that the same *Scriptures* were acknowledg'd, and the same *Religious Customs* and *Usages* obtained, which are before mention'd in the other Case, viz. *Baptism* and *Communion*, *Observation of the Lord's Day*, *Ministration of Priests*, *Government of Bishops*, &c. just as they are at this present. The Truth of all which we might be very well assured of, if there were no History, or other Monuments, of what was done in the Reign of *King Edward the Sixth* extant, down from his Time to this; be-
cause,

cause, by the former Supposition, there have been a great many Persons, who, during the Course of their Lives, computed at no uncommon length, might have convers'd with those who liv'd in King *Edward the Sixth's* Time, and also with those who are *now Living*; and at such Ages of their several Lives, in which they may well be suppos'd capable of remembering and judging of what they saw and heard: From which *intermediate* Persons, so many as are now Living, and convers'd with them, (which, I believe, are a great many) may have had such certain Information of the state of Religion in this Nation, during the Reign of that King, that they cannot possibly call in question. And if all these agree in their several Reports, without concerting with one another, the Evidence of the same Matters of Fact they thus agree in will be as strong, with respect to us who enquire these Things of them, and much stronger than to any of them themselves in particular, who have not made the same Observations concerning the Agreement of others before them.

'Twould

'Twould be no unreasonable Supposition to imagine, That there are some now Living; who have immediately convers'd with those who lived in *Edward the Sixth's* Time; but these are so *few*, and of so *unusual an Age*, that I shall not insist upon a Proof that might be made that way: But the other Case I have mention'd is easy and common, and lies open to every Body without a particular Computation of Time.

Upon which I shall further observe, That those, whose Testimony is allow'd sufficient for the *Form* and *Kind* of Religion professed in *England*; under *Edward the Sixth*, are, so far as that Period reaches, as good and capable Witnesses of the *Condition of its Being*, with respect either to its *Original then*, or any *considerable Alterations* or *Intermissions* in it *at any time since*. Whether the *Christian Religion* was *first introduced* into this Country by *Edward the Sixth*, or any Body else in his Time; all the Inhabitants of it having immediately before been *Jews, Heathens, or Mahometans*; or whether it had been *receiv'd* and *professed* here, *before* he came to the Throne, must have been *equally known*, and *in like manner convey'd down*, by those

G

from

from whom we derive the *other* Matters of Fact with which *this* is supposed *contemporary*? And if any *considerable* Changes in the *main Branches*, or *general* and *publick Usages* of it, such as are before instanced in; or any *Intermissions*, either of the *whole Profession*, or of *some of those publick Customs* and *Manners of Worship* or *Discipline*, should have happen'd at any Time since, these being more remarkable Facts than the *uninterrupted Continuance* of the *same state and form of Religion*, and falling later than the first Date of what we allow to be distinctly known and remembered, must be granted to be as easily and surely delivered down to us, as those Things which are acknowledg'd to fall earlier, and yet came safe to our Hands.

Now to apply all this to the former Case: These Bishops in the *Council of Nice*, who came from such or such a particular Province of the *Roman Empire*, might be as fully assured, That the *Christian Religion* was *professed* 150 Years before in that Province, *in the same Manner*, founded upon the *same Scriptures*, and attended with the *same Customs*, as it was at the Time of their assembling at *Nice*; as we of this Country can be assur'd,
That

That our *Religion, Scriptures, and Religious Customs* are the *same now*, that they were in the *Reign of Edward the Sixth, King of England*.

What *particular Christian Customs*, I mean, in both Instances has been sufficiently expressed already; but what *those Scriptures* were, which I suppose the *Nicene Bishops* unanimously acknowledg'd for the *Word of God*, and *Rule of their Faith*, and believed to have been written by the *First Apostles* and *Disciples of Christ*, and consequently to have been the same 150 Years before they met in Council as they were *then*, has not yet been declared, and, by what was done in the Council, does not certainly appear: But, I think, there is no manner of Reason to doubt, but they were the very same which now go under the Name of the *New Testament*. For whether the *Council of Laodicea*, which was the first that made any Canon concerning the Books of Scripture, was before this *Council of Nice*, as some imagine, or about Forty Years after, as others more probably conclude, we have Arguments and Authorities enough to convince us, That *all the Books of the New Testament* were acknowledg'd by the

greatest part of the *Nicene Fathers*, and most of them by all.

'Tis plain, from all the publick Decisions and Orders of the Council, That they are grounded upon some or other of the Books of Scripture now in our Hands, if they may be supposed to have been written before that Time: And that they were *Eusebius*, one of the Bishops of this Council, is a sufficient Witness; who, in a History he has left us, gives us an Account of the Time when they were all writ, and the Authors they were writ by; which is another very good Argument, That most of the *Nicene Bishops* had the same Bible: For *Eusebius* being not only present amongst, and conversing with several of them, but having a great Share in the Management of the Controversy they came to decide, and being of a doubtful Faith in the main Point determined by them; or, as some suspect, a Favourer of the Side condemned, must have had occasion either in publick Debate, or private Conversation, to have cited most of the Books he acknowledg'd for Scripture; and had any doubt arisen concerning the Authority of them, such a considerable and important

rant Controversy as would have sprung from thence, would have produced a Determination of the Council upon it; or, to be sure, have been as much taken Notice of, and as faithfully Recorded, as any Thing else that was done there.

Besides, 'tis plain from the History we have of this Council, by Cotemporaries, and others of the Age immediately following, That some Scriptures were appeal'd to, their Authority acknowledg'd, Forms of Expression drawn from thence, a Difficulty made of departing from *Scripture-Terms* till other equivalent Expressions were found necessary, to distinguish those who believ'd Scripture in a right Sence, from those who interpreted it wrong. And therefore, if *Eusebius*, or *Athanasius*, who were present at the Council, or any other Writer cotemporary, or near in Time to it, says any Thing of this Nature, he must be judg'd to mean, That the same Scriptures were acknowledg'd by the *Nicene Council*, which he himself owns: So that if *Eusebius*, or *Athanasius*, own'd all the Books of the *New Testament* which we do, 'tis manifest, That when he talks of the *Scriptures*, in the Account he gives of the

Nicene Council, he must mean the same that he does when he mentions them upon any other Occasion. And the like will hold of other Writers.

But further, to put this Matter past all doubt, 'tis certain, That the *Canon of Scripture* was some time or other afterwards fixed, as we find it now, with all the same Books in the *New Testament* that we have at present. The Occasion of making such a Canon was, because it was doubted of some of the Books, Whether they were the genuine Works of those whose Names they bore; and, if they were not, Whether they were of equal Authority with the rest. Now the way that was taken to remove all Objections, and fix the Authority of those *Scriptures* which were to be the *unalterable Standard* of the *Christian Religion*, was, by examining the *general Tradition* of all the different Churches where Christianity was professed; upon which Examination, when it was certainly known, That such and such Books, which were doubted of by some, because they had been but lately received among the Christians of those Provinces and Churches to which they belong'd, had been constantly acknowledged

knowledg'd under the same Style and Character with the rest, by the Generality of the other Churches of Christians; these were likewise as universally receiv'd as the other, and their Authority in the same manner allow'd. The Consent of so many different Churches in the same Opinion concerning certain Books, and, agreeably to their Opinion, in the same careful Preservation of them unalter'd, most of which Churches had continued separate, and independent one of another, ever since the Date they ascribed to those Writings, and several of them at such a Distance as to have had no communication with one another since that Time; such a Consent, I say, as this, whensoever the *Canon of Scripture* was first determined in a general Meeting, was thought sufficient to establish the Authority of any Book that was doubted of, and accordingly the whole Canon we now have, was afterwards universally acknowledged.

Since therefore we find, That *all the Scriptures of the New Testament* were universally received some time after the *Nicene Council*; and, since the Establishment of the Canon, and universal Submission

to it, were founded upon a *general Tradition*, so faithfully preserved in the far greatest part of Christian Churches, that all other Christians were fully satisfied of it: From hence it follows, That the *greatest part of the Nicene Bishops* must own the same Scriptures we do now, because the *greatest part of the Churches* from whence they came did.

But, not to insist upon this, we will consider only *those Scriptures* which were *never doubted of* by any Christians, and consequently must have been received by the *whole Council of Nice*. These were, according to *Eusebius*, who in his History gives us a Catalogue of them, *the Four Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, the Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul*, which have his Name to them, *the First Epistle of Peter*, and *the First Epistle of John*. And *Eusebius* could not say this, had he known of any of his Fellow-Bishops of the Council, who denied either the *Authority* or *general Reception* of any of these Books.

Supposing therefore, That these were the only Scriptures acknowledg'd by all the *Nicene Bishops*; then what was said before, concerning several *Religious Customs*

stoms and Practices there mention'd, will hold in like manner of *those Books of Scripture*; and such or such a particular Bishop, that was present at this Council, might himself, by a short, easy, and unquestionable way of conveyance, be assured, That for 150 Years last past, the *same Scriptures* had been acknowledg'd, as well as the *same Religious Customs* practised in that Church and Province from whence he came, and consequently, That the *main Scheme of Christian Doctrine*, and the *publick Profession* of it, had been all that Time the same.

Now if we apply the foregoing Observations to *all* the several Bishops of this Council, and suppose them all satisfied of the constant *Tradition* of the same *Scriptures & Customs* as are before specified, in the several Churches and Provinces from whence they came, as the History of these Times relates the *Matter of Fact* to have been; then is the unanimous consent of all these Bishops an infallible Argument of the truth of what they testify.

And, if there had not been such a constant Tradition in any of these Churches or Provinces as we suppose, then the

Original

Original Introduction, or Intermission of any of those *Scriptures* or *Customs* within the same compass of Time, would have been in the *same Way and Manner*, and with the *same Certainty* known to the *Bishops* of those Churches and Provinces, where such Introduction, or Intermission happen'd; and, what was first introduced among them, might as easily and surely have been traced to the Country or Province from whence it was derived to them, and the Manner and Occasion of the Conveyance as certainly remembered, as the continued Tradition of the same State of things could have been; and, then the enquiry may be made in those Churches and Provinces which did not derive their Religion from any other, within the time before set of 150 Years; and so far the Argument from *Tradition* will most undoubtedly hold according to the former Supposition laid down.

But, however this be, whether we suppose that *all* the Countrys and Provinces from whence the *Nicene Bishops* came, had profess'd the Christian Religion for 150 Years before this Council met, or that *some of them* had received it later; the *Tradition* concerning the *continued Uniformity*

ty of the *Scriptures* and *Religious Customs* which I have before given an account of is equally to be relied on for that whole space of Time; for, the *Tradition* of any thing being preserved by a *Succession of Men*, and not a *constancy of Place*, There was no Person at this Council, but was capable of informing himself with great certainty, that the *Christian Religion* had been in the World, and the *same Scriptures* and *Religious Customs* they then had in the Church he belonged to had been in like manner, constantly own'd and receiv'd by those that profess'd the *Christian Religion* for 150 Years before that time, either in the Country he himself was then of, or in some other from whence that *Religion*, and those *Scriptures* and *Customs* were derived to them. The Succession of the Persons conveying such a Tradition is so very short, that no change of Place is sufficient to disturb or interrupt the Conveyance, and therefore, no Person that gave himself the trouble of a faithful Enquiry, could be mistaken in it; and it must be allowed to have been the concern of all to enquire; and, since 'tis plain that all the Bishops did acknowledge these things

to be of greater Antiquity, and of uninterrupted continuance, as all pretences to the Christian Religion do necessarily infer; it must also be supposed that several of them had taken particular care to satisfy themselves of the truth of these Matters, and that none of them had met with any contrary accounts that shock'd their Faith.

Thus does it manifestly appear from the certainty of *bare Tradition* only, without the assistance of any *concurrent Monuments* of a more fix'd and lasting signification to strengthen it, that for 150 Years before the Council of Nice, the *Christian Religion* was in the *main Foundation and Substance*, and in the *principal Institutions* of it, the *same* it was then, wheresoever it was profess'd at either of these times: And, by accounts written about this latter Period, by Persons that were present at the Council then Assembled, who could be sure of the Tradition themselves in some Countrys, and could receive the like Information from the other Bishops Assembled with them, as to the Places they came from, it is likewise certain that in most, if not all the Provinces and Cities, any of the

Nicene

Nicene Bishops belong'd to, the *Christian Religion* had been established 150 Years before the Meeting of that Council, and in the same manner profess'd during that whole Term.

Taking it therefore for granted, that the *Christian Religion* was by large numbers of Men profess'd in the greatest part of the *Roman Empire* 150 Years before the Council of *Nice*, in the same manner it was at the Meeting of that Council; this Agreement of so many several distinct Countries in the *same Religion*, necessarily proves that that Religion must have been derived to them all from some *common Original*; and, since, as has before been observed, the Chief Governor of all these Provinces and Countries, was always, till the Person that then Reign'd, of a Religion opposite to that which was then profess'd by so many of his Subjects, and consequently cannot be supposed by any Decree or Law of his, to have introduced this into all his Dominions at once; it evidently follows from hence, that *this Religion* must have been published and entertain'd in some one Countrey or Province first, before it was heard of in any of the other; and in some particular

particular Town or City of that Province, except we suppose a great many first Inventors concerting a Scheme and agreeing to publish it all at the same time, in several Countries, or several parts of the same Country, which is a very unlikely Supposition, will hardly be objected here, and, if it was, would do the Objectors little service, as might easily be proved if there was occasion.

Whatever Country then we suppose the Christian Religion first published in, we must allow some time for its spreading through that Country, and being afterwards propagated and fix'd in so many other Nations of different *Manners*, *Tempers* and *Languages* as the several Provinces of the *Roman Empire* were, in which *the Christian Religion* was 150 Years before the Council of *Nice* established, and flourished, notwithstanding all the opposition a *New Religion* unsupported by *Civil Power* must meet with.

Now if we allow about Threescore Years for all this, and according to the natural progress of Things, 'tis incredible the *Christian Religion* should from any one City or Province of the *Roman Empire*, in *so short a time*, be diffused *so far*,

far, be embraced by *so many*, and be established *so fast*, under all the disadvantages that such a Religion must be attended with; yet, allowing but Threescore Years or thereabouts for so wonderful an Event, this added to the 150 before accounted for, brings us to the time of *Trajan*. We are sure therefore, that the Christian Religion could not have a later Original than under the Reign of *Trajan*: But 'tis *Pliny* plain from an Eminent Minister of his Court, that there were then vast numbers of Christians in the *Roman Empire*, and in Provinces very remote from *Rome*, as well as within the district of *Rome* it self, and the account he gives of that Religion, manifestly shews that it was *so far the same* with what was found in the *Scriptures*, and profess'd by all Christians at the time of the *Council of Nice*.

Since therefore, as has before been proved, the Christian Religion was the same 150 Years before the Council of *Nice* as it was *then*; since in some of those very Provinces and Cities of the *Roman Empire*, where *the same Christian Religion* was profess'd 150 Years before the Council

Council of *Nice*, we find that the *Christian Religion* was likewise profess'd; and there were great numbers of *Christians* about *Threescore Years* before that time; *under the Reign of Trajan*; and the account we have of these *Christians* and their Religion by *Heathen Authors*, agrees exactly with the Character of the *Christian Religion* which not long afterwards, we find, generally maintain'd, then it follows from hence, that in *those particular Places*, the Religion was the same in *the time of Trajan*, it was *Threescore Years afterwards*; and consequently, that being but *150 Years* before the Council of *Nice*, the same it was *then*: And, if the *Christian Religion* was as far spread in the time of *Trajan*, as it was *Sixty Years afterwards*, the same will hold as to *all the Roman Empire*; and, if it was not, it must be derived to those Provinces that wanted it, from those where it was profess'd, which amounts to the same thing; for, if the *Christian Religion* in *the time of Trajan* was not the same it was *Sixty Years afterwards*; no account can be given of so general and wide an Agreement *then* in so many different Provinces, as has already been prov'd

the

the same *Christian Religion* was profess'd in at that time, in all which, the Religion *then* profess'd, must be supposed different from the Original it was derived from *Sixty Years before*, even in those very Provinces, where it had been so long ago established, as well as in those where it was later entertain'd, which is absurd to imagine.

And further, since by the account we have of these Times, it plainly appears, that the *Christian Religion* was very far spread *under the Reign of Trajan*, and consequently published long before; and since as far as it was *then* spread, it was the same it was *Sixty Years afterwards*, when, as we have already proved, the greatest part of the *Roman Empire* agreed in the same general Form or Scheme of Religion which was profess'd at the Council of *Nice*, and in the same Religious Institutions and Practices as were *then* in use; it follows from hence, and from what has been before advanced, that the *Christians* we find in *Nero's Time*, were of the same Religion and Faith with those that lived at *the time of the Council of Nice*; and consequently, that all the common Historical Matters of Fact mention'd in

the New Testament, respecting the Original of the Christian Religion, the Place where it first appeared, the Time and Manner of Publishing and Propagating it, the Characters of those concern'd in the Work, and the Fortune that attended both them and their Doctrine, must necessarily be true, as I shall endeavour to shew more particularly by summing up the whole Argument in this manner.

It has been proved before, That the generality of Christians at the time of the Council of Nice, acknowledg'd all the same Scriptures that we do now, and that most of the Books of the New Testament were universally received then, and believed by all Christians of that Time, to have been so from their first appearance in the World. The Books which were thus universally received, were as universally thought to have been written by those Authors to whom they are ascribed, and to have been all written by their several Authors, at several times, between the end of Caligula's Reign and the beginning of Trajan's. And indeed, if they believ'd the Scripture-History, as 'tis plain the Christians, who received these Books, did, they must have

have believed likewise, that all the Books of the New Testament, being written by such Authors whose Names they bear, were writ within the compass of Time assigned for them; for from the Time and Manner of the Publication of the Christian Religion, it appears that they could not have been any of them written sooner; and from the Age of the Authors, it is plain that they could not have been Works of a later Date.

This being the general Faith of all Christians at the Time of the Council of Nice, must likewise, according to what has been already proved, the universal Belief of Christians 150 Years before this Council sat; and if the same Scriptures were in the same Manner received and acknowledg'd, in the greatest part of the Roman Empire, 150 Years before this Council of Nice, they must have been generally known and received in the Time of Trajan, as far as the Christian Name then reach'd, they could not otherwise have been propagated so far and wide in less than Threescore Years time; And if the Christians in Trajan's Time knew and believ'd these Scriptures, then was the Christian Religion under Trajan the same it was under Nero: For in every Book of the New

Testament the Author plainly supposes the Christian Religion established, and all the principal Matters of Fact, and Doctrines there recorded, believed before he wrote; and therefore, if all or any of these Books were received at *Rome* in the Time of *Trajan* (as the *Epistle to the Romans* must have been when Sixty Years afterwards it was believed by the greatest part of the *Roman Empire* to have been sent to them) then does it follow that all the Christians that received them must have certainly known that they believed the same Facts and Doctrines which they found in those Books ever since they profess'd the *Christian Religion*; and that all others who were of the same Name, must have profess'd to believe the same things too, (the Nature of that Religion so requiring) and consequently, that the Christian Religion at *Rome* was the same in the Time of *Nero* it was then, the *Neronian Persecution* being not above Thirty five Years before the *Reign* of *Trajan*; which is so short a Period, that several Christians of *Trajan's Time*, might have been Christians under *Nero* too, and must have known whether Christianity then Preach'd to them, was the same

same with what they found written, supposing they were converted before they had seen any of the Books of the *New Testament*; and if they were not, they might as easily have inform'd themselves, whether that part of the Christian History they found in these Books respecting *Rome*, and particularly *Nero's* Time were true or not: And their Conversion to Christianity by the means of these Books necessarily proves them satisfied of the truth of the Relations there given.

Now if most of the Books of the *New Testament* were received in *Trajan's Time*, and if Christianity was the same under *Nero* as under *Trajan*, and the same Preach'd as Written, then does it necessarily follow, not only that these Books were written by those Authors whose Names they bear, some time between the Death of *Tiberius*, and beginning of *Trajan's* Reign; but that all the common Historical Facts mention'd in the *New Testament*, and which I have undertaken to prove under this Head, are certainly true; otherwise they could not have been so generally and firmly believed, so near the Time they are there reported

to have happen'd in. For the Christians that lived in *Trajan's Time*, and received *these Books* as written by *such Authors*, must consequently believe that the *first Promulgation of the Gospel or Christian Religion* by *Jesus Christ*, happen'd but *Seventy Years* before, and that during that space it was *Preach'd* throughout the *Roman Empire*, by *such Persons*, and in *such a Manner*, as is there related; that it was embraced by *great numbers* of People in *all the considerable Provinces*, and *Cities* of it, established by the *Union of large Societies and Congregations* under the *same common Form of Discipline*, and *Witness'd and Confirm'd* by the *various Sufferings* of the first Teachers, and multitudes of their Disciples; and the Christians that lived in *Nero's Time*, must have believed most of this to have happen'd in half that space.

Thus by the help of *meer Tradition only*, does it plainly appear, that the *Christian Religion* was the *same* at the *Time of the Council of Nice*, as it was when it was *first Publish'd and Preach'd* to the World; and consequently, that *all the principal Matters of Fact* in the *New Testament*, such as I have before given an account

account of, were all along *believed* by those who *Styled themselves Christians*; and therefore *all those common Historical Facts*, the certainty of which 'twas my present business to shew, must be *true*.

All the *Authority* I have made use of to strengthen this *Tradition*, is the *Testimony* of some *Heathen Authors* of unquestionable *Credit* for the proof of this one point only, that there were a great many Persons *Styled Christians*, who were persecuted for what they *believed and did as such*, at *Rome*, by *Nero*, and in other remote Provinces of the *Roman Empire* by *Trajan*: Which two *Matters of Fact* happening at such particular distances from the supposed *Original of the Christian Religion*, I chose to mention rather for the better *Illustration* of the Matter I was to prove, than for any distinct *proof* of it. For, taking it for granted that the *Matters of Fact* concerning the *Council of Nice*, and the *State of the Christian Religion* at that time, were such as I have represented; and, allowing further, what, I think, I have proved, that the *Christian Religion* was *professed* in most, if not *all the same Places* from whence the *Nicene Bishops* came,

and in the same manner, as to the *Belief of the Scriptures*, and *use of those Religious Customs and Institutions* I have before instanced in, 150 Years before as it was then, it follows from hence, that, without the help of any *particular Testimony* of Heathen or other Writers, or any other *Ancient Monuments of History*, that all those common *Matters of Fact* which I have mention'd at the beginning of this Head, must needs be true. For, according to this Supposition, the greatest part of the *Roman Empire*, believing the Books of the *New Testament* 150 Years before the Council of *Nice*, must consequently believe that in less than 150 Years before that Time, the Christian Religion was first published to the World at *Jerusalem*, there being no such Thing as a *Christian* before; and that, within that space of Time down from the first Publication of the Gospel to their present Belief of it, it must have been *Preached and Propagated* through the greatest part of the known World, in the Way and Manner recorded in the Books of the *New Testament*, and that the same Persons who Preach'd it were the Authors of those Books; Copies of which had been dispers'd

pers'd so far, and multiplied to so great a variety, that most of the People that profess'd the Christian Religion in every Country, had them in their Hands; which *Matters of Fact*, and other Particulars depending upon them, if they had not been true, could never have been so generally believed at a Time so near that in which they were supposed to happen, that the first and remotest of all, was not 150 Years past, and the others must fall out much later.

But further, besides this proof that I have brought from *Tradition*, there are a great many other *concurrent Authorities* which do not only confirm the Certainty of the *Tradition*, but are of themselves a *distinct and sufficient Evidence* of the same Truths which we have already proved that way. For, at the same Period of Time wherein we have chosen to consider the State of the Christian Religion, and from whence we have traced it up to its first Original, and shewed the Constancy and Integrity of the Conveyance, viz. *At the Meeting of the first General Council of Nice*, we find a great many

many *fixt and standing Monuments of several Ages and different Places*, that every body might have recourse to, and examin when they pleased; all which did very exactly and fully prove the *Antiquity and uninterrupted continuance of the Christian Faith*, as to all the *principal Matters of Fact* related in the *New Testament*.

Eusebius, one of the *Bishops of the Nicene Council*, before mention'd, has writ a *History of the Christian Religion* from its first appearance in the World down to his own Time, and the Book is now extant, warranted to be his by the Testimony of abundance of succeeding Writers, and question'd by none. Now in this History he gives us a very large and particular account of the *State and Condition of Christianity* in all the several Places of the World, wherever he could learn it had been entertain'd: which Account consists of a vast variety of Matters of Fact, beside those already instanced, in as preserved by *Tradition*, the Memory of most of which, was not only preserved the *same way*, but was further secured by *lasting Monuments and Records*.

The most remarkable Matters in him, which I think sufficient to my present purpose

purpose to mention for the further Confirmation of those Truths I have already proved, may be referred to these three Heads, *Customs and Usages; Relicks, Buildings, and other such like Monuments; Books and written Words.*

And first it is to be observed that, at the time of the Council of Nice, besides those *Religious Customs and Institutions* before instanced in, which were *general and constant in all Ages and Countries* since the first Original of Christianity, there were several *other Customs and Usages* then Practis'd; some of which obtained as *generally* as the former did, and others were confined to some *particular Places*: such were the *Annual Feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost; stated times of the Year and Week for Fasting; Anniversary Commemoration of the Sufferings of Martyrs, and often Meeting at the Places where they Suffered; using the Sign of the Cross upon several occasions; calling Children by the Names of the first Apostles and Saints, &c.* These, and many other such like Customs as these, are plainly founded upon, and suppose an antecedent Belief of *Christianity*, and particularly those
principal

principal Facts Recorded in the *New Testament*, upon which the *whole Christian Religion* turns. These therefore are both fresh proofs of the Truth of those Facts we have undertaken to prove, and do also strengthen and confirm the *Tradition* of those other Customs and Institutions we have before instanced in; especially if we consider what the same History, that gives us this account, informs us of, *viz.* that the *Christian Customs now mention'd*, were not look'd upon as *such necessary parts of that Religion*, nor of so *early an Original* as the *other*; and that both these and the former were in *several Places and Ages* practis'd after *several Manners*, with *different additional Rites and Ceremonies*; which *general Reception of some Customs and general distinctions* betwixt *Necessary and Unnecessary, Substance and Manner* in all that were received, are certain Arguments of a *sincere and well-examin'd Tradition*.

Another Set of Testimonies which *Eusebius* furnishes us with, in behalf of the *Christian Tradition*, are *Relicks, Buildings, and other such like Monuments*; several of which were remaining in his Time

Time, and seen by him himself; such were *Christian Burying-Places and Sepulchres* with the *Names of Christians upon them*; particularly those of *Peter and Paul*; *Statues and Pictures*, particularly the Statue of the Woman cured by Christ of the Bloody Flux; Pictures of *Christ, Peter, and Paul*, in colours: These were all seen by *Eusebius* himself, as was likewise the *Episcopal Chair of James at Jerusalem*, several *Christian Libraries*, and several *Christian Temples*, before they were pull'd down and destroyed by the Order of *Dioclesian*. These, and many other such like Monuments remaining in *Eusebius's* Time, whether all the *Particular Traditional Reports* concerning them were *true or false*, might easily be perceived upon view, or divers other ways be known to be *Ancient*; and, whatever Age they were of, they must be good proofs of the *Belief of the Men of those Times*, and consequently of the *truth of Christianity*, so far as we are now concern'd to prove it.

But the *Tradition of Christianity* from its *first Original*, down to the Council of *Nice*, with all the *principal Matters of*

Fact upon which it is built, is further and more especially secured to us, and the truth of all the foregoing Testimonies confirm'd by *Books and written Records: vast Numbers* of which of *different Kinds and different Ages*, written by *several Men of different Countries, Characters, Designs, and Religious Persuasions* were extant in *Eusebius's Time*; a great many of which were *generally known, multitudes of Copies of them* being dispersed throughout the *World*; and several of these Writings were *carefully preserved* in particular places, and either never communicated further by any *Transcripts or Copies*, or remaining there to be seen in their *Primitive State* after *Transcription*.

Now all these Writings, of what kind soever they are, whose Authority is made use of for the establishing *the Christian Faith*, I shall rank under certain distinct Heads, in order to shew what sense and weight they have in the proof of what they are brought to maintain.

The several Books and Writings then to be considered, are: *Copies of the Holy Scriptures*, viz. of the Books of the *Old and New Testament*; *Publick Acts and Records*

Records belonging properly to *Societies*, and not to particular Authors; *Genuine Writings of profess'd Christians*, who by reason of their common Agreement in some certain Doctrines of Christianity are *Styl'd Orthodox*; *Books writ by Hereticks*, who were Men of particular Opinions different from those commonly received by other Christians; *Jewish and Pagan Books*, containing such Things as have Relation to Christianity; *Forged and Supposititious Writings of uncertain Authors*, which do some way or other concern the *Christian Religion*.

As to *Copies of the Scriptures* found in the hands of Christians in *Eusebius's Time*, I have these Things to observe; that they were then *multiplied* to so great a Variety, that hardly a Christian Family was without some of the Books; That they were *Translated* into *several different Languages*; That in those Countries, where the Translations were of common use, a *great many Copies* in the *Original Language* were preserv'd; That in most of the great Cities and Episcopal Churches, there was a *Copy* in the *Original Language more ancient* than the rest



rest, from whence the other Copies were taken, and Translations made; That such Copies as these might not only by *Tradition*, but by several *intrinsic Marks* be known to be ancient, and their Age pretty nearly determined; That, upon comparison, there was a very great *Agreement* betwixt these *ancient Copies* preserved in several very *distant and remote Churches*; That such care had been taken in Transcribing and Translating from them, that the *differences* found between any Copies either of the *Originals* or *Translations* were *very inconsiderable*; That all Christians thought themselves concern'd to preserve the *Jewish Canon of Scripture*, as well as the *New Testament*; and therefore *Copies* of the *Old Testament in the Original Tongue*, and *Translations* of it into *several Vulgar Languages* were *multiplied, carefully Transcribed, and kept together with those of the New*; That upon a diligent search into the Matter it was found, that, besides those Copies of the greatest part of the Books of the *New Testament* which were alike to be met with in *all Christian Churches*, there were others received in *some Churches*, and by a constant Tradition then vouch'd

to

to be *as early*, and of *as great Authority* as the *rest*.

From all which I think I may safely infer, That the *Writings of the New Testament* were *as early* as they are pretended to be, and that the *Christian Religion* had its *Original* in *Judea*, at the time assigned it; which being *less than 300 Years* before *Eusebius*; and the Books of the *New Testament*, which give an account of the *Christian Religion*, and plainly suppose an antecedent Propagation and Establishment of it in a great part of the World, being writ *some time after the first Publication*, *Eusebius*, or any other Person of his Age, who throughly examined the Matter concerning the Copies of the *Scriptures* then received, must needs be satisfied from this Consideration only, that *the Books of the New Testament* had *as early* a Publication in the World as is now ascribed to them, and consequently that the *Christian Faith* was somewhat *earlier* and the *same then* as it is in these Books represented to have been.

This will further be made out from the next sort of Writings to be considered,

I

red,

red, viz. *Publick Acts and Records*, belonging properly to Societies, and not to particular Authors: such were *Catalogues of Bishops, Decrees of Synods, Letters from Churches and Societies of Men, general Records of remarkable Matters, particular Acts and Monuments of Martyrs, Psalms, Hymns, Creeds, and Forms of Prayer.*

The most famous Churches, especially those constituted by Apostles, kept the Succession of their Bishops with great care laid up in their Archives, recording their Names and days of their Death in a pair of writing Tables: This Eusebius tells us was the Custom of the Primitive Christians; and these Tables he assures us he diligently examined, and he was very exact in the Account he took of them, as particularly appears from what he says concerning the Church of Jerusalem, viz. That he found from Old Records fifteen Bishops, with their Names, who had succeeded in that Church, from the Apostles to the Siege of the Jews in Adrian's Time; but could not find preserved in Writing the space of Time each Bishop spent in his Presidency over that See. The like diligence and exactness are observable in the Account he gives of the Succession of Bishops

shops in several other Churches, most of their Names being set down, and the times of their several Succession, Presidency, and Death punctually determined, and Reasons given why he could not speak with the same certainty of the rest omitted.

There were likewise extant in his Time a great many *Canons and Decrees*, made by several Councils and Synods, convened at several times, in different Countries, and upon different occasions; as also several Letters writ from Churches and Societies of Men such as were the *Epistles of the Churches of Vienna and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia*, concerning their Martyrs; *Epistle of the Church of Smyrna* concerning the Martyrdom of *Polycarp*; *Epistle of the Martyrs of Lyons to Eleutherus Bishop of Rome*; *Epistles of the Bishops, and other Members of Synods*, enforcing the Observation of the Canons they made, &c. All which were, according to the Nature and Designs of them, either dispersed far abroad, and to be found in several Countries, or else carefully preserved in some particular places whither they were directed, and so remain'd

main'd there to be seen by such as were pleas'd to consult them.

Besides such *occasional* Writings as these which, according to some particular Exigencies of the Church, were sent abroad and communicated from one Society of Christians to others, there were in several Places *Publick Histories of all remarkable Affairs* that happened in each Place, continued down for a considerable space of Time: several of which Publick Histories or Records *Eusebius* consulted, as he himself assures us, particularly when he gives us that wonderful Relation of *Agbarus King of Edessa*, he says he took it out of the *Publick Records kept at Edessa, wherein the Antiquities of the City and the Acts of Agbarus are contained*: And a great many other Memorable Facts he came by the same way.

In this manner were more especially preserved the *Acts and Monuments of such as had suffered Martyrdom* upon the account of the Christian Religion. The *Names* of abundance of Martyrs, the *Times* when they Suffered, the various sorts and *kinds of Sufferings* they endured, with all the other Circumstances relating

ating to their *Persecution*, were largely set forth in Writing, and the Records of them carefully kept in many Countries, where the Cruelty and Violence of the *several long Persecutions*, which had raged at *several distant Periods of Time*, were most remarkable.

Other Publick Writings extant in *Eusebius's* Time, were *Hymns and Psalms, Creeds and Forms of Prayer*: Several of which, that were constantly used in the Publick Assemblies of Christians, were known to be of great Antiquity: And some of these ancient Forms of Worship were the same in many Churches, and several of them more or less different from one another.

Now 'tis plain to any one that examines any of these *Publick Writings* belonging to Societies of Christians, that, whensoever they were writ, and whether in all respects true or false, they are certain proofs of an antecedent Establishment and Belief of the Christian Religion, such as it was in *Eusebius's* Time, and such as it was, and is now found in the *New Testament*; and all the Accounts we have of the Age and other Circumstances of them, do

concurr to strengthen the Evidence already given of the *Christian Tradition*.

But the Truth of all those Matters of Fact related in the *New Testament*, which I have at present engaged my self to prove, will be more abundantly made out by a *continued Succession* of a *vast number of Writings* belonging to *particular Persons*, distinguish'd by the Titles of *Orthodox Christians, Hereticks, Jews, and Heathens*.

A great many of these Writings are mention'd by *Eusebius*, and had been with incredible industry *read and examined* by him. Several he gives the *Titles* of only, others he gives some *Character and Account* of, and *Transcribes* large Passages out of them; a great many *Orthodox Books* he *omits* the mention of, for want of their Authors Names being prefix'd to them; others for want of being able to distinguish when their Authors lived; and a great many he *rejects* the Authority of, though they made for the Cause of the Christian Religion which he maintained, because they had not sufficient Marks upon them, to prove they belong'd to the Persons and Times they

they pretended to: Some of the Writings he quotes were *lost in his Time*, and only Fragments of them to be found in others that were entirely extant; several that were then extant and mention'd by him, were *seen by a great many later Authors*, and all his Quotations out of them are confirm'd to us by their Writings, but the Originals of them are now *lost*; and a great many remain *entire still*, and are plainly the same he represented them to be, and so are the Fragments of more ancient Authors contained in them: All which are certain Arguments of the *Diligence and Sincerity of this Historian*, and the *Antiquity of those Books*, whose Authority we are now to make use of.

In the next place then let us take a more particular view of these Writings, and consider the *Age, Character*, and other *Circumstances* of the *Authors*, the *Subjects* they treat about, and the *Form* and *Manner* in which they are writ.

As to the *Age* of those Christian Authors we call *Orthodox*, some small Treatises and Fragments we have of such as lived together *with the Apostles*, and were *immediate Witnesses* of the

Doctrines delivered, and the mighty Works done by them; and several of these ancient Pieces are allowed to be *Genuine* by those whose Skill and Enquiry into the Matter, have rendred them capable Judges. The Authors of the next Age who declare they lived *with those who convers'd with the Apostles*, are *more*, their Writings *much larger*, and of *more unquestionable Authority* than the *other*, being confirmed by *more numerous Testimonies* of following Writers, who in very near Periods of Time continually succeeded them.

The *Character* of all these Writers was in some respects very *like*, and in others very *different*. Some of them were *Jews* and *Heathens converted to Christianity*; others were *born of Christian Parents*; many of them were *Greeks* and writ in *that Language*, and many were of *Roman Colonies*, and writ in *Latin*; but, though all the Authors we have, writ in one of these Languages, they were most of them of very *different*, and very *remote* Countries from one another: Several of the first Writers were *Plain Simple Men*, without the advantage of a *Learned*, *Honourable*, or *Publick Education*, others

of

of them were *Philosophers*, and Men very well vers'd in all the *Heathen Learning*; some were of *Honourable Families*, and *Publick Employments*; many of them were *Bishops* of the *Christian Church*, and lived in the most considerable *Cities* of the *Roman Empire*, and by that means had great opportunities of being acquainted with the true *State of Things* in the *World*. In this they all agree that they were *heartly Believers* and *zealous Assertors* of the *Christian Religion*, that they bottom'd their *Faith* upon the *Books* of the *New Testament*, that they made it the chief *Business* of their *Lives* and *Writings* to promote the *Christian Faith*, and that they were ready to bear *Testimony* to the *Truth* of what they profess'd by resigning their *Lives*; the sincerity of which disposition of theirs is confirm'd to us by the actual *Martyrdom* of several of them, who lived in such *Times* and *Places*, as gave them opportunities of manifesting their *Faith* and *Christian Resolution* this way.

But the *general Character* of these *Writers*, as well as the *Authority* of what they *say*, will be further made out from the consideration of the *Subjects* they writ about,

hout, the several *kinds* and *sorts* of their Writings, and the *Manner* in which they are writ. All which I shall endeavour to bring under one view, and raise such Observations from them as will plainly confirm the main Conclusion I am to establish.

The *common Subject* of all the Books and Writings of the *first Orthodox Authors* was the *Christian Religion*, though in several Ways and Methods discoursed of. Most of these concern the *History of Christian Affairs*, either *expressly* or *occasionally*: For, besides those Authors, who purposely designed an Historical Relation either of the *Church in general*, or of some *particular Ecclesiastical Matter*, there's hardly a Christian Writer within the Time of our present Enquiry, but has some occasion or other to mention several Historical Passages in almost every Book that he wrote, in order to some further end he propos'd to himself in writing.

Now concerning the Writings of Christian Authors, considered under this Character of *Historians*, I have these Things to observe.

First,

First, That they do manifestly confirm the truth of *all those Traditions* and *standing Monuments* before mentioned. For we have frequent Proofs of the Antiquity of the *Scriptures*, and all those *Religious Customs* and *Institutions* in use amongst Christians in *Eusebius's* time, and the *General Tradition* strengthen'd by abundance of *New Circumstances*; such were the great *Controversies* and *Quarrels* about some Christian Usages, (particularly *Baptism*, and the *Feast of Easter*) together with the *Canons* and *Decrees* that were made, and the *Letters* that were writ with relation to these Affairs. Here is likewise mention made of the *same Christian Relicks* and *Monuments*, and the *same publick Acts* and *Records* which *Eusebius* saw, and the Accounts and Extracts of them in several Authors agree with what *Eusebius* himself was witness of.

In the next place 'tis very plain, that they give us an account of several *other Customs*, *Monuments* and *publick Acts*, and abundance of *other particular Historical Passages*, besides those mention'd in *Eusebius*; the *Truth* of which, or the *Antiquity of their Fiction* being

ing proved, they are so many new Arguments in behalf of the Christian Tradition, or the truth of those Facts we are now to prove.

Thirdly, I observe that most of these Authors, considered as *Historians*, were very *Competent Judges* and *Credible Reporters* of the truth of the Facts they relate. For either they were actual and immediate Witnesses of what they tell us themselves, or they took a great deal of care to inform themselves right, or the Facts were of that nature that they could not be deceived though they did not examine them very strictly; and which way soever they came by them, they were *Faithful* and *Sincere* in their Relation. Several things they tell us of *their own Knowledge*, others they *quote their Authors for*, and others they deliver only as *Traditional Reports*, which they distinguish also into *Probable* and *Fabulous* according to the Evidence that then appeared to them upon a diligent Examination. And several of them have given great Marks of their *Diligence and Care in enquiring* as well as *Sincerity in reporting*: as particularly *Hegesippus*, who gave an account of the Unity of Faith in several

several Cities, after having travell'd through them, and convers'd with the Bishops of them; *Clemens* who used all the care he could to inform himself of the Truth and Sincerity of the *Christian Tradition* from several Eminent Persons of different Countries; *Irenæus* who carefully remember'd the Conversation he had with Eminent Christians in his Youth, and was very much concern'd to have his own Writings deliver'd down faithfully to Posterity: a proof of which first Remark concerning *Irenæus*, we have in an Epistle of his to *Florinus*, quoted by *Eusebius*, part of which I think worth the Transcribing, when reproving *Florinus* for some ill Opinions he held, he speaks to him in this manner: "These
" Opinions the Presbyters who Euf. Ec. H. 1. 5. c. 26.
" lived before our times, who
" also were the Disciples of the *Apostles*,
" did in no wise deliver unto thee: For I
" saw thee (when being yet a Child, I
" was in the Lower *Asia* with *Polycarp*)
" behaving thy self very well in the Pa-
" lace, and endeavouring to get thy self
" well esteemed of by him; for I remem-
" ber the things then done better then
" what has happen'd of late; for what we
" learnt

“learnt being Children increafes toge-
 “ther with the Mind it felf, and is clofely
 “united to it, infomuch that I am able
 “to tell where the Blessed *Polycarp* fate
 “and Discourfed; alfo his goings out and
 “comings in, his manner of Life, the
 “fhape of his Body, the Discourfes he
 “made to the Populace, the familiar Con-
 “verfe which he faid he had with *John*,
 “and with thofe who had feen the *Lord*;
 “and how he rehears’d their Sayings, and
 “what they were which he had heard
 “from them concerning the *Lord*; con-
 “cerning his Miracles, and his Doctrine,
 “according as *Polycarp* received them from
 “thofe who with their own Eyes beheld
 “the Word of Life, fo he related them,
 “agreeing in all things with the *Scri-*
 “*ptures*. Thefe things by the Mercy of
 “God beftowed upon me, I then heard
 “diligently, and copied them out, not
 “in Paper, but in my Heart; and by the
 “Grace of God I do continually and fin-
 “cerely ruminare upon them. And the
 fame *Irenæus*, at the end of one of his
 Pieces fays thus. “I adjure thee who
 “fhalt Tranfcribe this Book, by our *Lord*
 “*Jefus*, and by his Glorious coming to
 “Judge the Quick and the Dead, that
 “you compare what you fhall Tranfcribe,
 “and

“and correct it diligently according to
 “that Copy whence you fhall Trans-
 “cribe, and that in like manner you af-
 “cribe this Adjuration, and annex
 “it to your Copy. Which concern of
Irenæus for the faithful conveyance of
 Truths contained in his own Writings to
 Pofterity, is a very good argument of
 his care in examining the Traditions and
 Writings that came down to him from
 elder times, refpecting the fame Impor-
 tant Truths.

A great many other fuch like Inftances
 as thefe may be given, where the Primi-
 tive Christian Writers pofitively and ex-
 preffly declare, that they had feen and con-
 vers’d with the immediate Succeffors of the
 Apoftles, and with thofe upon whom
 feveral great Miracles had been wrought
 by them, & had themfelves been Witneffes
 of a great many wonderful Gifts remain-
 ing in the Church in their time; as like-
 wife where they demonftrate by many
 fenfible Marks and Signs, the great Care
 and Diligence they had taken in exami-
 ning the Informations they received from
 remoter Hands, and all other concurring
 Prefumptions arifing from Circumftances
 of Fact, and Rational Inferences.

And

And as they were *competent Witnesses* and *careful Relators in General*, so are they *more especially* to be relied upon, as to those two great and concerning Matters of Fact the *Scriptures of the New Testament*, and *Persecutions of Christians*.

The *Truth* and *Authority of the Scriptures* was with much enquiry and examination Established: This every one made it his business to be well assur'd of; and a free disquisition concerning the truth of some or other of the Books of Scripture is every where to be found among the Antient Writers.

Then as to the *Persecutions* they were so many, they continued so long together, were so widely spread, were attended with so vast a number of very new and remarkable Facts, and so many of the Writers lived in the heat of them, and had so large a share and concern in them themselves, that 'tis impossible that the accounts they give of them, should not be, most of them at least, very true.

The Fourth Observation I have to make upon the *Historical* part of the first Christian Writers, is that there are so many *Notes of time* to be found in them, such a particular Designation of *Places* and *Per-*
sons

sons, and such a mixture of *Jewish* and *Heathen Affairs* with the Christian History, as rendred any Errours or Mistakes so liable to a discovery at those times, when the several Books that treat of these Matters were first Published to the World, that by not being confuted, they are, as to the main substance of what they declare, irrefragably confirm'd.

The *other Writings* of *Orthodox Christians* of the first Ages, which do not concern the *History of Christianity*, are either *Vindications* and *Defences of the Christian Religion* against all the Objections and Calumnies raised by any of the Enemies of it, or *Explications of the Christian Doctrine*, *Government* and *Discipline*, or *Exhortations* and *Directions to Practise*, or *Animadversions* and *Reproofs* for *Errours* and *Offences*: All which are written under the form of *Orations* or *Apologies*, *Letters*, *Disputations*, *Comments*, &c.

Now it's plain from all these Writings, that the several Authors of them were *thoroughly convinced of the Truth of the Christian Religion*: This appears from the Zeal and Warmth with which many of them write upon several occasions to one another, and to *Hereticks*; the readiness they testify to

quit all they have, and to lay down their Lives rather than do any thing contrary to their Profession; the concern they express for the continuance of their Fellow-Christians in the same Faith, and the Conversion of others to Christianity; the Boldness and Courage they shew to Persons of Power and Authority, when the truth of their Religion, or their own Innocence is call'd in question, and from many other unquestionable marks of *Honesty, Sincerity*, and a through *Perswasion*, visible almost in every Page.

'Tis manifest likewise that all these Authors *believed the Scriptures of the New Testament*, and Founded their Religion upon them. Several of them have writ Comments upon them, all quote them and confirm the Doctrines they deliver, and the Rules and Directions they give from them; and all their Writings plainly declare they were very well vers'd in them and influenced by the same Spirit that governs there, and distinguishes those Writings from any other; and, when ever any Controversy happen'd in matters of Christian Faith or Practic'd, the Appeal is constantly made to these Scriptures.

Several

Several other Remarks and Observations might be drawn from the *Writings* of those Christians call'd *Orthodox*; but these are sufficient for what I design to prove by them, and so I pass on to consider what we have written by *Hereticks, Jews* and *Heathens*, with relation to Christianity.

A great many things were written by Persons of these several Denominations in the Three first Ages of the Christian Æra, but very little of them that expressly concerns *Christianity* remains now; and a great many of these Writings were lost in *Eusebius's Time*; so that almost all we know of them is contained in the *Orthodox* Writers: In many of which there are several considerable Fragments yet to be found, and accounts of what is lost. From all which we may collect that none of the Enemies of the Christian Religion, neither *Hereticks, Jews* nor *Heathens*, did at any time offer to disprove or contradict those Christian Facts I have been now Establishing, but did in several respects strengthen and confirm the truth of them,

K 2

We

We find by the *Orthodox Writers*, that there were in the most Primitive Times, and continually, in all the after-Periods of Christianity, a great many *Hereticks* of very *different Characters and Opinions*, who troubled the *Peace of the Church*, and endeavoured to corrupt the *Christian Doctrine and Tradition*. Their Writings are full of the strange Opinions of *Hereticks*; they are oftentimes very large in giving a History of the Men, their vicious Lives, and wicked Designs; and in confuting their Absurd, and, for the most part, *Blasphemous Doctrines*. From hence we find that several of these *Hereticks*, in order to justify their Errors, made use of all the Arts and Shifts they could; and some denied one Book of Scripture, and some another; some took upon them to reform the Scriptures, and added what they thought serv'd their turn, or took away what they did not like; Others made new Scriptures, and put them out in the Names of the Apostles; but none of them denied the *principal matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament*, neither *Miraculous* nor *Common*, though their *Character* oftentimes allow'd, and their *Cause* requir'd such a denial, if the Evidence
of

of those Facts had not appear'd to them so strong as to render all contradiction Vain and Ineffectual.

The *Jews* who writ against the *Christian Religion*, allow'd *most* of the principal matters of Fact Recorded of *Christ* in the *New Testament*, even his *Miracles* as well as the *Common History* of his Life; and when they deny the *Reality* they grant the *Pretence*, & are wholly concern'd to shew that *Christ* was not the *Messias* promised them, notwithstanding his extraordinary Character; because, as they thought, several of the Prophecies in the *Old Testament*, which were agreed on all hands to relate to the *Messias* could not be apply'd to *Christ*. In this consisted wholly the Controversie betwixt them and the *Christians*; and therefore are the *Jews* of these times censur'd by the *Christian Writers*, as corrupting the *Old Testament* in such Passages of it as seem'd to them to make most for the *Christian Religion*: Particularly *Justin*, in his *Dialogue with a Jew*, endeavors to evince, That several Testimonies of the Prophets which he quoted was cut out of the *Bible* by the *Jews*, which charge whether true or false, proves thus much, that

the *Jews* had no other way of resisting the Evidence of the *Christian Religion*, but by *denying*, or in some manner *evading* the Arguments drawn from the *Prophecies of the Old Testament*. Here they placed the chief strength of their Cause, and not in the *Confutation* of the *Christian History*; the greatest part of which is plainly granted in the Arguments they make use of to overthrow the *Faith* built upon it, and the *Inferences* drawn from it. Particularly *Josephus* does confirm the truth of several of the Facts related in the *New Testament*, and such as necessarily determine the *Original of Christianity*.

The like account, in a great measure, may be given of the *Heathens* whose Writings do any ways concern *Christianity*: For neither those of them that were Instrumental in the Persecution of *Christians*, nor those who endeavour to overthrow the truth of their Religion by Arguments, do deny any of those matters of Fact related in the *New Testament*, which we have distinguished by the Title of *Common Historical Facts*; and a great many of them are confirm'd by other *Heathen Writers*, who treat of their own affairs only, or mention

mention *Christian Matters* occasionally, as they happen'd to be intermixt with those Things they designedly writ about. Nay, some of those that writ expressly against the *Christian Religion*, do not only allow that *Christ pretended to Miracles*, and that he did those Things Recorded of him in *appearance*, (as was the Opinion of several of them) but that he did *really* work those very *Miracles* he pretended to: But then they endeavour to lessen the Credit of them, and destroy the Doctrines built upon them, either by ascribing them (as many of the *Jews* likewise did) to *Magick* and *Evil Spirits*; or shewing that several of their own Religion had done as extraordinary Things as any that were attributed to *Christ* and his *Apostles*.

A great many of these *Heathen Writings* are quoted, some of them particularly Answer'd and Confuted, and several large Pieces of them inserted in the *Books of Christian Authors*. There we find, besides a great many *Passages out of Private Authors*, and *Common Traditions*, several *Rescripts*, *Edicts* and *Letters* of *Roman Emperors*, either mentioned or transcribed; and several *Publick Acts*

and *Records* compiled by the Authority of *Heathens*, and in their keeping, appeal'd to with the greatest Confidence and Assurance imaginable, as extant in the Writers Time that Cites them, and generally known: Particularly we meet with divers of these *Heathen Monuments* in the *Christian Apologies*, which were at several times, by different Writers, Dedicated to *Roman Emperors*, the *Senate of Rome*, and *Governors of Provinces*.

Many such Proofs and Evidences as these of the *Christian Faith and History*, are still to be found in the *Christian Books* which were writ before *Eusebius*, and are now extant: But there were also extant in his Time several of the same *Heathen Books* out of which those Testimonies were taken, and others which gave the same Account of Christian Affairs; which was look'd upon by *Eusebius* to be so notorious a Truth, that when he talks of the State of Christianity under *Domitian*, he confirms what he says by the Authority of *Heathen Writers*,

without thinking it necessary to name any particular Author: *Eus. E. H. i. 3. c. 18.* "So mightily (says he) did the Doctrine of our Faith flourish in those
" fore-

" forementioned Times, that even those
" Writers who are wholly estranged from
" our Religion, (by which he plainly
" means Heathens) have not thought it
" troublesome to set forth in their Histo-
" ries both this Persecution, and also the
" Martyrdoms suffered therein; and they
" have also accurately shewn the very
" Time; relating that in the Fifteenth
" Year of *Domitian*, *Flavia Domitilla*,
" Daughter of the Sister of *Fabius Cle-*
" *mens*, at that time one of the Consuls
" of *Rome*, was, together with many o-
" thers, banished into the Island of *Pon-*
" *tia*, for the Testimony of *Christ*.

There are likewise several *Heathen Authors* still *separately* extant, out of which may be Collected a great many Passages, which give a concurrent Evidence of the Truth of the *Christian History* as *Tacitus* and *Pliny* before quoted, and divers others; and there is nothing to be found in any of them that does, in the least, contradict any of the principal Matters Fact now to be proved.

But, besides these Writings which are acknowledged to be *Genuine*, and the true and proper Works of those Persons whose

whose Names they bear, whether *Orthodox Christians, Hereticks, Jews or Heathens*, there were a great many other in the Primitive Times of Christianity, written by *uncertain Authors*; and either *purposely Published* under false Names and Titles, with a design to promote the Belief of the *Christian Religion in general*, or to advance and defend some *particular Notions and Practices* which the Authors of them approved, and had a mind to recommend to the World; or else by some mistake ascribed to those Persons to whom they did not really belong. Such were a great many *false Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Revelations*, and several other Historical and Doctrinal Discourses, Published under the Names of *Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and Eminent Christians* of the succeeding Ages; such were also several *Letters* said to be Writ by *Pilate, Seneca, and Lentulus*, the *Oracles of the Sybils*, and several other Writings attributed to some considerable *Heathens*, a Passage in *Josephus* relating to *Christ, &c.* All which, supposing them *all Forged*, or only *some* of them so, *some accidentally mistaken*, and *others doubtful*; whoever were the Authors of them, so long as it plainly

plainly appears they were of such and such Antiquity, they are certain proofs of the *general Faith of Christians*, at the respective Times when any of them were Published, and consequently of the Truth of those Facts in question; forasmuch as they all evidently suppose an antecedent Belief of the *Christian Religion*, founded upon those Facts, as is visible by all the Remains we have left of them; and therefore are as good Arguments of the Truth of what I am proving, as the most *Genuine unquestionable* Writings of any other Author whatsoever, *viz.* That the *common Historical Facts related in the New Testament* are true.

Which Point, I think, is proved by such a *multitude and variety* of Evidence, that I may take it for granted, That *Jesus Christ* who lived and was Crucified at *Jerusalem*, in the Reign of *Tiberius Cesar*, was the *first Author of the Christian Religion*; That the *Characters, Sufferings and Pretences of Christ* and his *Apostles*, and the *Doctrines* taught by them, were the *same* we find represented in the *Books of the New Testament*, and that the *Christian Religion* there delivered, was
propagated

propagated through the World, and those Books writ, according to the Time, Manner, and Circumstances there mentioned, between the middle of *Tiberius*, and the beginning of *Trajan's* Reign; and consequently that the *Christian Faith*, as to the principal Facts and Doctrines contain'd in the *New Testament*, was always the same, from the Time of *Tiberius* to the Council of *Nice*, and from thence to the present Age; the greatest part of the Scriptures having been always acknowledged to be the *Genuine Works* of those whose Names they bore, and to contain the unalterable grounds of the *Christian Religion*; and the Sum of what Christians were obliged to believe.

2. In the next place then, I am to prove that those extraordinary Facts Recorded in the *New Testament*, which we call *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, were really true, according the Relation there given of them.

That they were constantly believed to be true by all Christians ever since the Time in which they are first said to happen, has already been proved; but whether

whether their Faith was well grounded, or not, is now the Enquiry: That it was, I shall prove by shewing that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Testament*, are related and attested in such a manner, that the Truth of them cannot possibly be called in question.

But that the strength and validity of what I have to say upon this Head, may be better, and more clearly perceived, I think fit, by way of Introduction, to shew,

First, What I mean by *Miracles* and *Prophecies*; and,

Secondly, What kind of Evidence these Facts are capable of, and which way they are to be proved.

By *Miracles*, then, I would now be understood to mean only strange unusual Events, out of the common Road and Course of Things, which by all the Knowledge we have of Nature, we cannot tell how to bring to pass, nor account for, when they have happened: And these are to be distinguished into such as are absolutely, at all Times strange,

strange, and not to be accounted for by what we know of the Power and Force of Nature, as *the Resurrection of the Dead, &c.* And such as are so only in consideration of some particular Circumstances; as *healing the Sick*, which is in it self no strange Thing, but only when 'tis done in a shorter Time than Medicines were ever known to operate, or without the assistance of any visible means, or the like.

By *Prophecies*, I here understand Relations of such future Events, as have no perceivable connexion with the State of Things at the Time when they are uttered.

This is all I mean at present by *Miracles* and *Prophecies*; and every Body I am sure will allow me that there are a great many such Matters of Fact as these mention'd in the *New Testament*: How, and by what means they were done, whether they were *Natural* or *Supernatural Effects*; whether they were the *Works of Art* or *Magick*; whether *God* or *Man*, or some *Good* or *Evil Spirit* was the Author of them, is not my present business to enquire; that belongs to another place: All that I have now undertaken to shew, is that they were some
way

way or other really done, according to the Relation we have of them in the *New Testament*.

Now I know of no other way of proving this, but by the *Number* and *Character of the Witnesses* who attest the Truth of these Facts, and by the *Nature* and *Circumstances of the Facts* themselves, according as they appear from the Account the Witnesses give of them. If the Witnesses are such, as we have no reason to think, could be deceived themselves in what they relate, or would offer to impose upon others; and if the Facts are such as could not be represented by the Witnesses otherwise than they were, without a certain discovery of the Falshood of their Relation, nothing more can be required to justify our Belief of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Testament*.

This being premised, I shall endeavour to shew that the *Christian Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Testament*, have all the forementioned Characters of Truth belonging to them, and are therefore very reasonably and justly believed to be true; which is the
Thing

Thing I have obliged my self to make good, and shall prosecute my Design in the following Method.

First, I shall consider the *Miracles* by themselves, and this according to the different Periods in which they were done, and the different Persons they were done by.

Secondly, I shall consider the *Prophecies* apart according to the same distinction of Times and Persons, as I observe in treating of *Miracles*.

Thirdly, I shall make some general Reflections with Relation to the proof of the Christian *Miracles* and *Prophecies* taken altogether.

First, Then as to *Miracles*; 'tis very plain that a great many such Facts as these, that I call *Miracles*, are said to be done by *Jesus Christ*: This is every where asserted or supposed in the *New Testament*; and the *Gospels* give a very particular and circumstantial Account of several of them. 'Tis certain also, from the general Proofs before given of the *History* of the *New Testament*, that these *Miracles* were believed by the first Christians, both by those that lived in *Judea*, and those that dwelt

dwelt in other Countries; and the real Truth of them will as evidently appear, if we consider the Grounds and Reasons upon which they were at first believed.

The greatest part of the *Miracles* Recorded of *Christ*, were done in the presence of great Multitudes, at the most Publick Places in *Judea*, and at the most solemn Times of Meeting: Nay, he was so constantly employed in Travelling and going about, and performing so many Signs and Wonders where-ever he came, and gave so many repeated instances of his Power in the same Places, that there were very few in that whole Country, who had not seen some of his mighty Works themselves; and therefore the sole Ground and Reason upon which the generality of the first Christians of *Palestine* believed these *Miracles*, was the *Testimony of their own Senses*.

The Facts themselves were so level to their Capacities, and the manner of doing them was so open, and so easily and fully perceived, that they found no reason to distrust their Senses, and therefore they readily concluded them to be true.

A great many of the first Believers of *Christ's Miracles*, had a further and more intimate perception of the Truth of them than the rest, *viz.* those upon whom some of the *Miracles* were wrought, or who were made to have a share in the Actions themselves: Such were all those that were healed or fed by *Christ*, that had Devils cast out of them, that had their secret Thoughts or private Actions revealed to them, &c.

Those who saw none of these mighty Works themselves, but believed upon the Testimony of others, were confirm'd in their Faith by an universal concurrence of all Persons their Curiosity or Concern disposed them to enquire of: For, as we read in the *New Testament*, all kinds of People believed the *Miracles of Christ*; not only those who revered his Person and Character, and imbraced his Doctrine, but even those who despised him and set him at nought, and rejected his *Gospel*.

The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* who were the most Powerful and most Zealous Enemies of *Christ* and his *Gospel*, acknowledged his *Miracles*, but attributed them to *Evil Spirits*. Some of the *Pharisees* could

could not deny his wonderful Cure of a Blind Man, but would not allow that he was of God, because he kept not the Sabbath-day; though others of them said, how can a Man that is a Sinner do such Miracles? None of the Jews, upon the strictest Examination, were able to disprove this or any other of his *Miracles*; but notwithstanding, they would not believe in *Christ* or embrace his Doctrine, because they were *Moses's Disciples*, and they knew that God spake unto *Moses*; but as for that Fellow who cured the Blind Man, they knew not from whence he was.

The *Chief Priests* and *Elders* never doubted of the mighty Works done by him, but only question'd his Authority in doing them. Among the *Chief Rulers* many believed on him, but did not confess him, lest they should have been put out of the *Synagogue*. His Country-men acknowledged that mighty Works were wrought by his hands, but were offended because so mean a Person did them, whose Birth, Relations and Education they knew. The *Gergesenes* were astonished at the wonderful Things he did, though they besought him to depart out of their Coasts: And the *Devils* confessed

his Power before they were cast out, though *he came to torment them before the time*. A great many were convinced of the Truth of his *Miracles*, but did not hearken to what he taught, because *none of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on him*; and because they took him for a *Galilean*, and thought that *no Prophet arose out of Galilee*. Several would not believe on him, because they *knew whence he was*; and when *Christ came*, *no Man* they supposed *knew from whence he was*; though they were thus answered by others who believed, *when Christ cometh will he do more Miracles than these which this Man has done?* Some were entirely satisfied of his Miraculous Power, by being healed by him, as *Nine of the Ten Lepers*, and nevertheless regarded him not. Abundance of People accompanied him where-ever he went, and were continual Witnesses of the *Signs and Miracles* done by him, and yet followed him not for the sake of them, but because they were fed by him. And many there were that *believed in his Name when they saw the Miracles that he did*; but *Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all Men*. So that all these bore Testimony to the Truth

of

of the greatest part of *Christ's Miracles*, as well as those who became his Disciples, and imbraced his Doctrine.

But other *Miracles* there are Recorded of *Christ*, which were done in the presence of his *Apostles* and *Disciples* only, who already believed on him; some of which continually attended him, and others of them were very frequently with him. Several of these *Miracles* were done in his Life-time; sometimes before the whole Twelve, who are peculiarly Styled *Apostles*; sometimes before a Select Number of the Twelve; sometimes before a promiscuous Company of his *Apostles* and *Disciples* together: After his Death, he appeared at several times to different Persons and different Companies; but his Resurrection, and whatever he did or said during Forty Days Conversing upon Earth after he was risen, his Ascension into Heaven, and Mission of the *Holy Ghost*, with many extraordinary Signs and Wonders, none were Witnesses of, but his own *Disciples* and *Followers*: And therefore the Truth of all these *Miracles* must principally depend upon the Credit of the *Disciples of Christ* that relate them.

L 3

Besides

Besides all these wonderful things immediately attributed to *Christ himself*, we meet with several others in the *New Testament*, which are represented as done by *some other Power*, but are such as have a manifest relation to *Christ*, and are designed to confirm the truth of his Pretences: Such were the Appearance of *Angels* to *Mary* the Mother of *Christ*, *Zachariah* the Father of *John*, and to the *Shepherds*; the appearance of a Star in the East to the *Wise-Men*; the Dumbness of *Zachariah*, and other Signs that attended the Birth of *John* and *Christ*; the Dove and Voice from Heaven at the Baptism of *Christ*; the Darkness, Earthquake, Renting of the Vail of the Temple, and Resurrection of dead Bodies at his Crucifixion. Several of these things could not be known immediately to the *Evangelists* that relate them, or to any *other Disciples of Christ*, but to those only whom they are told of, and upon their credit we must in a great measure rely for the truth of them; but several of them were very publick; and consequently the truth of these rests upon the Testimony of a great number of Witnesses besides those that relate them.

In

In this manner are the *Miracles of Christ*, and all the Wonders and Signs that accompanied him, from his Conception to his Mission of the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, Related and Attested in the *New Testament*.

But of the same *Jesus Christ*, who has so many wonderful things there reported of him, it is farther testified, that he conferred a power of working Miracles upon a great many of his Followers, who believed in him; and that a great many Miracles were accordingly performed by their Hands. In his Life-time 'tis said, that he gave this Power to *Twelve Apostles* and *Seventy Disciples*, whom he sent out into all the Towns and Villages of *Judea*, with a Commission to *Preach his Gospel*, to *cast out Devils*, and to *cure Diseases* and they went about *Preaching the Gospel*, and *Healing every where*, and *the Devils were subject to them through his Name*. This we have their own Testimony for; and whoever were Cured or Dispossessed by them, and all that saw what they did are so many more Witnesses of the Miracles they wrought, but none of the Particular Facts or Circumstances of them are mentioned.

L 4

After

After the Ascension of *Christ* we read that the *Twelve Apostles*, being all with one accord in one place, received a larger power of working all kind of Miracles by the Mission of the *Holy Ghost*; who, according to the promise of *Christ*, was to be constantly with them, to guide and assist them in the whole course of their Ministry. This Power immediately shewed it self by their speaking in several different Languages before unknown to them; the Witnesses of which Fact are not only these Apostles themselves, but a great many others that heard them; *Parthians, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians*, who were amazed to hear *Galileans* speak in their Tongues the wonderful things of God. Those also confirm the truth of the Fact who foolishly imputed it to *New Wine*.

After this we read of a great many other Miracles of different kinds performed by several *Apostles* and *Disciples*, who received their Power immediately from *Jesus Christ*; and, by the account that is given

given us of them, we find that the particular Facts were more numerous, more frequent, and more publick than those of their Master *Christ* himself. The time of *Christ's* Ministry was but Three Years or thereabouts, the Exercise and Manifestation of his Power was confined to the Country of *Palestine*, and whatever mighty things he did, he did them in his own single Person; Whereas the *Apostles* and *Disciples* of *Christ* were a great many; all which were constantly employed in Preaching the Gospel, and confirming it every where with Signs and Wonders, during the whole course of their several Lives; and they performed this Work with Diligence, not only in *Judea* and *Samarina*, but in divers other Cities and Countries throughout the whole *Roman Empire*.

By which Account it plainly appears, that most of the same Persons, who were Witnesses of those Miracles of *Jesus Christ*, were also Witnesses of those that were done by the Hands of *his Apostles* and *Disciples*; the truth of which was likewise owned and acknowledged by a vast Multitude more, both of such as believed the Gospel, and of such as rejected and opposed it, and

and violently Persecuted the Teachers of it.

To omit the Testimony of true Believers, thus it is Recorded concerning those upon whom the *Gospel of Christ* had no Power nor Influence: The *Rulers, Elders, Scribes and High Priests* among the *Jews*, when they summoned *Peter and John* before them for curing a Lame Man, *could not deny but that a notable Miracle had been done by them, which was manifest to all them that dwelt at Jerusalem.* They were afterwards filled with Indignation, and took Counsel to slay them, because they could not restrain them from doing more *Miracles* in the Name of *Christ*; but they never questioned the Truth of the Facts. *Stephen full of Faith and Power, did great Wonders and Miracles among the people;* but he was accused and condemned by the Council of the *Jews*, not for deceiving the People with false *Miracles*, but for speaking things against the *Holy Place and the Law*, for saying that *Jesus should destroy that Place, and change the Customs which Moses delivered them;* when at the same time it is said, that *all that sat in the Council looking stedfastly on him, saw his Face as it*
had

had been the Face of an Angel: Neither had they any Thing to object against his Life or his Works. *Simon, the Sorcerer, to whom all the people in Samaria gave heed from the least to the greatest, looking upon him to be the great Power of God, was himself as well as those that were bewitched by him, Baptized by Philip, and believed when he beheld the Miracles and Signs that were done:* But afterwards we find, by the wickedness of his heart, which he discovered to *Peter*, that he was an Enemy to the true Doctrine of the *Gospel.* *Elymas the Sorcerer, who was struck Blind by Paul, and yet not converted to the Faith, is another unwilling Witness of the Power of the Apostles.* The People of *Lystra* confirm the same Truth who took *Paul and Barnabas* for Gods in the likeness of Men, by reason of the *Miracles* they saw performed by them, and afterwards, by the Instigation of the *Jews, stoned Paul.* The *Damsel possess'd with a Spirit of Divination, and her Masters who saw the hope of their gains gone, by Paul's commanding the Spirit to come out of her, several Vagabond Jews Exorcists, who took upon them to cast out Evil Spirits in the Name of Jesus, but*
suffered

suffered very much for the Impudence of their Pretences; and a great many other such like, were Witnesses of the *Miracles of the Apostles*, who by reason of some wicked or dishonourable Motives rejected the *Doctrine* they taught; or profess'd to imbrace it upon ill Designs; or, after they had received it *made Shipwrack of the Faith*: Great Complaints of all which sort of Men we find in the *Epistles*.

Thus are the *Miracles of the first Apostles* and *Disciples of Christ* declared and attested.

But moreover it is Recorded of them, that they had not only a Power of working *Miracles themselves*, but that they were Authorized and Enabled by *Christ* and *his Spirit* to convey the like Power to others: And accordingly we find a great many Instances in the *New Testament*, where *Miracles* were wrought by *private Christians*, by Virtue of a Power they had received from the *Apostles*, which was conferred upon them by Prayer and Imposition of Hands: After which Actions of the *Apostles* they are immediately said to be *filled with the Holy*

Holy Ghost, and to have *received the Gifts of the Spirit*; which, according to the different exigencies of the Church, and the different qualifications of the Persons indued with them, were divers: And among these are reckoned the *Gifts of Tongues* and of *Interpretation*; the *Gifts of Healing* and of *Miracles*; which Gifts are said to be very common among the first Converts to Christianity, in all places where the Gospel was Preach'd; and the same is plainly implied by the frequent Rules and Cautions that are given by the *Apostles* concerning the due Exercise of them, and the fear and apprehension they often express, lest the Christians thus impowered, should, by coveting one anothers Gifts, or being putt up with those they were severally possessed of, neglect to apply themselves, as they ought to do, to the Edification of the *Church of Christ*.

This is the Scripture-Account of *Miracles*, and these were those wonderful Facts believed by the first *Christians*; their full assurance of the Truth of which was the chief Ground and Motive

tive of their embracing the Gospel or Doctrine of *Christ*.

There were likewise other strange Matters of Fact called *Prophecies*, which were *most surely believed* among them, and which contributed very much to their receiving the Gospel, and *continuing in the Profession* of Christianity *without wavering*; and these I shall consider in the same Way and Method I did *Miracles*. For there are several Prophecies Recorded in the New Testament as uttered *by our Saviour himself*, together with several other spoken *with relation to him* and *fulfilled by him*; others there are mentioned as spoken *by the Apostles and Disciples of Christ* who had received the Power of Prophecy immediately from him: 'Tis plain also from several Instances and Passages in the Sacred Writings, that the Spirit of Prophecy was conveyed by the first Apostles and Disciples to *private Christians*, and was very common among them.

The Prophecies spoken by *our Saviour*, were most of them delivered *in private* to his *Disciples*; some of which were not written till after the things happened, and the truth of these the Disciples are wholly answerable for; and some of them were

were Published in Writing before the things happened, and these might then, and may still be examined by the Circumstances of them; others of them were spoken *publicly* and *frequently* before great Multitudes of People, as those about his *Suffering* and *Resurrection*, &c. and several, besides their being spoken openly, in the presence of many, were also spread abroad in Writing long before the Events actually happened, as particularly that remarkable one concerning the *Destruction of Jerusalem*.

Prophecies spoken *of Christ in former times*, with relation to his Person, Actions, Sufferings and Doctrine, with the several Circumstances belonging to the whole Dispensation of his Gospel, are to be found written in the Books of the *Old Testament*, which were manifestly wrote long before his coming into the World, and are now Extant, and might then, and may still be compared with those Events related in the *New*, which are pretended to be completions of them: And some Prophecies there are concerning *our Saviour*, spoken by *Holy Persons* a little before and after his Birth, and at his Presentation in the Temple, as also others concerning

cerning *John his Forerunner*; and all the Preaching of *John* was Prophetical of *Christ*.

The truth of all which Matters of Fact does not depend wholly upon the Credit of the *Prophets* themselves, but upon the Testimony of those also that heard them; and some of them were spoken before much Company; particularly what *John* said of *Christ* was very publick, and frequently repeated, and consequently there were great numbers of Witnesses of it.

The particular Prophecies of the first *Apostles* and *Disciples*, and other *Christians*, preserved in the *New Testament*, are but few, and most of the Events foretold, were so near the time of their Prediction, that we cannot certainly tell whether they were written before they were fulfilled; but some of them there were many Witnesses of, and consequently the truth of them does not depend wholly upon the credit of their Relation.

But what is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures of the *New Testament* concerning the *Gift of Prophecy* in the *Church*, (by which Expression is often signified an extraordinary Power of foretelling future Events as well as interpreting Scripture) is a plain Appeal to the Testimony of all *Christians* in general:

general: For, according to the account there given, so many were indued with it, that 'twas an easy matter in any place where the Gospel was spread, to be satisfied of the truth of the matter whether there were any *Christian Prophets* or not:

Thus have I taken a short view of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Testament*, and shewn how they were all attested, and upon what grounds they were at first believed.

In the next place, I shall make some general Reflections upon the account here given, in order to evince the truth of these extraordinary Facts, and the reasonableness of those Grounds upon which the first *Christians* believed them.

It has been observed before, that when any Matters of Fact are attested by such *Witnesses* as cannot be imagined capable of being deceived themselves, or willing to deceive others, and the *Facts* related by them are such as could not possibly be represented falsely without a certain discovery, no greater evidence can be required for the proof of them: And that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Testa-*

ment are such kind of Facts, and so attested, will plainly appear from the following Considerations.

First of all 'tis certain, from the account before given, that *Christ pretended* to do a great many Miracles, and that vast Multitudes of People *pretended* to have seen a great many Miracles done by him, and to believe that what they saw was truly and really performed by his means; and some *pretended* further to have experienced the effects of this strange power in themselves: From whence it evidently follows, that all these Miracles so attested were true; because it was very easie for *Christ* to know whether he had such a Power as this or not, by an *immediate Consciousness*, and therefore he *could not be deceived* in pretending to what he had not; and the Sincerity, Innocence, and Integrity of his Life, the Disinterestedness, of all his Actions, the Humility and Uprightness of his Carriage, and the many Troubles, Sufferings and Afflictions he was actually exposed to upon account of these Pretences, and which by his great Wisdom and Knowledge of Men he easily foresaw would happen to him; all these, I say, do sufficiently assure us that
he

he *would not offer to deceive* others, by pretending to such Works which he knew he had not done, or could not do.

Then as to the *Persons pretending to have seen*, and, for that reason, *to believe* his Miracles, *they could not be deceived*; because the matters of Fact they are Witnesses of, are such as were the proper Objects of Sense, and were as easily, distinctly and fully perceivable, as any other the most common obvious Events daily taken notice of; so that *every one who had Ears to hear, and Eyes to see*, was a capable Judge of what *Christ* said and did, and there wanted no great skill or capacity of understanding to compare his *Pretences* with his *Performances*.

But those who *felt the effects of this wonderful Power in themselves*, had a more intimate and more infallible preception of the truth of his Miracles, which gave them greater assurance of their not being deceived.

And when we consider the number of those who had all, at the same time, the same Preceptions, 'tis a further confirmation of the truth and reality of the Appearances; especially when we observed that a great many of these were possessed with

violent Prejudices against the *Person* and *Doctrine of Christ*, and were unwilling to believe any thing that seemed any way to justify his Pretences.

And as all these Witnesses of the *Miracles of Christ*, cannot possibly be imagined to have been *mistaken themselves*, in thinking they perceived what they did not really perceive; so neither was it possible for them to *deceive others*, by telling them such things were done in their presence which they knew were not done: For, besides that 'tis utterly inconceivable how so great a Multitude of Persons of different *Places, Degrees, and Opinions*, as the first Witnesses of these Miracles were, should agree together to assert that they saw such Facts as were never done; and this constantly without any ones ever discovering the Cheat; besides this, I say the *Characters* of the Witnesses will not suffer us to think they could entertain a design of imposing upon the World; and the Manner and Circumstances of their first Declaration of their Belief of the Miracles, makes a Confederacy to deceive utterly impossible.

As to the Characters of the Witnesses, they were either such Persons as after they

they had seen, believed and imbraced the Gospel of *Christ*, or such as continued in the Religion they were before educated in, notwithstanding all the Miracles they saw: Most of the former sort were Persons of remarkable Probity and Integrity, and of great Simplicity of Life and Manners, who renounced all the Interests and Advantages of this present World, and exposed themselves to great variety of Troubles and Afflictions, for their constant profession of their Faith in *Christ*, and his Miracles; and it cannot be supposed of Persons of this Character, that they would invent, and industriously propagate what they knew to be false, if the agreement of so many in the same design had been possible: But, if so many People could be supposed capable of forming such a design, and of putting on such a false Character for the better promoting of it, it is not imaginable that they should be able to continue their Plot, and preserve their Character so long as they did, without betraying themselves, when they lost and suffered so much for carrying on the Cheat, had no prospect of future success answerable to their present Sufferings, and might have been very well rewarded by

the Enemies of *Christianity* for a seasonable Discovery.

But all the Witnesses of *Christ's* Miracles, who afterwards entertained his Gospel were not of the same Character with the former; some of them *confessed him with their Mouth, but in their Works denied him*; they acknowledged his Authority, and admired his Doctrine; but being *led away by their Lusts, or distracted by the Cares of the World*, they continued still in their Sins, and never lived up to those holy Rules he prescribed: These who never felt the power of the Christian Religion, could never be so concerned for the Interests of it, as constantly to vouch and maintain an unprofitable Lye in its defence; when 'tis very probable they might have had easier Consciences and better Fortunes for disproving the Pretences it was built upon: Others of them *made Shipwrack of their Faith, and turn'd again unto those beggarly Elements or Idols they were freed from*, neither can these be suspected of justifying what they knew to be false in behalf of a Religion they had forsaken: 'Tis more reasonable to suppose, had they been privy to any de-

ceit,

ceit, that they would have been very zealous in the discovery of it.

Then as to those who *rejected the Authority and Doctrine of Christ*, and continued in the Religion they were at first Educated in, notwithstanding all the Miracles they saw; who, as we find by the History of the Gospel, were frequently reproached by *Christ* and his *Apostles* for their Infidelity, and obstinate adherence to the Religion and Traditions of their Fathers; the greatest part of whom, and those Persons of the greatest Dignity, Authority and Learning among them, made it their business to Persecute *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and all that professed the *Christian Religion*: 'Tis plainly as impossible to imagine that Persons of this Character should agree to own the truth of *Christ's Miracles*, which they knew to be false, as that honest sincere Christians who *abhorred a Lye*, and were thoroughly perswaded Eternal Misery was the certain Punishment of Lying, should conspire to deceive the World, by contriving, spreading, and continually supporting, what they were sure was the grossest Cheat imaginable.

But, without considering the Characters of the Witnesses, *the Manner and Circumstances* in which they first gave Testimony to the truth of *Christ's Miracles*, makes a *confederacy to deceive* utterly impossible: For in many Instances of Publick Miracles in the *New Testament*, we find that, upon the sight of something done by *Jesus Christ*, the whole Multitude of Spectators immediately declared their Belief and Admiration by openly glorifying God, or expressing their Wonder to one another: So that it plainly appears from hence, that they were all severally convinced of the truth and wonderfulness of what they saw before they could know one another's Minds concerning it, and therefore the agreement of their Testimony could not be the effect of any antecedent concert among themselves.

Thus have I evidently proved the truth of the *Publick Miracles of Jesus Christ*; and whatever has been said upon this Subject will hold with the same, or rather greater degrees of certainty, concerning the *Publick Miracles of the first Apostles and Disciples of Christ*, who received that Power immediately from their Master; and of *all other Christian Believers* to whom
th:

the same Gifts were conveyed by their Hands: For the Signs and Wonders Recorded to have been done by any of them were as *easily known* and distinguished by vulgar Senses and Capacities as those of *Christ*; *the Characters and Circumstances of the Witnesses*, so far as concerns the credibility of their Testimony, was very near the same: But the *number* of those, who by an intimate consciousness of their own Power knew they performed such Works, of those who felt the Effects of this Miraculous Power in themselves, and of those who saw the External Signs and Appearances of it in the Facts that were done, was very far greater than in the former Case; and the impossibility of a general agreement to deceive, more manifest here than there; and consequently the truth of all these Facts is as evident as that of the *other* before proved.

As to the more *Private Miracles* done by *Jesus Christ* himself in the presence of his Disciples only, and the Signs and Wonders imployed by some *other Power* for the manifestation of *Christ* to a few chosen Persons; we have these reasons to believe them true.

The

The Facts were of the same nature, and as easy to be known and discerned as the other before mentioned; the several Witnesses of these things which happen'd at several times, taken altogether, were a great many, which makes an agreement of them all to deceive, and a constant invincible Perseverance in a Cheat very difficult to imagine; the Characters of them, as far as appears from the History of the *New Testament*, were such as leave no room to suspect the Fidelity of their Relation; for they are all of them, the Apostles and first Disciples especially who are principally concern'd in the present Cause, represented as honest, sincere, undefigning Persons, that feared God and loved Mankind; that were free from Pride and Vanity; and were so far from seeking their own Interest or Advancement in this World; that they were despised, and set at nought, and evilly intreated wherever they came, and were, as to this Life, of all Men most miserable, for constantly asserting the truth of the *Resurrection* and *Ascension of Christ*, and such other Facts now in question; all which they were as firmly perswaded of, as of any of the *Publick Miracles of Jesus Christ*; and several

several of them they Preach'd up as more necessary and important to be believed.

Besides all this, many of these Miraculous Facts, which were fully discovered only to a few, were accompanied with several Circumstances more publickly known, with which they have so near, and almost necessary a connexion, that 'tis very difficult to imagine these *Circumstances* should be true, and not the *principal Facts* also; as will easily appear from the Instance of the *Resurrection of Christ*.

In the account of which wonderful Fact we find, that it was known to the *Chief Priests* and *Pharisees* among the *Jews* that *Christ* had said, while he was yet alive, after three Days I will rise again; for which reason they make Application to *Pilate* to secure his Sepulchre, that his Disciples might not come and steal him away by Night, and take occasion from thence to give out he was risen from the Dead. The Sepulchre was accordingly made sure by rolling a great Stone to the Door of it, by Sealing the Stone and setting a Watch: But 'tis further said that, at the time appointed and foretold for the rising of *Christ*, there was a great Earthquake, and that then the Angel of the Lord

Lord descended from Heaven, and rolled back the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, and sat upon it; that his Countenance was like Lightning and his Raiment White as Snow; that the Keepers saw all these things, and, for fear of the Angel, did shake and became as dead Men: Afterwards we read that some of the Watch came into the City and shewed unto the Chief Priests all the things that were done; that the Chief Priests when they were Assembled with the Elders, and had taken Counsel, gave large Money to the Souldiers, to say, his Disciples came by Night and stole him away while they Slept; which the Souldiers accordingly did, upon their Promise to perswade the Governour if it should come to his Ears, and secure them.

Now if all these Circumstances were true, for the truth of all which the Chief Priests, Pharisees and Elders, Pilate, and the Souldiers that watch'd the Sepulchre of Christ, are cited as Witnesses, then is it certain that the Body of Christ was removed out of the Sepulchre by an extraordinary Power, agreeable to his own Prediction: The belief of which will render all the after-Accounts of Christ very easie and probable, and the sincerity of the Witnesses that relate them will take

take away all manner of doubt concerning the truth of them.

Which Sincerity of the Witnesses is manifest, not only from the constant settled Character of the Men, but from a great many peculiar Circumstances in the Relation it self that is given of this great and wonderful Event: Such as were the Ignorance of the Disciples of Christ, who knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the Dead; their Fear and Flight when he was taken; their Sorrow and Disconsolate Dispair of seeing Israel Redeemed by him after he was Dead, as they trusted before it should; their Amazement and Astonishment, Terrour and Trembling when he appeared to any of them; the Trouble and Distrust some of them shewed upon his discovering himself to them; the suspence of others from believing by reason of their Joy and Wonder; the difficulty of believing and hardness of Heart in all of them, and particularly in Thomas, (who believed not them that had seen him after he was risen) till they were convinced by the Testimony of their own Senses: All which Passions are expressed in such a manner, as none but honest sincere Persons,

sons, who were throughly perswaded of the truth of things, were capable of expressing.

Several other Circumstances might be alledged, and all of them further enlarged upon, to confirm the truth of what I have advanced; and the like might be done in many other Facts besides that of the *Resurrection*, as may be plainly seen in the Gospel-account of them; but this single Instance is sufficient to shew that the truth of the *Private Miracles of Christ*, is supported by the *Publick Circumstances* with which they were attended, as well as by the *Characters of the Witnesses* that related them.

But the greatest Confirmation of the Truth of all these Private Miracles of *Christ*, and the chief Ground upon which the first Christians believed them, was the *Power of working New Miracles*, which was so manifestly and remarkably upon all occasions exercised by the Relatours and Publishers of them. *The Publick Miracles of Christ* were such, and so well known and attested as made it very easie to believe he might do the like, or as great, or greater *privately*, in the presence of a few: And the *publick Miracles of the Apostles*

Apostles and Disciples of Christ, took away all Suspicion of their forging *privates ones* done by their Master; that extraordinary Power they were indued with, being reckoned a certain Argument of the *Divine Favour* to them, and consequently of their extraordinary Piety and Holiness, which are Characters utterly inconsistent with all Falshood and Lying Pretences.

But, if notwithstanding this wonderful Power and Appearance of *Divine Aid*, they were Persons of a contrary Character, and otherwise assisted; then is it utterly inconceivable they should be so much concerned to invent and propagate, and so earnest to persuade all People to believe what only made for the Honour of another, at the same time they knew it to be *false*; when they might better have served their own ends, whatever they were, in concealing it from the World, if it had been *true*. For, whatever farther Designs they had, 'tis certain they intended to have their own Miracles believed in order to compass them; and they could not possibly hope to make People believe *they* work'd Miracles *openly* and *publickly* in their presence,

fence, by vouching some done by *another*, which they themselves *only* were Witnesses of: The difficulty of believing *these* was likelier to lessen than increase the Credibility of *their own*, the uncontroverted certainty of which, was the chief Thing that made the *other* believed.

This is sufficient to establish the *private Miracles of Christ*.

Whatever Miracles are Recorded as done by the *first Apostles and Disciples of Christ*, or any *other Christian Believers* afterwards *privately* in the presence of a few; the *Characters and publick Miracles* of the Persons that did them, are, to those who were not Witnesses of them, a sufficient Warrant for the Truth of their Relation, or of any other Account not contradicted by them: And those few, who were *Witnesses*, had a more Sensible Conviction *themselves*, and were a further security for the Truth of the Relation of them to *others*.

What hath been said of the *Miracles*, will hold in like manner of the *Prophecies* Recorded in the *New Testament*; only there is one Thing to be observed, which is peculiar to *Prophecies*, and which makes
the

the proof of them somewhat different from that of *Miracles*; though, I think, in no respect less, but in some instances rather greater.

This peculiar Character of Prophecies is, that every Prophecy consists of two Parts; a *Prediction* and an *Accomplishment*, which are commonly at some distance from one another; from whence it happens, that the same Persons who are Witnesses of the one, may not be so of the other, which seems to take off something from the Credibility of the whole Fact, that often depending upon the Agreement of several Persons, who were at different times Witnesses to several parts of it: But then, on the other hand, if we consider the *Prediction* only, as well Attested and Recorded in Writing before the appointed time of its *Accomplishment*, a *Prophecy* will have this advantage of a *Miracle*, that *more* People may have read the Prediction in Writing than can possibly be Witnesses of a *Miracle* at the time when 'tis done, and consequently, there may be often-times more Witnesses of the Accomplishment of a Prophecy than of the Performance of a *Miracle*; forasmuch as things Prophesied of are
N commonly

commonly Events of such a nature as have a *more fixt and continued Existence*, and a *much wider compass of Appearance* than Miracles have: And besides this, for a Person acquainted with the Prediction, to be satisfied of the Accomplishment, 'tis sufficient to know such an Event is any ways come to pass, without knowing any thing of the Power by which it was done, or perceiving any thing extraordinary or unusual in the manner of its happening.

Thus for Example, the *Destruction of Jerusalem, and Extirpation of the Jewish Nation*, were Events of a wider and more lasting Cognizance than *Healing a Sick*, or *Raising a Dead Man*; and a Person who knew the former were foretold by reading the Prediction in Writing, might be more easily and certainly satisfied of the truth of their Accomplishment, than one who was not an actual Spectator of the other Facts, could be of the truth of them: For to be assured that that Prediction was fulfilled, and that therefore it was a true Prophecy 'twas enough to know that *Jerusalem* was Destroyed, and the *Jewish* People driven out of their Country, whatever way this came about;

about; but to know that such a Man was Well, or such another Alive, or that the one had been Sick, and the other to all appearance Dead, is not sufficient to convince a Man of the truth of the *Miracle* in either case; and a Person who did not see the Manner and Circumstances in which each of these Facts was done, can receive no assurance of them afterwards, but from the Testimony of others; because there are no visible Remains and Footsteps of the Miracle left after the Action is over; whereas, in the other Instance of *Prophecy*, the Event is constantly the same it was at first, and equally convincing at all times to every one that will take the pains to satisfy himself.

And further, if a considerable time intervene between the *Prediction* and the *Accomplishment*, and the Record of the *Prediction* was very publick before the thing happen'd, the Persons who live after the *Accomplishment*, and so were immediate Witnesses of neither part of the Prophecy, may be more easily and fully satisfied of the truth of a *particular Prophecy*, than of a *particular Miracle*, they were not Witnesses of themselves; because *both the Prediction and the Accomplishment*

plishment being *Common Facts*, considered in themselves, without any relation to one another; are less liable to suspicion than *unusual Events* of a more surprising Nature, and the truth of the *latter Fact* being often certainly cognizable at any time of inquiry, there is so much time supposed between *this Accomplishment* and the *former Prediction*, that 'tis easie to find out whether *that* really happened out before *this*, which is all that is required for the truth of the *whole Prophecy*; the *extraordinary nature* of which arises from the *comparison of both* together in order to know the *reason of their Connexion*, and not from any thing in the *Facts* themselves severally considered, as it does in *Miracles*, where the *Facts* themselves are wonderful, without any consideration of the *Causes* or *Occasions* of them.

Thus are the *first Christian Miracles* and *Prophecies* related and attested: These are the *Grounds* and *Reasons* upon which they were believed; and this is the *sum* of all the *Evidence* that is brought for them; which is capable of being illustrated and confirm'd by a vast variety of *particular Observations*; but my intended

Method

Method not allowing me to make such *Inlargments*, I shall conclude the *Proof* I was upon with this *General Reflexion*.

From the account that is given in the *New Testament* of the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* there Recorded, and of the manner of *Preaching the Gospel*; and *Converting People to the Christian Religion*, it plainly appears that the first and principal Motive upon which any Persons believed in *Christ*, and imbraced the *Doctrine* taught by him and his *Apostles*, was some *Miracle* they *themselves* were actual *Witnesses* of; for *Miracles* were then so common every where, that there was hardly any *Christian*, even among the *Gentile Converts*, for above *Threescore Years* after the *Promulgation* of the *Gospel* by *Christ*, but was *himself* a *Witness* of some *Miracle* wrought by others: So that, tho' they might be further confirm'd in the belief of what was taught them by the *Characters* of *Christ* and his *Apostles*; the *Testimony* of *Jewish Christians*, who, upon the several *Persecutions* in *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, were scattered and dispersed among the *Gentiles* of all *Nations*; and the *Accomplishment* of *Prophecies* written in the *Books* of the *Old* and *New Testa-*

ment, which they knew to have been written before the Events happen'd; yet the first and chief ground of their assent to the Miracles and Doctrines of the Gospel was some Miraculous Power they had *themselves* been Witnesses of.

When therefore we consider the vast number of Converts that were made to Christianity in the first Age of the Gospel, and consequently the vast Multitude of *seeming Miracles* that must have been continually wrought for their Conversion in all Places, together with the steady and invincible Perseverance of Christians in *the Faith*, notwithstanding all the variety of Sufferings they indured for believing, 'tis impossible to imagine there should be a whole Age of *Delusion* and *Deceit*; that there should be such a long continued train and series of *meer empty Appearances*, without any *reality* under them; which produced such *real* Effects, as remain till this Day; and Effects of such an extraordinary nature, as in a very short time gave a new turn to the whole Scheme of Affairs in the most considerable part of the World.

Since therefore *all the common Matters of Fact* mentioned in the History of the Gospel,

Gospel, as we find it delivered in the *New Testament*, are *true*, as I have shewed before; and consequently, *that* among the rest, that the *Miracles* Recorded in the *New Testament* were *believed*, according to the relation there given of them; it necessarily follows from hence, that there were such Facts as those, *in appearance* at least, otherwise there could have been no ground for believing them in that manner as 'tis said they were believed; and if there were all those *appearances* of something done, I shall take it for granted, for the reason just before given, that there were so many *true real Facts*.

And if the *Miracles* are allowed to be *real*, the *Prophecies* must be so too, as being freer from all suspicion of *wrong appearance*.

3. The next step I am to make in the proof of the *Christian History*, is to shew, that what is said in the *New Testament* concerning *Divine Assistance* and *Revelation*, is true.

Now 'tis frequently and positively asserted there, not only that such and such *Signs* and *Wonders* were wrought; such

Prophecies uttered and fulfilled; and such *Doctrines* preach'd; but that all these things were performed by the immediate *Power* and *Authority of God*: This is every where acknowledg'd and insisted upon by *Christ* and *his Apostles*, and all that were concerned in the *Work* and *Ministry of the Gospel*. What they constantly affirm of themselves is, that they were *sent from God*; that they were *authorized and ordained by God to Preach the Gospel*; that they were *doing the Work of the Lord*; that the *Doctrine* they taught and preached *came from God*; that they *had it by Revelation*; that *God shewed them things to come*; that they *spoke by the Spirit of God*; that the *Power they had was from God*; and that *God was with them*, continually *assisting them and revealing himself to them*.

Whether the *Matters of Fact* were really so as they affirmed, we have no other ways of knowing but these two, *their own Testimony*, and the *nature of the things* said and done by them.

As to the *Testimony* of those who declare all these wonderful things of themselves; their *Condition*, *Character* and *Sufferings* have been considered already, and found to be such as are a sufficient warrant to
secure

secure us from any fear or suspicion of their *designing to impose upon us*: But because they do not require us to believe *their own Witness*, but bid us *examine their Works*, and *inquire of their Doctrine*, in order to know whether they were of God or not, we will take the Method they have prescribed us; though I cannot but observe by the way, that the Appeal they make, and the Directions they give, for a careful examination of their Pretences, is a very good Argument of their Sincerity, and full assurance of the truth of what they pretended to.

But, waving all Observations of this kind, I will confine my self to the consideration of the *nature of the things* said and done by *Christ* and *his Disciples*; and shew that they were such as neither *they themselves who said and did them*, nor *those that saw and heard them*, nor *any body else* that is *any other way convinced of the truth of the Appearances*, could be deceived in thinking they proceeded wholly from God.

The *Matters* to be inquired into, fall under one of these Three Heads, *viz. Miracles, Prophecies, and Doctrines*; concerning which we will inquire first whether the
the

the *Persons themselves*, who appeared to be the immediate Authors of them, might not be infallibly satisfied, that, whatever of this kind they did or said was from *God alone*, and not at all from their *own Power or Skill*.

This is certainly and undeniably *possible*, that God *may*, if he so please, *reveal* and discover something to a *Man*, which he did not know before, and something, which, without such discovery he could not have known at all, or not at that time when he first perceived himself to know it. He that made us and gave us the capacity of Perception and Understanding, may as easily, when and howsoever he thinks fit, put into our Minds such thoughts as our own Labour and Industry had not yet, or could not have supplied us with. There needs no further proof of this to him that believes a *God*.

And, if *God* can reveal any thing to *Man*, 'tis likewise as certain that *that Man* to whom such discovery is made, may be *undecervably convinced* that the *Revelation* came from *God*. The same *God*, who gave him the faculty of discerning betwixt Truth and Falshood in his acquired knowledge,

knowledge, can enable him to distinguish as certainly betwixt his *own Attainments* and *Divine Communications*: He may judge that such a thing was revealed to him by *God*, with the same Satisfaction and Acquiescence of Mind, and with the same impossibility of entertaining a doubt, notwithstanding all his efforts and endeavours to distrust himself, as he judges any other Proposition is true in which the connexion of the simplest and most known Ideas is irresistibly perceived.

Evidence of Perception is the *only Standard of Truth in all Cases*: And though several Men may have been deceived in thinking some things were revealed to them by *God* which were not so revealed; this is no more an Argument that a *Man cannot be certain of any Revelation*, than 'tis an Argument for *Universal Scepticism* that some Men have been mistaken in what they thought *self-evident Propositions* and *Demonstrations*.

But not to enter further into that dispute, which I shall have occasion to consider in another place; besides the certainty that a *Man* may have that *God* has revealed himself to him, from *immediate consciousness*, his Faith may be confirm'd,

if any degrees of Evidence can be supposed wanting, by *External Signs* and *Characters*. God may, if he please, give a Man such a strong conviction of his Power to do such and such wonderful things, that he may be intirely satisfied, without so much as a desire to make any tryal of his Talent; and he may likewise manifest himself to him in such a manner as leaves some room for Doubts, but such as must needs yeild to further Proofs ordained by God for the removal of them.

Thus, for Instance, a Man that is strongly perswaded God has given him a Power of performing such and such extraordinary things, but has some little distrust of himself lest he should mistake the *Delusions of his own Fancy* for the *Revelations of God*, when, upon trial, he finds that such things are really perform'd by his Hands, all his doubts vanish, and he is throughly confirm'd that both his Power and former *Perswasion* were from God.

This in general must be granted, that a Man may take such a certain estimate of his own *Capacities, Powers* and *Attainments*, that he may be infallibly sure that he could

could not do or know such a thing of himself without some other Assistance; that he did not know such a thing before such a time; that he did not know it then by the help of his Antecedent Knowledge; and that he did not do such a thing by any Power or Force of his own, or by any Skill or Knowledge of the manner how it was done.

That I cannot *now* Cure the Sick, nor Raise the Dead, nor Speak the *Syriack* and *Arabick* Tongues, nor tell when the *Jews* shall be settled in their own Country again, I am as sure, as 'tis possible for me to be, that I can think, or speak, or move: And if I should *hereafter* Cure the Sick, or Raise the Dead by the word of my Mouth, if I should speak the *Syriack* and *Arabick* Languages, without reading any Books writ in those Tongues, or hearing them spoke, or should foretel the exact time of the Restoration of the *Jews*, I should then be also fully satisfied and assured that I did not perform such Works, as curing the Sick, and raising the Dead by any Power or Skill of my own; that I did not understand such Languages, or know any thing of such an Event before I spoke the one and foretold

told the other; and that all the knowledge I had acquired before that time, was not sufficient to make me understand those Languages, and that Event, without some further and more extraordinary Assistance, exceeding all my Power and Knowledge. If I am capable of knowing any thing at all of my self, I cannot be mistaken in these things; and the same Experience every other Man is alike capable of.

But supposing *Christ* (whom I consider now only as a Man) and *his Apostles* and *Disciples*, were all severally satisfied, by a *certain consciousness* of their own Power and Knowledge, that the *Miracles* they performed exceeded their *Humane Power*, and the *Prophecies* and *Doctrines* they delivered could not be the Results and Products of their antecedent Knowledge, how could they be assured that *God* was the sole Author of them all, and not some *other Being* of Superiour Order to Men? Why the very same way they were convinced that *they themselves* were not.

God who made them after such a manner that they could by *immediate consciousness* perceive that such a thing did not proceed from *themselves*, could enable them

them in like manner to judge that such a thing did proceed from *God only*, and not from any other Being.

'Tis true indeed there may be, and we have several reasons to believe there are other Beings, besides *God*, of a Superiour Nature to Man; who 'tis probable may, and do, by some *invisible unperceivable way* act upon the Mind of Man, as we are sure Men act upon one another by the means of *External sensible Signs*; but, if God so please, we may distinguish as truly and certainly betwixt the *Revelations of God* and the *Suggestions of other Spirits*, as we can betwixt the thoughts arising within us from *our selves*, and those raised in us by *other Men* upon occasion of External Signs. And though some may have mistaken the *Suggestions of other Spirits* for the *Voice of God*, there is no more reason from hence for those who have had *true Revelations* to doubt of the certainty of them, than there is for me to distrust the *evidence of my own Perceptions*, when I judge such Ideas were occasioned in me by the real Voice and Presence of other Men, because some have imagined they heard such and such Words spoke by such Persons, when these Ideas came from their

their own Minds only, without any External Occasions to execute them.

From all which it necessarily follows, that *Christ* and his *Apostles* might be *infallibly convinced* that the *Signs* and *Wonders* they wrought were done by the *Power of God*; that the *knowledge of future Events* was communicated to them *by God*; and that the *Doctrines* they preached were delivered to them *by God*: All this, I say, they might be infallibly convinced of by an *immediate Consciousness*, not only of their *own Disability* to do and say such things of themselves, without the assistance of some higher Power; but of *God's express Revelation* of himself to them in all these Instances.

Which sort of Evidence and Satisfaction, though it reaches no further than the *Persons themselves* who pretend to have received any Revelation from God, yet is it of great use for the Conviction of *others*, by making way for such Proofs as are proper to that end, and which will not have any Force at all without it.

For, except it be supposed that *Divine Revelation* is possible, and that the Person to whom the Revelation is made may be *certain* of it, 'tis in vain to persuade any

any Man that he is obliged to believe and do such and such things, because they were revealed by God: For, if Revelation be impossible, 'tis plainly absurd to make that a foundation either of Faith or Obedience; and, if Revelation be possible; but no Man can be certain when any thing is revealed to him, and when not; there can be no Arguments found to convince another of the truth of a Revelation, which the Person that pretends to it cannot be satisfied of himself.

But, both these things being proved, we are in the next place to examine how *other People* can be satisfied that *God* revealed himself to *Christ* and his *Apostles*.

Now 'tis plain by the Account before given, that *they themselves* might be intirely satisfied by the *immediate assurance of their own Minds*, that God had given them a Power of saying and doing such things, and had made such things actually present to their Minds as could proceed from *him only*, and from *no other Being*: But, except they communicated what was given and revealed to them by *External Signs*, 'tis very plain that the Revelation could not be known to, or concern any

other but *themselves*; and therefore the only way that *others* have of knowing the truth of the *Christian Revelation*, is from the *External Signs* and *Appearances* by which it was communicated to them from those who first received it; which, as has been before observed, may be considered under the style of *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, and *Doctrines*: So that, if it can be proved that the *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, and *Doctrines*, Recorded in the *New Testament*, did proceed from *God*, this is sufficient to convince us that *God* has spoken to us by *Christ* and *his Apostles*; and that we are obliged to believe and obey the *Christian Religion*, as delivered to us by *Divine Revelation* and *Authority*.

The proof I shall give of this great and concerning Point, shall consist of these three parts.

First, I will endeavour to shew, that *Christ* and *his Apostles*, considered as *meer Men*, unassisted by any higher Power, could not be the Authors of the *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, and *Doctrines* Recorded in the *New Testament*.

Secondly,

Secondly, I will make it appear, not only that *God* might be the Author of them, but that they have such *certain Marks* and *Characters* of *Divinity* upon them, that we cannot be mistaken in attributing them to *God*.

Thirdly, I will prove that 'tis very improper and absurd to ascribe these things to *Evil Spirits*.

First, Then I am to shew, that *Christ* and *his Apostles*, could not by any *Humane Skill* or *Power* be the Authors of those wonderful things said and done by their *Ministry*.

'Tis said of *Christ*, that he *spoke as never Man spake*; and he says of himself, that he did those things among the *Jews* that *Man never did*; which he uses as an Argument to prove their unbelief in him inexcusable: The plain meaning of both which Phrases here is, not only that no *Man* could of himself speak like *Christ*, or perform such things as he did, but that no *Man* had ever spake like him, or done what he did, however assisted by any other Power. This appears from several other

Passages in the *New Testament*, and particularly from *Christ's* own Argument against the *Jews*: For he knew that they believed in *Moses* and the *Prophets*, and were persuaded of the truth of all the *Miracles* Recorded in the *Old Testament*; and therefore he did not think it sufficient for *them* to believe in him for the sake of his Works, though he had done what no Man, without *Divine Assistance*, was able to do, if he had not also done greater things than *Moses*, or any other Person Divinely assisted, had done before. So much was necessary to convince the *Jews*, and supersede a former *Revelation*; but for the truth of *Revelation in general*, both *Christ* and his *Apostles* seem to make this the only Test, that what they said and did exceeded the Power and Wisdom of *Men*; from whence they immediately concluded that therefore it was from *God*. If this then be the Standard we are to judge of *Revelation* by, 'twill be easily made out that neither the *Miracles*, *Prophecies*, nor *Doctrines* of the *New Testament*, could be from *Men*, and therefore that they came from *God* who assisted and revealed himself to those Men that appeared to be the Authors of them.

It

It has been observed already that a Man may take such a certain estimate of his *own* Capacities and Powers, and of his Present stock of Knowledge, as to be infallibly sure that he *cannot do* or *know* such and such things, either *at all*, or not *after such a manner*. And, if we know any thing certain of the nature of *Man in general*, we may confidently affirm that we are made and fashioned with such resemblance to one another, that, notwithstanding the great variety and disproportion of Faculties and Attainments observable among us, a Man may be able, by what he knows of himself, so far to determine the Limits of *Humane* Force and Skill, as to be firmly assured such and such things cannot possibly lye within the reach and comprehension of *meer Man*, unassisted by any other Being.

Thus for Example, to use the former Instances, we are fully and intirely assured that no Man whatsoever, barely by his *own Power*, without the Assistance or Application of any other Being, can Cure the Sick, or Raise the Dead, or Speak a Language he knew nothing of just before he spake it, or foretell such Events as that of the Restoration of the *Jews*.

O 3

We

We may likewise be as fully sure that Persons of such an Education and Course of Life could not possibly, *of themselves*, by the force of their own Capacities and Acquisitions, conceive, speak, write or do such and such things, in such a particular way and manner as we can suppose, or may actually find.

Whoever therefore believes the *Miracles, Prophecies and Doctrines of Christ*, and *his Apostles*, according to the History given of them in the *New Testament*, must have this assurance, that if *these Matters of Fact* were so as they are there delivered, 'tis impossible that *those Men* should be the Authors of them, as I shall shew more particularly by considering them apart.

To begin with *Prophecies*, which have been always reckoned the most unexceptionable Testimonies of an Intelligence exceeding *Humane Knowledge*: If the *Books of the Old Testament* were writ long before *Christ* came into the World; and all those Passages out of them, which we find applied to *Christ*, and the Dispensation of the Gospel in the *New Testament*, had a designed relation to those Events they are there applied to; 'tis impossible

to imagine that either the *Prediction* or *Accomplishment* of them was the effect of mere *Humane Knowledge and Power*.

Such a *multitude and variety of surprising Events*, never before heard of in the World, that had no manner of perceivable connexion with the state of things when they were foretold, nor indeed at any other time before they happened, could not, by any force of *Humane Wisdom*, be so *particularly and circumstantially* fore-known.

Neither can it be supposed that *Christ* made all those Relations in the *Old Testament* pass for Prophecies by an Arbitrary Application of them to such Events, as were in his own Power to bring about in such a manner, as he thought would bear the nearest resemblance to those accounts of things he found already written; for 'twas manifestly impossible for *Christ* to order and contrive the time, place and manner of his Birth, and all the other Circumstances which attended his coming into the World; and yet these things are as particularly and remarkably expressed in the Writings of the *Old Testament*, as any other matters whatsoever applied by *Christ* to himself; and as certainly

believed by the *Jews* to belong to the *Messiah*, before the Pretensions of *Jesus Christ* were heard of, as any other Prophecies that were ever thought by them to concern him.

If the *Prophecies* cited out of the *Scriptures* of the *Jews* relating to the Death, Resurrection and Ascension of *Christ*, the Mission of the *Holy Spirit*, Propagation of the *Gospel*, Rejection of the *Jews*, and Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the success and continuance of the *Christian Religion* among the *Gentiles* were allowed by the *Jews* of that time to belong to the *Messiah*, when *Christ* applied them to himself, then are they certain Arguments of a knowledge in the *Prophets* who uttered them exceeding all *Humane* Sagacity and Foresight: But if none of the *Jews* understood them in that sense, or would grant the Passages referred to, to be Prophetical of any thing, then must the Application of them to such and such future Events by *Christ* be reckoned as new distinct Prophecies, uttered first by himself, and so they will be equal proofs of an extraordinary and more than *Humane* Knowledge in *Christ*; because the Events foretold were such as 'twas plainly impossible for
Man

Man to foresee or accomplish by his own Power.

For, not to mention the vast unlikelihood there was, according to all *Humane* Measures of Judging, that *Jerusalem* should be utterly destroyed, and the whole Nation of the *Jews* rooted out, so soon after the time it was foretold this should happen, and in that very manner in which the whole Fact stood described; not to insist upon all the amazing Difficulties that might be urged against the success of the *Gospel*, which render'd it, in all *Humane Appearance*, a thing impracticable that *Christian Religion* should so mightily and suddenly prevail and spread by such means and instruments as is foretold it should be propagated by: Waving, I say, all Reflexions of this nature that might be made, which are a great many, this must certainly be granted, that 'twas utterly impossible for *Christ* by any *Humane* Skill or Wisdom to know that he should rise again, and ascend into Heaven, and that afterwards his *Apostles* should receive such Knowledge, Courage and Power, as to Preach his *Gospel* boldly, endure Afflictions patiently, confirm their Doctrine by many Signs and Wonders,

ders, and Convert great Multitudes to the Christian Faith. And if it was impossible for him of *himself* to know all these things, it must be accounted much more impossible for him to *effect* and *accomplish* them by his own Power.

But, if it be said that all these great and wonderful Events were really foretold in the *Old Testament*, though so darkly and obscurely exprest, that no Man, before *Christ*, understood the method and way of applying them right, whence had *be* the Art and Skill of *Interpretation*? This is as great a Mark and Character of an extraordinary and more than *Humane* Wisdom, as *Prophecy* it self would be: But then, besides this wonderful Skill of *Interpreting*, he must be allowed the Talent of *Prophecy* too, by reason of several new Circumstances and Particulars relating to those great Events, which are plainly and expressly mentioned by *Christ*, and cannot be deduced from any Passages of the *Old Testament*; as will easily appear upon a Comparison of the several *Predictions* of *Christ*, and the ancient *Prophecies* of the same Events referred to by him: Which Particulars foretold by *Christ* himself, and others afterwards by some

some of *his Disciples* and *Believers* are most of them such as could not be foreseen by any Labour, Art, or Force of *Humane* Understanding; because they are such Matters of Fact as before they did actually happen, no Man, without an *over-ruling Conviction* could possibly persuade himself to believe would ever happen at all, much less to expect that others should believe they would upon his Testimony.

From hence it evidently appears that most of the *Prophecies* Recorded in the *Old* and *New Testament* relating to *Christ*, and *his Gospel* must be the results of some *Higher Knowledge* than that of *Man*, because they are such as cannot possibly be accounted meer *lucky Conjectures*, nor *skilful Prognosticks* grounded upon the necessary connexion and dependance of *Natural* Causes and Effects; which are all the ways of foretelling things that *Men* are capable of.

'Tis true indeed some *general common* Events, may sometimes by a *lucky turn* of *imagination* be foretold; such as Life or Death, Peace or War, Prosperity or Adversity, and the like; and therefore had *Christ* spake no other *Prophecies* but such as these
that

that *Peter should be Crucified*, and *John should out live the rest of the Apostles*; there might have been some ground to think them *casual conjectural Predictions*; though a great many true Predictions even of this nature, without one mistaken guess, could not with any colour of reason or probability have been attributed to *chance*.

Several other Events likewise there are, which by a skill in this or that part of Knowledge, and by an immediate information concerning several antecedent Circumstances may be foretold: Thus does an Astronomer foretel an Eclipse, a Physician the Death of some particular Person, a Politician a National Calamity or Advantage; and thus does a Wise Man understand how such a Person, whose Temper and Principles he is well acquainted with, will behave himself upon such an occasion; and many other the like Instances might be given. But the *Prophecies of Christ* and other *Ancient Prophets* before him concerning the whole Dispensation of the Gospel could not possibly be meer *Guesses* and *Conjectures*; because the things foretold were, most of them, such as the Persons who foretold them had never seen or heard of any Instances of before,

fore, and so could have nothing to lead or determine their thoughts that way: And if the Ideas of such Facts could be supposed to have entered their Minds, they could not have *positively* and *confidently* affirmed that those Facts would really happen, without thinking it probable that they might so happen; and 'tis impossible that any Men in their senses should look upon such Events as probable, which they had had no manner of experience of before, without a deep insight into the nature and reasons of things, by which they were enabled to see such a train and connexion of Causes as would very likely produce such Effects.

But this cannot be pretended in the case before us, for several reasons.

For first of all our Knowledge of *Nature* and the *Causes* of things, is so very scanty and imperfect, that hardly any thing was ever foreknown by Man without an antecedent experience of something of the same kind or nature that had already happen'd: Some Eclipses were observed before any were foretold, such a complexion of Symptoms had actually proved fatal before it was known to be a certain cause or sign of approaching Death,

Death, and the like will hold in all other Instances of *Humane Prediction*, by virtue of any *natural* or *acquired* Knowledge.

Besides, in none of these cases can any particular Event be foreseen by the most certain comprehension of all the Causes producing it, without a true and particular information concerning the punctual and determinate Existence of those Causes, and all the Circumstances requisite to make their Influence effectual. If a Man be never so well acquainted with the Motions and Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, he cannot tell that an Eclipse will happen at such a time without knowing the particular position of the Bodies contributing to an Eclipse at that time; nor can a Physician, by all his skill in the frame and structure of Humane Bodies foretel that such a particular Man, whose Constitution and Circumstances of Health he knows nothing of, shall at such a determinate time dye or recover of such a Disease.

But, supposing a Man knew the whole Oeconomy of the *Corporeal World*, was acquainted with all the *Laws of Motion*, and saw the necessary dependance of all the *Parts of Matter* upon one another, he

could not be enabled from hence to foretel such things which depended upon the free Resolutions and Determinations of *Intellectual Beings*; nor is it possible for us, by what we know of the Temper and Dispositions of all the Persons we converse with, to foretel what Men will Live, and what particular Actions will be done by them at a great distance from us. The connexion of *all Humane Actions* is not discoverable from the clearest view we can have of *Humane Nature*, and all the Principles and Motives Men act upon.

Now for all these reasons, 'tis impossible that those great and wonderful Events foretold by *Christ* and the *Ancient Prophets*, which we find mentioned in the *New Testament*, could be foretold by any *Humane Skill* or *Learning*, the same way that we have seen other natural Truths Predicted.

For several of them, 'tis plain, were such as the Prophets had never seen or heard of any Instances of before: As for Example, that a Person should come down from Heaven to save Mankind from their Sins; that a *Virgin* should conceive & bear a *Son*, &c. And indeed all those Facts we call *Miraculous*, may be referred to this Head; for

tho' some of the same, or alike kind were known to have happen'd before, yet the Prophets, who knew and believed them, look'd upon them as exceeding all *Humane* Power and Cognizance, and therefore could not foresee the like by any ordinary Natural way of Knowledge, because they had never had any Experience of such things happening according to the *ordinary* course of Things.

Several of the Matters prophesied of, if they had depended upon *certain necessary Causes*, and that dependance had been very well known to the Prophets, yet they could not have been foretold by them, for want of knowing some particular Circumstances, which must concur to their Existence: Thus, for instance, supposing a Man was able, by his extraordinary Skill in Nature, to explain how a *Virgin might conceive*, or the *Dead rise*, the *Lame be made to walk*, and the *Sick be cured*; he could not by the means of this Knowledge, foretell that, at such a certain time hereafter, such Facts as these should happen, because he could not understand whether the State and Disposition of Things, at that time, would certainly be such that those Facts must ensue.

But

But these Reasons chiefly concern *corporeal* Agents: Whereas, besides the difficulties arising from hence, all the Prophecies we are concerned to defend could not be fulfilled, without the concurrence of an infinite variety of *Humane Actions*, which were not the Results of irresistible Motives when they were done; nor was the Application of any Motives for the doing of them, nor even the Existence of the Persons that did them, necessary.

That such a Person as *Christ* should at such a Time and Place be Born, depended upon Ten Thousand Millions of the most contingent Determinations *Humane Nature* was ever sensible of; which must all happen in such a manner, betwixt the time of the *Prophecy* and the *Completion*, or else the Event had never been: And the like might be shewn in all the other Christian Facts, and Events, prophesied of.

All which is abundantly sufficient to prove, that the *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Testament*, were not conceived and uttered by *meer Men*, without the assistance of some *other Being*, of *greater Knowledge* and *Wisdom*.

P

And

And the same likewise may easily be made out of the *Miracles* there Recorded; that they were such Works as *Man alone*, by his *own Power* could not perform.

For some of them were such, that the Persons who did them had never seen or heard of before; as *casting out of Devils*, *speaking unknown Tongues*, &c. How came it then into their Minds to think of them? And when they did think of them, how had they the Confidence to believe they could do them, and venture upon a tryal?

Most of those they had heard of before, were by *them themselves* believed to surpass *Humane Skill*, and to have been done by a *Higher Power*; and therefore they could have no Inducement, or Encouragement from thence, to try their own Abilities upon them; nay, further, any inducements of this kind were utterly inconsistent with such a Belief as is here supposed.

The *Skill* or *Art* of doing any of them, in a *natural* way, was never pretended to before, and was never known to *any other* Persons; Whence therefore had *these Men* their great unheard of Skill? *Raising the Dead,*

Dead, Curing all manner of Diseases, and several other things Recorded to have been done by *Christ* and *his Apostles*, have always been lookt upon as impossible to be effected by any *Humane Art*, or *Application* of the Powers and Vertues of Bodies to one another: And, not to mention those other Miracles of *Christ*, and *his Apostles*, which seem *more* above *Humane Power*, it cannot be supposed, but among those vast promiscuous Multitudes of *Blind, Lame, Sick* and *Maimed*, that were cured by them, there must have been some, such as were then, and always before, and would be now, accounted *Incurable* by the help of any *known Remedies*.

But, allowing that the secret force of *Nature* is very great; that the Powers of *Natural Bodies*, and their Operations upon one another, are very strange and wonderful; and that we cannot conclude such or such Effects are *impossible*, because we have never seen the like before; that there may be Medicines proportioned to every Disease; and that there may be an Universal Remedy for all found out, as several Learned Men have imagined: Allowing, I say, all this; and supposing further,

ther, that *Christ* and *his Disciples* were acquainted with all these mighty Secrets; yet, if the *History of the Gospel* be true, as we have proved before it is; the wonderful Cures they did, could not be brought about in a *natural way*, such as is here intimated; because 'tis plain, by the account we have of these Matters, that they never made use of any manner of Applications of other Bodies to the Persons Cured by them; (excepting one in the case of a Blind Man) and, if they had, whatever the Medicines were which they used, no body could have been Cured by them, in the manner Persons are said to be Cured in the *New Testament*.

The first is plain from all the several Relations there given of the Cures that were done; it being every where almost positively affirmed that Persons were Cured by *Christ* and *his Disciples* immediately; most of them upon their *speaking the Word*, without any kind of operation or process, some of them by a *Touch of their Garment*, and some by *their Shadow passing over them*. And however ignorant we may be in the *Nature of Bodies*, we comprehend the whole Force, and Power, and all the possible Vertues of a *Word*, a *Touch*

Touch of a Garment, and a *Humane Shadow*.

But, if the most powerful Medicines the World affords had been applied, 'tis demonstrable from the *Nature and Laws of Motion*, and the *constant Manner of Operation*, observed in all other Natural Works, that the Cures performed by *Christ* and *his Disciples*, could not have been wrought in an *instant*, nor in any short time without such *violent Agitations* in the Bodies Cured as would have appeared in *strange External Marks*; which must have been taken notice of by all the Beholders, and consequently some of them would have been mentioned in the Accounts that were written of the Facts; whereas we find no such things in all the *History of the New Testament*; unless perhaps one Case of a Blind Man be thought an Objection to what is here advanced: But this Instance, which is made use of by some to prove that this, and all other Miracles were brought about the same way, by the Application of proper means, is a very good Argument to the contrary; for besides, that the means here used had no particular fitness in them for the End designed above any other what-

soever, this was the slowest Cure we read of, and took up the longest time in doing.

And, if these Observations hold true, as to the *Cures* wrought by *Christ* and *his Disciples*, they are of much greater weight, with respect to several other of the *Miracles* done by them. If the Sick could not be Cured by a *Word's speaking* without the use of Remedies, How could the Dead be Raised without any other Application? If no Application could Cure the Sick *in an instant*, what Force or Power of *Natural Bodies* could Raise the Dead *immediately*? And to what secret Workings of Nature can we ascribe the power of speaking several Languages, which the Speakers were utterly ignorant of, immediately before they spoke them?

Neither is it to any purpose to urge, that the Relation of all these *Miracles* in the *New Testament* is imperfect, and several Circumstances omitted; which, if they had been Recorded, would have enabled us to explain how the Facts might have been brought to pass in a *Natural, ordinary Way*: For, if that Account we have of them, or those Circumstances

stances that are mentioned are true, 'tis impossible, by the addition of any other Circumstances whatsoever, to make the Events appear such as might be compassed by *Human Power*.

If several Persons, who were unknown to *Christ*, and whose Constitution and Case he had no antecedent knowledge of, were Cured by him, *immediately* upon his *first view* of them, as soon as he had *spoke the Word*, as 'tis plain they were from abundance of Instances in the Gospel's; if *Lazarus* came out of the Grave *immediately* upon *Christ's calling of him*; if the *Centurion's* Servant was healed the *self same hour* *Christ* spoke that it should be done, without his going to the House where he lay; and if the *Apostles* were enabled to speak several Languages, which, the Day before they spoke them they knew nothing of; which things are all positively asserted in the *New Testament*, let us imagine what *other Circumstances* we please, and suppose *Christ* and *his Apostles*, indued with all the Knowledge and Power that any Man ever was, or could be Master of, 'tis impossible to give such an account of these Matters, consistent with that Relation we have of

them in the *New Testament*, as can satisfy any Man they were Effected by *Humane Skill and Power*; as does evidently appear from the Reflections before laid down.

But, if it be further Objected, notwithstanding the Evidence before given, which plainly proves the contrary, that all these things we call *Miracles* would have happen'd according to the Establish'd *Course of Nature*, at the time, and in the manner they did happen, whether *Christ* and *his Apostles* had used such previous Signs as made *them* appear to be the Authors of them or not; and so all the Facts are to be ascribed to *other natural Causes*, tho' they could not be Effected by *Man*; if this, I say, should be urged, and the supposition allowed, then must all the *Miracles*, with respect to the pretended Authors of them, be resolved into *Prophecies*, and that will amount to the same thing: For the *foretelling* all those wonderful Events Recorded in the *New Testament*, as done by *Christ* and *his Disciples*, will plainly appear, by what has been already said upon the Subject of *Prophecies*, to be as much above the *Power and Skill of Man* as the *doing* of them would be.

The

The vast number of *Miracles* done, the multitude of Persons concern'd in them, the publick Manner of doing them, and the Times and Places in which they were done, take off all imaginable suspicion of *Confederacy*, if the Natures of the Facts would have admitted it, as 'tis certain they would not; and therefore I shall not suppose that Objection, and nothing more can possibly be urged.

And as the *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, which concern the Christian Dispensation, did certainly proceed from some *Higher Power and Knowledge* than that of *Men*; so likewise did the *Gospel* it self; by which I mean that *whole Scheme of Doctrine* delivered by *Christ* and *his Apostles*, as we find it contained in the Books of the *New Testament*.

'Tis allowed on all Hands, that there never was so Just and Noble a Draught of *Morality* as the *Christian*; so full and consistent a Scheme of *Humane Duty*; laid down in so plain and simple a Manner, without any Art or Ostentation; and press'd upon Mankind with so much Earnestness and Authority; without any visible Interest or Advantage of the Preachers

Preachers and Writers; and without any Worldly Dignity or Title that made them Superiour to the lowest of those they Preach'd and Writ to.

It must be likewise confessed that the *Grounds* and *Reasons* upon which the *Practise* of this Morality is enforced, by the Preachers of it, are very New and Surprising; that the things they require Men to *believe*, in order to render their Practice of the Duties enjoyned them effectual, are very shocking and repugnant to the common Opinions and Prejudices of Mankind, but especially those of that time in which they were first Published; and that the very *Language* and *Forms of Expression*, in which the great *Articles of the Christian Faith* are delivered in the *Scriptures*, are very different from whatever we find used upon any other Occasion.

Now, these Things being granted, I cannot possibly conceive how any Man should at once *invent* such a System of Morality as the *Christian*, so very different from all others known before, and so contrary to all the Passions and reputed Interests of Men; nor how he should take upon him to *injoyn* several Duties as necessary,

cessary, which none of the Learned in these Matters had judg'd so before; as *bearing* and *forgiving Injuries*, *doing Good for Evil*, and the like; should positively *affirm* some Things as certain, which were doubted of till then, as the *Resurrection of the Body*, and a *future state of Happiness and Misery*, &c. should *command* every thing he said to be believed, or done, under the severest Penalties imaginable; and all this barely upon *his own Word and Authority*, without consulting any other Principles, or Rules of Action, which had before obtained, or giving any Reasons to prove his own, were better, and therefore ought to be submitted to.

But, if any Man can be supposed to have invented all the *Christian Morality* himself; what force of Imagination, what turn or agitation of Thoughts, could have helpt him to conceive that Set of Notions which make up the whole *Christian Faith*, in the way and manner they are joyned together in the *New Testament*? If they had entered into his Mind, what Reason or Motives could he have to believe them? And, had he believed them himself, how could he expect to make others assent to the truth of them? How could

could he imagine that *these Opinions* would recommend his *Morality* to the World? Why should he think himself obliged to propagate them; to insist upon them as necessary; to make the danger of disbelieving them as great, as neglecting the Duties of his *Morality*; and yet give no other Reason to the World for what he said, but his bare Saying it?

Besides, were all these *Christian Doctrines*, relating both to *Faith* and *Practice*, found out by *meer Humane Sagacity*; 'tis extremely difficult to imagine, that neither the *Contrivers*, nor *Publishers* of them, should any where in their Preaching or Writing, arrogate any Thing to themselves upon this account; but should constantly renounce the Honour of the Discovery, and never betray any design of procuring to themselves Esteem, or any other Advantage of Life whatsoever, for obliging Mankind with so beneficial a Scheme of Things as the Gospel proposes.

And, to carry this Point yet farther; If it be so very hard to imagine how *any Person whatsoever* should frame such Notions and Opinions to themselves, and afterwards

terwards act upon such Motives, and observe such a Conduct in the Publication of them; 'tis much more inconceivable how *ignorant* and *unlearned Men*, of *very low Education*, and *constantly employed in mean Affairs*, should do all this: And 'tis particularly unaccountable how *Jews* should give such a Character and Representation of their *Messiah*, and his Office and Business in the World, so directly contrary to all the Opinions and Expectations of that whole People; and upon that account so very unlikely to be entertained or credited.

'Tis moreover impossible to conceive how *so many Men*, as were concern'd in the Preaching and Propagating *Christianity* in several parts of the World, at the same time, should, before any thing was committed to Writing, all agree upon the *same Set of Doctrines*, use the *same* open, sincere, unartful *Method of delivering them*, and the *same* bold, authoritative way of *inforcing* them; and should all shew the *same* Courage and Resolution in *maintaining the Truth* of what they Preach'd, and in bearing all manner of Losses and Afflictions for the *sake* of that Testimony: This, I say, is not to be conceived or

accounted

accounted for, if they were not *assisted* by continual *Revelations*, and constant supplies of *Spiritual Strength* and *Force*, which proceeded from some *more powerful and knowing Being* than *Man*.

That they were all *firmly persuaded* they were thus assisted, is the least that can possibly be supposed; and how the *invention of the whole Christian Scheme*, and the *conduct of those that Publish'd and Preach'd* it to the World, and *Suffered* for it, can be ascribed to *Resvery* and *Enthusiasm* (which must be the Case, if that Persuasion was ill grounded) is much more unintelligible; since, as has been proved before, these Effects are such as exceed the most improved *Force*, and most accomplish'd *Wisdom* of *Man*.

'Tis certain then, from all that has been said, that the *Miracles*, *Prophecies* and *Doctrines*, contained in the *New Testament* could not be the Work and Contrivance of *meer Man*.

In the next place therefore, I am to prove that God was the Author of them all.

That *God might*, if he pleased, *Reveal* such Things to *Men*, by *secret Impression* upon

upon their Minds, as they did not know before, and could not have found out of themselves, has been proved already; and therefore all the *Prophecies* mentioned in the *New Testament*; all the *Doctrines* which *peculiarly concern Christianity*; the *consciousness* that *Christ* and his *Apostles* had, that *they could do such Miracles* as are Recorded of them; or a *firm Persuasion* that they *would be done*, upon their use of such external Signs; and *several of the Miracles themselves*, such as telling the private Thoughts and Actions of Men, speaking strange Languages, and the like, may all be accounted for this way.

And whoever believes a *God*, must likewise grant, that 'twas *possible* for him to *effect all the other Miracles*, either by an *original Designation* of such a chain and connexion of Events, or by an *immediate interposition* of his Power.

That it was not only *possible*, but very *likely* and *probable*, that *God should reveal* himself to Mankind in this manner, appears from the *common Opinion* of Men in all Ages, that he had revealed something to the World, and their *common Expectation* that he *would manifest* his Will to them in *further Discoveries*.

In all the Accounts of past Things we have left us, we find that every where what was Great or Good, was always ascribed to some *Divine Power*. Not to mention the *Jews*, whose Opinions in this respect, are sufficiently known and allowed; if any thing useful or beneficial to Mankind, was invented among the *Heathens*, the *Gods* had the Praise and Honour of the Discovery; if by Dreams or waking Suggestions, Men were put in mind of procuring themselves some Advantage, or avoiding some Evil, the *Gods* were thank'd for it; many also were the absurd and the superstitious Opinions of the People; concerning the way and manner of the *Gods* discovering Things to them, by the means of external Signs; but this they were all most constantly and unanimously satisfied of, That their *Religion* came immediately from *Heaven*; and what we call *Prophecies* and *Miracles* were always esteemed proper Marks and Characters of *Divine Power*; especially if they any ways contributed to the happiness and welfare of Mankind.

This has been the constant *Faith* of the World at all Times; and so far as it concerns

cerns *Divine Revelation in general*, and the ways of conveying and confirming it by *inward impressions* upon the Mind, and by *Prophecies* and *Miracles*, I think, is very well grounded: For, first, That there *has been* such a Thing as *Revelation* in the World; and that there have been *true Prophecies* uttered, and *true Miracles* wrought to confirm it, seems to me very plain. For, not to insist upon that common, but very true Observation, that all *Pretences* of this nature must be founded upon *Realities*, and that therefore it cannot be conceived how *Revelations; Prophecies* or *Miracles* should ever have been *pretended to* or *believed*, if there never had been any *true* ones of each kind; omitting, I say, this Reflection, it appears very unaccountable to me, upon a supposition that there never was any *Revelation*, how there could be any such Thing as *Religion*, *Civil Government*, or *Learning* in the World.

Learning certainly depends upon *Government*: When Men are not united together in Society, and live securely under good Laws and Defences, no Improvements of Knowledge are to be expected; and I do not see how such a Union

Q

should

should be made without a good share of *Religious Notions*; nor how a loose divided Herd of Men, such as we must now suppose, living in a State of Want and Ignorance, who are wholly employed in providing themselves Necessaries, and securing what they have from others, and consequently who have but few Ideas, and no leisure or curiosity to get more; how, I say, *such Men as these* should be furnished with any Notions of *Religion*, or how they should be able to form a *Regular Government and Constitution* without, I cannot possibly imagine.

The present State of the *Americans* is an instance which confirms me in the Opinion I have laid down; for, I cannot help believing, that if this People should always continue divided from the rest of the World, and have no Commerce with other Men, nor any *Revelation* from *God*, they would constantly, as long as the World should indure, remain in the same stupid ignorant Condition we now find them in; or, if possible, worse, without any further improvement in *Religion, Policy* or *Learning*.

This seems to me much more probable than that any Polite, Learned, and well-govern'd

govern'd Nation, which once lived under the Advantages of Wise Laws and a Rational Religion, should in some few Ages become as Rude, Barbarous, and Ignorant as the present *Americans*; and yet this has been almost the Fate of many a Countrey, and would have been quite, if they had been deprived of the Assistance of better, and more inlightened Neighbours, as the poor *Americans* were.

And in general, from many Observations 'tis evident, That Men are naturally so apt to *degenerate*, and fall into a State of Ignorance, Confusion, and Wildness, even till they become *like the Beasts that perish*, that all remains of *natural Religion*, seem purely owing to *Tradition*, and not to Study and Search; and if so, that Tradition must have had its Original from *Revelation*, the former set of Men being as unlikely to find out and cultivate Religion of themselves, as the present.

So much is visibly owing to *Revelation*, That, had it not been for the *Jewish and Christian Pretences*, there had hardly been now any such Thing as *Religion* in the World, if we may judge what would have been in other Places, by what we

find actually is in those Countries where the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelation* were ever heard of, or are now forgot. Nay, those obscure Notices of Religion we find among the Ancient and Modern *Pagans*, are, most of them, plainly derived from something contained in the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament*.

And, as from these Observations concerning the general Opinion of Mankind about *Revelation*, and the different State and Condition of Humane Affairs where *Revelation* is supposed, and where none is pretended to, it appears very probable, that there *has been* such a thing in the World; so likewise does it seem very agreeable to the best and purest Notions our most improved Reason is now able to form concerning *God*, and our selves, and the Obligations we owe to him that *God should reveal* himself to us.

We cannot but think, however we came first by these Opinions, that 'tis highly suitable to the *Nature of God*, to give Men true Notions concerning himself; to acquaint them how and in what manner they ought to Obey and Worship him; and to direct them in the Knowledge, and assist them in the Attainment of their Happiness.

We

We are very sensible of our own Ignorance, Misery, and Impotence: We cannot by any Arguments of Reason find out how, or when we were made; what should be the occasion of that contrariety of Principles and Inclinations we experience within us; why we should act contrary to what we our selves think our selves obliged to act, and be more disposed so to act, than otherwise; why we should be determined to pursue Happiness, and yet be Miserable; why the enjoyment of several Pleasures we are inclined to, should be often attended with greater degrees of Pain; and acting as our Reason approves and prescribes, should be oftentimes as prejudicial to our present Happiness; why we should look upon it as our Duty to serve *God*, and yet in several Instances, endure more Trouble and Misery upon that account, than those who live in defiance of Religion; these are Things our Reason is puzzled to explain to us: And, if there should be a future State after this Life, as we have very good grounds to believe there is, how can we be sure our Religion or Piety was acceptable to God? And, supposing our service was proper so far as it

Q 3

went,

went, what assurance can we have, that the many constant violations of our Duty which our own Consciences accuse us of, may not render our final Service ineffectual? Besides, the Bounds and Limits of our Conduct and Behaviour, with regard to our selves, and one another, must be very uncertain and precarious, when we have no other Guide but our unassisted Reason; and no Man is obliged to submit to any other Judgment but his own; for in this Case, every Man, according to the difference of his Passions, Prejudices and Interests, must have a different Standard to regulate his Actions by.

These are Things we are all sensible of now, and which, without allowing *Revelation*, we are not able to account for, or satisfy our selves about, notwithstanding all the improvements of Rational Knowledge we at present enjoy: And the expediency of being rightly inform'd in all these Matters, is esteemed so great, that 'tis urg'd by some, as an Argument against the Truth of the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelation*, that they have not been Universal enough; it being look'd upon by the Objectors, as a Thing incon-

inconsistent with the Goodness of God, to suffer so great a part of the World, in all Ages, to live in a State of gross Ignorance, Barbarity and Disorder, as Ancient History and Modern Experience inform us of.

Since therefore we cannot but be satisfied from Reflections upon our own Nature improved, and from Observations upon the wretched State of a large part of Mankind who live in Ignorance, that the Difficulties which concern the Knowledge of Religion, are very great, that the Effects and Consequences of the want of Religion, are very Dismal and Calamitous; and that Men in such a State of Ignorance, as we find some whole Countries are, would very probably, never, by any force of their own Faculties, without foreign Helps and Assistances, reach to that Knowledge of *Natural Religion*, that some Nations of the present Age are arrived to, which is manifestly owing to those Books they have among them, and which they look upon as communicated to them from *God*: Since we are further convinced, that Persons in such a State of Ignorance, as we now suppose, if they should be allowed to make some

advances in the Knowledge of Natural Religion, could not, by *meer Reason*, without *Revelation*, proceed so far, as upon good grounds, to be fully assured of the Truth and Obligation of what they knew, and the Advantages or Dangers that attended their Performance, or Transgression of the Rules they laid down; that they would never be able to explain any of the Difficulties before mentioned; and that, in a short Time, by the over-ruling prevalence of present Pleasures and Passions, working differently in different Men, they would relapse into their former State again: Upon all these Accounts, it seems very expedient, that *God* should give *Men* a *true and perfect Scheme of Religion*, agreeable to the *Reason*, and fitted to all the *Wants* and *Exigencies* of *Mankind*.

However, I dare not venture to argue that, because it appears so very *expedient* for *us*, and so *suitable* to the *Nature of God*, that there should be some *Revelation* made to the World; therefore *God* has *actually* done it, because I cannot comprehend all the particular Reasons and Ends of *God's* acting with regard to *Men here*; nor what allowance
he

he will be pleased to make in his Future Judgment upon them, in order to *another State*: But, if there be a *Revelation* pretended to, and I find, upon a strict Examination of it, that it has all the Marks and Characters of such a *Revelation*, as our Reason tells us *Men wanted*, and was very *proper* and *becoming God* to give, and such a one, as has been proved before, *Man himself could not be the Author of*, I must be convinced from hence that it *came from God*. And such a *Revelation* as this is the *Christian*.

There we find a very just and rational Account of the Nature and Attributes of *God*, of the Original Formation of the World, and particularly the Creation of *Man*, the change and alteration of his first Condition, and the unhappy Consequences of it; *from thence* we are enabled to explain these contrary Tendencies and Principles of Action we experience in our selves, that unequal Composition of Perfections and Weaknesses, Capacities and Wants we are sensible of, the Ignorance of which makes *Man* the most unaccountable part of the whole Universe; *There* we are acquainted with the most proper suitable way of Worshipping
ping

ping and Serving God; *There* we have the truest draught of Morality, the best and most exalted Scheme of all the Duties which concern the Government of our selves, and our Behaviour to one another; *By this Revelation* we are assured, that the observance of Religious Duties in such a manner will be acceptable to God; all our Doubts about the Imperfections of our Obedience are removed, and our Consciences intirely satisfied, a way being *there* shewed us how our Piety and Vertue may be rendred well pleasing to God, notwithstanding the many failings they are accompanied with, the Wisdom and Kindness of which Expedient we cannot but acknowledge and admire; *The same Revelation* does likewise fix and ascertain our Belief of a Future State, and proposes such Rewards and Punishments in another World as are proper and sufficient Motives to determine us to the Practice of Religion in this, and gives us a satisfactory Explication of all the present Inequalities of Providence in the conduct of Humane Affairs.

This is certainly a very rational Scheme of things, and very agreeable to all the Notions

Notions our Souls are able to frame of God; and therefore since it could not proceed from *Man*, as has already been shewn, we must ascribe it to *God*.

But moreover, besides the *nature of the Things* revealed, the *Ways* and *Methods* made use of to *Communicate* them to the World, and to *Establish* and *Propagate* the Belief of them among Men, are Infallible Marks that the *Revelation came from God*. His Power and Wisdom are as Legible in this whole Dispensation, as in the Frame and Structure of the Universe, as will easily appear from a short view of the Progress and Conduct of this great Work of the *Salvation of Man*.

For, except the *Hand of the Lord* was in it, how came the *Jews* to have better and juster Notions of God, the Original of the World, and the Nature of Man than any other Nation under Heaven, when they had no manner of Learning among them, no gradual Improvements in Knowledge as we find other Countries had? How came the whole People to have these Notions as well as the chief and most knowing among them? In all the Periods of Learning

Learning among the *Egyptians, Chaldeans, Greeks and Romans*, the People were generally Idolaters, and the *Priests and Philosophers* durst not propagatè better Notions of God when they had found them out, tho' even their best had a ridiculous mixture of *Fable* and Superstition in them, How then came the People of the *Jews* to remain intirely free from Idolatry for so many Years, ever since they became a Nation? Or, if we believe their own Story, and they were as inclinable to Worship Idols, and imbrace absurd Opinions of God and Religion as any other Nation, How came they to recover themselves again, and preserve the true Worship of God among them? And how at last, when they were so wedded to the external form and manner of Worshipping the true God as to place all their Religion in it, to the neglect of Moral Duties, at a time when there was no other sort of Learning among them, how I say, came a perfecter Scheme of *Morality and Religion* to proceed from thence than from any other Quarter of the World; and such a Scheme as no body that professed it durst think of altering, adding to, or diminishing, when no such respect was paid
to

to any Philosophers Scheme by his own Sect or Party? To whom can we ascribe such a wonderful Preservation of *true Religion* but to *God*, who was able to bring *Strength out of Weakness*, and even of *Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham*.

If afterwards we consider *by what particular Hands* this perfecter Scheme of Religion was delivered to Mankind, and *in what manner* it was first Published and Preached to the World, here the *Finger of God* will plainly appear also. For all the Instruments and Ministers of this great Work were Persons of a low Rank and mean Occupations, Ignorant and Unlearned, and of *no Reputation in the World*, and their Preaching was plain and simple, *without the enticing Words of Man's Eloquence*; and yet, where-ever they came the Gospel prevailed, *many were daily added to the Church*, and, in a little time, *they drew the whole World after them*; this they did notwithstanding all the Opposition that was made to them, by the Reasonings and Disputings of the Learned, and by the Force and Authority of Magistrates and Men in Power; notwithstanding the *Doctrine* they Preached was
every

everywhere spoken against, and the Preachers and Believers of it were everywhere Persecuted and Afflicted with all the variety of Sufferings their Enemies could invent: And when we perceive it so ordered that *the Foolish things of the World* should Confound the Wise, that *the Weak and Base things of the World, and things which are despised,* should Confound the things which are Mighty and in great Esteem, we cannot but acknowledge that *God hath chosen them,* and what is thus wonderful in our Eyes is the Lord's doing. Thus it became God Almighty to humble Men, and shew his Power in a way directly contrary to all the measures they would have imagined proper.

Was it not likewise every way worthy of God, and agreeable both to the Wisdom and Goodness of his Designs in giving Mankind a more perfect Model of Religion than they were hitherto acquainted with, that he should convince them of the Beauty and Reasonableness, and encourage them to the Practice of it, by exemplifying the whole Scheme in the Lives of the first Publishers and Preachers of this Religion? And where were such perfect Characters of Men ever heard of before,

as those of *Christ and his Apostles,* and most of the *first Christian Believers?* What could more demonstrate the Force and Influence of the *Christian Religion,* and recommend it more Effectually to the World than this? As therefore the Knowledge of a true and reasonable Service of God must be referred to him, so must likewise the power to will and to do, according to all those Rules and Measures he has been pleased to prescribe us.

But further, when such Doctrines as those of the Gospel which were Preached, Believed, and Propagated in such a manner, and recommended by Persons of such Characters, as is before specified, are confirm'd by so many Prophecies and Miracles, and those of such kinds as we find mentioned in the *New Testament;* it must be likewise allowed that God was the Author of all these Signs and Wonders. For, if it be possible, and sometimes expedient, for God to reveal something to Mankind, as has been already shewn, more infallible Tokens and Indications of himself he cannot give us, than such Prophecies, and such Miracles as those Recorded in the *New Testament;* no greater Instances of Knowledge

ledge and Power, besides what appear in the Making and Governing the World, are conceivable by us; and what better deserved such an *extraordinary* and *immediate* Manifestation of these Attributes of God than the *Gospel*? To what nobler Ends could God employ his Power than for the confirming and promoting the belief of such a just, reasonable, and beneficial Scheme of things as the *Christian Religion*?

But besides, *these Prophecies* and *Miracles* were not only certain *Indications* of *Divine Revelation* and *Assistance* in themselves, and more undoubtedly so to us, for being made use of to confirm a Doctrine which deserved such Attestation; but they were also the properest and most suitable *means* that could be chosen for Establishing the belief of the *Gospel*, to which they were designed, and consequently must be employed by God to that End: For, what was more becoming the *Divine Wisdom*, and what could be more effectual to convince Men of the truth of such *future* things as are Promised and Threatened in the *Christian Religion*, than by the Completion of *Prophecies*, spoken of at several distant Periods of time

time before the Events happen'd, to give them a sensible proof, that *all things were manifest and open to the Eyes of God*, and that *a Thousand Years was to him but as One Day*? And that the *strangeness* of the *Christian Events* relating to a *Future State*, upon the prospect of which the whole Religion is founded, might not shock the Faith of Mankind, what wiser and more convincing Method could be taken, than by various Instances of things actually done in their Presence, of as strange and surprizing a Nature as those foretold, and some of them of the very same kind, as *the Resurrection of the Dead*, *Ascension into Heaven*, &c. How, I say, could Men be better satisfied, than by such *present Experience* of the *Divine Power* that *nothing was impossible to God*; and that there might be such things in a *Future State*, which *Eye had not yet seen*, *nor Ear heard*, *nor had entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*?

Thus have I proved in short, that the *Prophecies*, *Miracles* and *Doctrines* contained in the *New Testament*, and consequently the *whole Christian Religion*, which were before shewn to exceed all *Humane Reach*

R

and

and Capacity, did certainly proceed from God.

After which proof the third thing proposed will be very easily made out, *viz.* that 'tis very improper and absurd to ascribe these things to *Evil Spirits*.

All that we know of *Good* or *Evil Spirits*, without *Revelation*, is that there have been some Men unaccountably assisted by some invisible Power, to say and do certain things which they knew they could not have said or done without such Assistance; that, if what was said or done this way was serious and concerning, and seem'd to contribute any thing to the Good of Men, it was reckoned to proceed from a *Good Spirit* appointed by the *Supreme God* for that End; if the things said or done were Trifling or Hurtful they were thought to come from *Evil Spirits* permitted by the *Supreme God* to Amuse or Punish Men; and that Sacrifices and other Religious Rites were performed by the Persons particularly concern'd to express their Thanks to the One, or to appease the Other, these *Good* and *Evil Spirits* being esteemed as *Gods* of a *Lower Order*, who had different Offices assign'd them by the *Supreme*.

In

In the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*, we have a more particular account of *Good* and *Evil Spirits*, the first occasion of their Distinction, and their different Offices and Employments as such; and there we find that what was said or done by *Angels*, or *Good Spirits*, was by the express Order and Command of *God*, and is Attributed to him in the same manner, as if it had proceeded immediately from himself; and what was said or done by *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, was by the Permission of *God* for the Trial or Punishment of Men.

The Power *God* suffered *Evil Spirits* to Exercise, and the Signs and Wonders he permitted them to do, in order to tempt Men from the Belief or Practice of those things he had enjoined and commanded them, were so easily distinguishable from the *positive express Manifestations of Divine Power*, that any Man was justly to be Condemn'd for being deceived by them: For besides that *Miracles* done by the help of *Evil Spirits*, were, as

a *Judicious Author* well observes, Pascal. always foretold, or outdone, or both, and consequently could never be of force enough to invalidate a *Divine Revelation*:

R 2

Besides

Besides this, I say, the *Works of the Devil*, and the *Doctrines of Devils*, are so contrary to the Reason and truest Interests of Mankind, and so easily known to be so, especially when compared with the *Doctrine of God* and the *Fruits* of it, that no *Miracles* or *Signs* whatsoever can be sufficient to establish their Credit.

And therefore 'tis very absurd, and contrary to all that the *Scriptures* inform us of concerning *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, to suppose that they should employ all their Power and Cunning to promote a pure and holy Service of One God, and to destroy all the Pretences of Superstition and Idolatry: 'Tis contrary to all the Policy of the *Kingdom of Darkness*, as our Saviour argues, that it should be *divided against it self*, and that some Evil Spirits should disturb and oppose the rest, when they are all carrying on the same Work.

But neither *Jews*, *Christians*, or *Heathens*, ever entertained any such Notions of *Devils* or *Evil Spirits*, as to make them the Authors of any thing that recommended and establish'd what they call'd *Vertue* in the World, or contributed to the Peace, Welfare, or *Happiness of Mankind*.

'Tis

'Tis manifest then that such a Scheme, as we have seen the *Christian Religion* is, could not be Contrived, and Propagated through the World in such a manner by *Evil Spirits*; neither was it possible that the first *Preachers* and *Professors* of this Religion should derive their extraordinary Characters from the Possession and Influence of *Devils*. These are such Notorious Truths, that there is no need of further Inlargments upon this Head.

Thus have I finished what I undertook under my Second General, and by a *full* and *direct Proof* made it very Evident that *all the principal Matters of Fact related in the New Testament are true*.

III. I shall strengthen and confirm the same Truth by shewing the *improbability* and *absurdity* of a *contrary Supposition*, and the *weakness* of all the *Difficulties* and *Objections* rais'd against the *Scriptures*, and the Matters contained in them; which is the third thing I propos'd to make good, in order to my main Design, which is to establish a firm Belief of the *Christian*

Religion, and all the Obligations of it.

It has been sufficiently proved already, that if all the *common Matters of Fact* related in the *New Testament*, or only the principal of them, such as have been before mentioned are true, in the Manner and Circumstances there set down, it necessarily follows from hence that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* there Recorded must be true also; and if the Miracles and Prophecies are true, they must certainly be the Effects of *Divine Assistance* and *Revelation*; and consequently, the *Doctrines* delivered by Persons so assisted must come from *God*: This, I say, has been fully made out beyond all possibility of a reasonable Contradiction, and every thing that could be *supposed*, all the *different Accounts* that could be given of these Matters, in order to invalidate the strength of the Inferences drawn from them, have been shewn to be false and groundless.

The next Pretence which the Enemies of *Revealed Religion* make use of in the behalf of *Infidelity*, is that the whole Body of the *Scriptures of the New Testament* are *Forged* and *Suppositions*, that all the principal Matters of Fact there Recorded, with

with all the Strange and New Doctrines built upon them, were purely the *Inventions of Men*; and that the Books were given out by the Contrivers of them, as containing the *Revelations of God*, in order to Establish their Credit and Authority in the World. This is the worst that the utmost Malice of Scoffers and Unbelievers can suggest, but the Folly and unpresideded Absurdity of this Plea will easily appear upon a slight Examination of it.

For first, 'Tis very manifest from what has been said already, that it has been a *constant* and *universal Tradition*, in this part of the World, that *most* of the Books of the *New Testament* were written by *those very Persons*, whom we that are now called *Christians* pretend they were Written by, and that *all* of them were writ about the *same time* we now believe and affirm they were, and therefore there is the *same reason* to believe these Books to be *true* and *genuine* as any other of the same Standing and Antiquity, and, if we consider the importance of the Books, much greater.

In the next place 'tis certain, that in all the Accounts we have left us of the *History of Christianity*, it no where appears that any of the Ancient Adversaries of this Religion, either *Jews* or *Heathens*, *Prophane* or *Revolting Christians*, ever Objected to the true Christian Believers, that the Books in which they pretended their Religion was contained were *Forg'd* and *Supposititious*, and consequently that their Faith was Vain and Ill-grounded: And if those who lived at and near the first rise of Christianity never made use of this Objection against it then, what strength can it have now, when urged by those who cannot well be more industrious Enemies of the *Christian Religion*, than their Unbelieving Predecessors were, and cannot possibly at this distance make out such a discovery as they pretend to, could we suppose the thing true and never detected before, by such as sought all occasions to lessen the Credit, and stop the growth of *Christianity* in every Age; which to me seems utterly inconceivable.

I am likewise perswaded that *no meer Man*, by the strength of *his own unassisted Capacities*,

capacities, could have framed and contrived such a Book as the *New Testament* is. I cannot possibly prevail upon my self to believe that such *Facts* as are there Recorded, such a *Contexture of History*, such a *Scheme of Doctrines*, such *Characters of Men*, and such a *manner of Writing* as we find throughout that Book, could be altogether the Issue and Result of *Humane Sagacity alone*.

But supposing it to be possible, that all these things might have enter'd into a Man's Mind; supposing likewise that notwithstanding the present appearance of *Universal uncontradicted Tradition* to the contrary, a Book now believed to be true, might some time or other have been invented without any ground for such a Work in the *reality of things*; allowing, I say, the possibility of these things, 'tis still upon many other Accounts manifestly absurd to imagine that the *Writings of the New Testament*, were the Work and Contrivance of Men, without a sufficient Foundation of *true real Facts* to support them,

This

This will more particularly appear from these two Considerations.

1. That there is no *End* or *Design* imaginable sufficient to have determined the supposed Author of the *New Testament* to undertake such a Work.

2. That if the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, had not been true, 'twould have been utterly *impossible* that the *Christian Religion* should ever have been *believed* and *propagated* in the World, in the manner we find it is at present.

First then I am to prove that there is no *End* or *Design* imaginable sufficient to have determined the supposed Author of the *New Testament* to undertake such a Work.

All the Ends we can imagine the Author of this Extraordinary Performance acted upon, must be either the *Good of Mankind*, his *own particular Interest*, or *Reputation in the World*, or purely the *pleasure of deceiving*, but none of these could have Influence enough to produce such a Work, and therefore we must account for its Original some other way.

For

For first, it cannot be supposed that some *Virtuous Good Man*, who endeavoured, as far as he was able, to live up to those Rules we find delivered in the *New Testament*, should, out of pure Zeal for the *Welfare* and *Interest of Mankind*, Publish such a Scheme of Living, as is there laid down, under the grossest form of *Imposture* imaginable; it could never enter into the thoughts of such a Man as this, to recommend *Simplicity*, *Truth* and *Integrity* by the most solemn variety of *Lyes* and *Falshoods* that ever were invented: He that was concern'd to establish a *Form of sound Words*, who represents all manner of *Lying*, *Deceit* and *Dissimulation* as utterly inconsistent with that *Model of Religion* he was setting up, and who strictly forbids all Men to do Evil that Good might come of it; a Person, I say, of this Character, who was in earnest, and thoroughly perswaded of the truth of the Principles he recommended, cannot be imagined to have acted directly contrary to them *himself*, in order to have them *Believed* and *Observed* by others.

'Tis true indeed *Fables* and *Parables* have been often made use of as very proper

proper and easie means of conveying good Instructions to Mankind; but the *History of the New Testament* is too Particular and Circumstantial to be reckoned an *Allegory*, and therefore there is no occasion to prove it none; so that if the Principal Matters of Fact Recorded in the *New Testament* are not *true*, according to the first obvious *literal* meaning of them, the whole Relation must be a downright *Forgery*, and consequently could not be the Work of an *Honest Man* invented by him merely for the good of *Mankind*.

The possibility of which Supposition can no ways be accounted for by the many *Forged* and *Supposititious* Writings, Published by some of the *first Christians*, in favour of that Religion; for, considering only those which made for the *Christian Religion in General*, and may seem to have been contrived purely for the Propagation of it among such whose Condition was lookt upon as very Miserable, by reason of their Ignorance or Disbelief of *Christianity*; whatever of this Nature was Forged by any *Christians* was not really done upon any *good Motive*, but proceeded from too passionate a Concern for the Party they were of, and the Opinions they

they had undertook to defend: When the Enemies of their Religion stood out against all the *true rational* Proofs urged for it, an eager desire of convincing those they Disputed with, and doing Honour to their own Cause and Management of it, put them upon *inventing* such things as by the Temper or Concessions of their Adversaries were likelier to prevail with them. This I take to be the true Spring and Cause of most of those *False* and *Spurious* Writings which were designed for the advantage of the *Christian Cause in General*, the *Forgeries* that were contrived for the defence of some *Particular Doctrine* proceeding most commonly from a worse Original. But 'tis very evident, that the first *Invention* and *Publication* of the *whole Christian Scheme* could not be owing to the Influence of any such Principle or Motive as is before mentioned; and if it had, the *Inventer* and *Publisher* could not have been a *Good Man*, that was so Influenced, nor such a good Man as we suppose acted upon a pure disinterested Principle of *Love to Mankind*.

And if it should be further Objected, that 'tis very probable some *honest well-meaning Christians* were guilty of the like indirect

Practices

Practices, as well as others, and that purely out of Love and Compassion to Mankind, for no other End and Design, but to bring over as many as they could to the belief of that Religion which they were persuaded would make them happy; the Answer to this is very ready and obvious, viz. That these were very plain simple Men, as manifestly appears by those Circumstances whereby their Forgeries were discovered; their great Zeal for the Salvation of their Brethren was without Knowledge, and they were ignorant of the Nature and Power of that Religion they sought to Propagate, as imagining such well-intended Frauds allowable. But the Author of the *New Testament*, if the Work was wholly *Humane*, was certainly a wise knowing Man, his *Forgery*; if it was one, was so well laid and contrived, that nobody has been yet able to find it out; and he cannot be thought to have been so ignorant of the Religion he made himself, as to believe that to be lawful which he had expressly forbid; and therefore we may certainly conclude, that if the *Scriptures of the New Testament* were Forged, the Author of them was an *Ill Man* who acted upon some *Private Motive*,

sive, and not out of a true generous Concern for the good of Mankind.

But what *Principle* or *Motive* can we imagine strong enough to have disposed an *ill Man* to frame such a Work? Not any *Profit*, *Interest* or *Advantage* that could accrue to him from it. He could not but foresee, that to impose a New Religion upon the World, to change the Ancient Laws and Customs of Nations, to Condemn and Expose to Contempt, what the Wisest and most Powerful part of Mankind had in Veneration, to disturb Men in the Possession of Advantageous Errors and Prejudices, and to put a Restraint upon their most agreeable Passions and Inclinations: This, I say, he must needs foresee, would be an attempt too difficult to be manag'd without the most violent Opposition imaginable, and too great to be effected in his Days. 'Twas hardly possible, I think, for a Man of Common Sense, to persuade himself such a design as this should succeed at all; but much more inconceivable, that he should imagine Things should be carried on so smoothly and easily, that he should live to enjoy
the

the Fruits of his Labour; and a *future Reward in another Life*, could have no antecedent Influence upon him, who is supposed to Invent the Notion, or at least, to inforce it upon others, without having any good Reason to believe it himself.

And as it must be acknowledged, 'twas very easie to foresee the many Troubles and Difficulties that would attend the Establishment of *Christianity*; so 'tis plain, that the *Author of the New Testament*, whoever he was, understood very well, what the Natural Consequences of such an Attempt were, as appears by the large Representation he makes of the manifold Sufferings and Afflictions which beset all the first *Publishers* and *Preachers* of the *Christian Religion*, and those who embrac'd the Doctrines they taught.

It must be likewise confessed, That if any of those mentioned in the *New Testament*, as concern'd in *Publishing* or *Preaching* what is there call'd the *Gospel*, did really *Suffer such things* as are there Written of them, for endeavouring to persuade people to believe such *Wonderful Facts* and *Doctrines* as we now find Recorded in that Book, which some of them had before invented, and afterwards

caused

caused to be written, together with the Account of their own Sufferings: If this, I say, be supposed, then it must be granted, That the Event was every way answerable to the *Prospect* which we have seen the *Author of the Christian Scheme* must have had before him when he was upon that Design; and which soever of these Persons we ascribe the Work to, we must be convinced, that he did, by no means, consult his own Interest in it.

But if some *unknown Person* was the *Author* of the *New Testament*, and the *whole History* of it is *pure Fiction*, as must be allowed in the Supposition we are at present concerned to disprove, then is it utterly impossible to find out what Advantage he could propose to himself by a Performance of this Nature. I cannot conceive, for the Reasons before given, that he should design any Interest of his own at all in it; and his being unknown, is no small Argument that the Advantages gained, whatever they were, were too inconsiderable a Recompence for such a noble, well-invented Scheme. as he has given us in the *Scriptures of the New Testament*.

S

'Twas

'Twas not then for any *Private Interest* or *Advantage* assignable by us, That any Person, who thought fit to conceal himself, could frame and contrive the *New Testament*; and much less can it be supposed, that a *desire of Reputation* put him upon such a Work, since he has taken such effectual care to suppress his own Name, and attribute the Glory of his Invention to another.

Nothing therefore remains, but that we say 'twas purely *the pleasure of deceiving*, which occasioned the writing that Book: But this is as unlikely and insufficient a Cause of such an Effect, as any of the other before mentioned: For the *secret Pleasure of deceiving*, without the *Reputation* which is wont to attend an artful Deceiver, could never work so strongly, as to produce any thing of that *excellent Skill* and *Contrivance in the making*, and of such *mighty tendency in the Consequences* of it as the *Christian Religion* is.

Besides, when a Man acts for no other End, but to *deceive*, his Designs can never be such as serve for the procuring and promoting the *benefit of Mankind*. The pleasure that an ill Man takes

takes in deceiving, is always a *malicious pleasure*, which is raised and heightened by the prospect either of the *Folly* or *Misery* of the deceived. Had *such an Impostor* as this, contrived the *Christian Religion*, he would never have taken the pains to oblige the World with such a *Rational Scheme* of Life, as was never before exhibited, and could never since be mended; he would rather have chose to triumph over the *Ignorance* and *Credulity* of Mankind by giving them *false* and *pernicious Rules of Action*, as well as *monstrous* and *improbable Articles of Belief*; but those who considering the *Christian Facts* and *Doctrines* as meer Imposture, talk of them under that Style, are forced to allow, that the *Christian Morality*, whether it be of *Humane Invention*, or *Divine Revelation*, is certainly the most perfect accomplish'd Piece that was ever declared to Mankind.

There is no other Motive imaginable *the Author of the New Testament*, if it be all a Forgery, could have acted upon; and the insufficiency of those alledged, has been already shewn, and might be further made to appear, if

there were occasion for such an enlargement; But the absurdity and impossibility of the supposed Forgery, appearing more plainly from the following Head, I shall add but one Argument more for the Confirmation of what I have said very briefly upon this.

Now the Argument I shall insist upon, is this; That 'tis utterly inconceivable, that the supposed *Author* and *Contriver* of that Book, could have imagined that such a Scheme of Things, as we there find delivered, should ever come to be believed and established in the World; and without such a Thought and Perswasion of this in the *Author*, we can never account for either the first *Contrivance* or *Publication* of it. Whatever it was that determined him to frame the *Christian Scheme*; whatever End he proposed to himself from his Labour and Skill in making it, he must certainly design that the whole Fiction should be believed by those it was communicated to; otherwise it was impossible for him to compass the End he aimed at: If therefore 'tis certain, That the *first Author* and *Publisher* of the *Christian Religion* did design and intend to have it believed; and

and if he was a Wise, Understanding Man, of great Reach and Sagacity, as the Enemies of his Religion allow, and is very evident from that Rational Draught of *Morality* the World is obliged to him for; then does it plainly follow, That *Christianity* is no *Imposture*, and that the *Books of the New Testament* are not *Forged* and *Invented*.

For how was't possible for a Wise Man to think, that such a Multitude of *strange, unheard of Facts* as are Recorded in the *New Testament*, and made the Foundation of the *Christian Religion*, should be believed without any manner of Proof, or Evidence, of the Truth of them? But if he did not distrust the credibility of the Facts themselves, what could induce him to give such a *particular circumstantial Relation* of them, as submitted them to every Bodies Enquiry and Examination, and made the discovery of their Falshood easie and obvious? How could he perswade himself, that such *New and Difficult Doctrines* should be entertained, which no former Notions of Learning or Religion, prepared Men to receive, and which no Discovery or Revelation could make them fully comprehend?

prehend? And how was it possible for him to imagine, That *such Doctrines* and *Facts* as these, should set off and recommend his *Morality* to the World, which considered by it self, is granted to be unexceptionable?

Had the principal Aim and Design of this supposed Impostor, been to establish the *Christian Morality*, he would rather have Published it alone, in the Name of some admired *Prince* or *Philosopher*; or have pretended, by some secret way of conveyance, to have received it from *Heaven*. This, any Man of common Sense, would have judged a likelier Method of getting it believed, than the mixing and blending so many *strange Facts* and *Doctrines* amongst it, and laying the whole Work upon such a Foundation as he knew had no manner of Support from *Reality*.

And, on the other side, had it been his chief Intention to abuse the Credulity of Mankind, by making them believe so many strange and unaccountable Lyes, as are contained in the *History* and *peculiar Doctrines* of *Christianity*, if they are all False, he would have taken care to have made his *Morality* more easie and palatable

ble, and more suited to the common Prejudices and Inclinations of the generality of Mankind, that so the other parts of the Scheme might have been taken down readily, and without Examination, for the sake of this.

But taking the *Christian Religion* altogether, as we now find it, 'tis not to be imagined, that a Wise Man should believe he was able to bring People over to imbrace it; supposing it purely an *Invention* of his own, which he knew had no Foundation in *true Facts*: And therefore there could be *no End* or *Motive* sufficient to Influence him to contrive what he could not believe would ever be received so far, as to answer any End proposed.

But, supposing it possible that there should have been some Man, who was Wise enough to *invent* the *whole Christian Scheme*, as we now find it in the *Scriptures of the New Testament*, and who was at the same time so absurdly foolish, as to think it would be *believed* so far, as to recompence him for the pains of making, and the hazard of Publishing it: Supposing, I say, all this, which to me is perfectly unconceivable, yet the *Books of*

the *New Testament* could not be forged: Because,

2. If the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, had not been true, 'twould have been utterly *impossible*, that the *Christian Religion* should ever have been *believed* and *propagated* in the World, in the manner we find it is at present; which I shall endeavour to prove in the following Method.

That the *Christian Religion*, such as we find delivered in the *Books of the New Testament*, is at present own'd and profess'd in a great part of the World; and that, where-ever this Religion is profess'd, those Books are appeal'd to as the *Rule* and *Standard* of it, as to every thing therein contained, are Truths I shall take for granted.

It is likewise as evident, that there was a Time when there were no such *Books*, or *Religion* known or heard of.

The inquiry then will be *when*, and *how*, the *Christian Religion* came to be Establish'd in the World? In answer to which, it must be allowed, that either the *Books of the New Testament* were written
first,

first, and the *Christian Religion* Propagated from them; or the *Doctrines* therein contained, were spread first by Preaching and Conversation, and afterwards committed to Writing: But whichever of these Suppositions we take, the Publication of the *Christian History*, and the *Doctrines* built upon it, cannot possibly be placed above the Times mentioned in the *New Testament*; because there are abundance of Names, and other Circumstances allowed to be true, which could not be known before without a *Spirit of Prophecy*, which *Imposture* has nothing to do with.

In the Account the *New Testament* gives of this Matter, the first Scene of the *Imposture*, if the *Christian Religion* be accounted such, is laid at *Jerusalem*, in the time of *Tiberius Cesar*, and consequently the Period fix'd upon for first acquainting the World with what is pretended to have happen'd then at *Jerusalem* must be at, or near that time, or at some distance since. Let us consider this great Event in all these different Periods, and see what the Success will be.

In the first place then, let us suppose the *Christian Religion* Invented and Published
at

at *Jerusalem* in the *Reign of Tiberius Cesar*: 'Tis plain the way of Propagating the belief of it must have been by *Writing* or *Preaching*; if the Work was begun by *Writing*, it must be by some of the *Gospels*, none of the other Books of the *New Testament* can be pretended to be then *Written* without *Prophecy*: But whether it were by one or more of the *Gospels*, or by *Preaching* the things contained in them, 'twas absolutely impossible such a Scheme of *Falshood* should be *believed* by those who by an *Infallible Conscience* must know it to be so; or be *spread*, *propagated* and *defended* by those who did not believe it themselves, in places where every body was as capable and certain a *Judge* of the *Cheat* as they.

Was not there such a *Man as Christ*? Did he not, in all appearance maintain such a *Character*? Did he not pretend to such *Discoveries*, and *Wonderful Works*, and did he not really *Suffer* such things upon account of his *Pretences*, as we find *Recorded* in those Books call'd the *Gospels*? All this must be granted in the present *Supposition*, which fixes the *real Publication* of that Religion, we now profess, at the same date we find mentioned in the

New

New Testament: And if it be allowed that these *Facts* were true, then does it certainly follow that all the *Pretences* of *Christ* were *real*, for otherwise they could never have been believed, as has been sufficiently proved already, and will more fully appear under another *Head*, where I shall shew the *necessary Connexion* betwixt the truth of the *Common* and the *Extraordinary* *Facts* mentioned in the *New Testament*. But if these *Common Matters of Fact* just now instanced in were false as well as the other, then must the whole *Story* be much more *Ridiculous* and *Incredible*.

If the *Forgery* be dated about *Forty* *Years* lower at some time *near the Destruction of Jerusalem*, then must we take in the *Acts of the Apostles* and the other *Books* of the *New Testament* into our *Account*, which will render the difficulty of believing the *Christian Religion* much greater: For here we have abundance of *New Matters of Fact* to believe as *strange* as those in the *Gospels*, and as *easy* to be *known* and *disproved*, but vastly more *Numerous*, and *more Publick*, to the truth of which a great many more *Cities* and *Nations* are brought in as *Witnesses*, all which are supposed false and consequently

could

could never obtain Credit in the World at that time.

If the *Christian Religion* was not heard of any where, till *some time after the Destruction of Jerusalem*, how could it possibly be then believed, when its chief Pretence was, that it had been *Published, Believed, and Established in many places long before*, which was palpably and notoriously false? Now that this must be the Pretence upon which the *Christian Religion* was first Founded, whatever Period we suppose, this Event happen'd in *after the Destruction of Jerusalem*, is very plain from the *Nature of the Religion* its self, and the *Manner of its Publication*, which are intirely built upon *Matters of Fact*; so that if the *History of Christianity*, or the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *New Testament* are false, the *whole Religion* must fall: And the *Nature* of those *Facts* 'tis built upon is such, that 'tis imposible for any body to believe them at any distance from the time in which they are affirmed to happen, if they were then first invented, when he is required to believe them.

For, let us fix the Period when we will, how can we imagine that the *History* contained in the *Books of the New Testament* should

should be believed by those who are supposed to live after the Times of all the Transactions therein mention'd, and yet who had never before heard or read of any of them? Can it possibly be thought, that any People would change their Laws and Religion upon such a Story as this, without enquiring into the truth of it? And how could they be satisfied upon enquiry when the supposition of an Imposition makes all other Information, but that of the Publishers utterly impossible? And what reason could there be to believe him, who gives only a positive bare Relation of Matter of Fact, done before his time, which he delivers without any pretence to *Revelation* himself, and without any Authority but his own to confirm the truth of what he endeavours to impose upon the World? Would not these have been every Man's Questions? Why was not the Religion now offered to us imbraced when it was first prescribed to Mankind, with all those wonderful Evidences of its *Divine Original* we are told of? Why were not those strange Facts believed by those that were the immediate Witnesses of them? If they were, and if the *Christian Religion* spread

spread and increased upon the Credit of them (as is affirmed, and if the Miracles were true, must needs be allow'd) How came it to pass that neither We nor our Forefathers ever heard of these things, and that we have no History or Monuments of them remaining? How should such a New Religion as this, Establish'd upon the evidence of Sense, and Propagated by vast Multitudes of Professors, be quite lost and worn out of the memory of Men already? How came you that Publish it to be the only Person that could recover the Knowledge of it? What reason have you now to believe what has been laid aside by those, who, by being nearer the Original, were better Judges of the truth of it? And what Authority have you to receive it, and enjoyn Mankind the belief of it? These were Questions which an Impostor could never give any Answer to; and without satisfaction in these Matters, so great and wise a part of Mankind as are now, and were formerly throughly perswaded of the truth of the *Christian Religion* could not voluntarily lay aside all their ancient Prejudices and Engagements, and imbrace a *New Religion*, with all the dangerous
Consequences

Consequences that they knew must attend such a change.

It is therefore manifestly absurd, to suppose there ever were any Men Foolish and Impudent enough to Publish a false History of Matters of Fact, pretended to be done just before the Publication, and in the very Place where the Scene is laid, within the immediate Cognizance of all the People to whom the Relation is directed; and if there were any such Pretenders, 'tis impossible to think there should be any People so Stupid, as to believe they themselves saw and heard such Things as were never said or done among them, and this purely upon the Information of others, without which they had remained intirely ignorant of them; from whence it necessarily follows, that *the Christian Scheme* could not be Published *at the Time 'tis dated at*, if it were meer *Forgery* and *Invention*.

It is likewise very ridiculous and irrational to imagine, that a long series of *Publick Notorious Facts*, said to be done in the presence of great Multitudes of all sorts of Persons in different Countries and Nations; the Consequences of which, are pretended to be very great
and

and concerning to all Mankind; and which, by the Credit they had obtained, and the Opposition that had been made to them, had occasioned mighty Changes and Alterations in the World: 'Tis very absurd, I say, to maintain that such Facts as these, which never happen'd at all, should at any distance, from the Time in which they are pretended to have happen'd, ever come to be generally believed, in, or near those Places they are appropriated to, barely upon the Authority of their Publication; when those that were supposed to believe them, can have no other Reason for their Faith but this, That some body had the confidence to Publish a strange, unheard of Story: And if there be any absurdity in this supposition, 'tis impossible the *Christian Religion* should have been first Promulg'd *any time after* the Period assign'd for its Publication in the *New Testament*; because it was impossible it should ever have been believed, as it now is, if it had.

A great deal more might be said to prove the *Christian Religion* no *Imposture*, and to expose the gross absurdity of such a Supposition; but I do not think it necessary

cessary to enlarge upon this Point, both because I have, in a great measure, prevented my self in the direct Proofs I have before given of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*; which, with a different manner of Application, would serve the same purpose here; and because this is thought, by the *Enemies of Christianity* themselves, too weak a Post to defend, and is rarely insisted upon by them, any further than as *Trick, Cheat, and Imposture* are odious discrediting Names, which serve to blacken the Cause they want Arguments to overthrow.

The chief strength of *Modern Infidelity*, or, as its Favourers and Professors delight to call it, *Deism*, consists in a great many loose Objections, levelled against something or other in the *Scriptures*, without any *certain aim*, without any relation to a *Scheme* or *Hypothesis* to account for all standing Appearances, and without any regular Deduction of *Consequences* from what is Objected, or *Answer* to contrary Proofs.

But, before I enter upon a particular Examination of these Objections, it is to be

T

be

be observed, that they are directed indifferently against any part of the *Scriptures* of the *Old* or *New Testament*; and therefore I shall think my self obliged to consider them only so far as they are made use of, or intended to lessen the certainty of *Divine Revelation in General*, or of the truth either of the *Jewish* or *Christian Religion*, both which we pretend, and undertake to maintain, *did come from God*.

I have not indeed given a particular Proof of the *Jewish Revelation*, because it is supposed in the *Christian*, and confirmed by it; and therefore what proves the Latter must establish the Former: But if any Man will take a short view of the *Jewish Revelation*, as we find it delivered in the Books of the *Old Testament*, and impartially consider the *Nature, Variety* and *Number* of the *Facts* there Recorded; the *Relation* and *Connexion* they have to one another; the *Time* and *Manner* in which they were Recorded; the *Ways* and *Methods* of preserving the memory of them; together with the *Characters* and *Circumstances* of all the *Persons* concern'd in them; He will never be able to doubt but the *Principal Matters of*
Fact

Fact mentioned in the *Old Testament* were true; it being impossible to conceive they should have been *Forged*, either *altogether* or *separately*, since they are the Foundations of all the *Jewish Religion* and *Policy*, and are of such a nature that we cannot suppose any time when the *Forgery* should begin without a discovery of it; which would appear more evidently if we applied all the *Characters of Truth* and *Divinity*, remarkable in the *Christian Revelation* to the *Jewish*; but such a *Repetition* being altogether unnecessary in its self, and without the bounds of my present Subject, I shall immediately proceed to examine the *Deist's* Objections to *Scripture* and *Revelation*.

Now the summ of what they have to say, which has not been already particularly considered, tends to shew that the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* mentioned in the *Scriptures* (allowing the Accounts there given of the *Facts* to be true) are no Proofs of a *Divine Revelation*; and that there are a great many such *Faults* observable in the *other parts of Scripture* as prove the whole to be a pure *Humane Composure*.

What they object against *Miracles* being used as an Argument to prove a Doctrine *Revealed from God* is, that it Derogates from the *Nature* and *Perfection of God* to work *Miracles*; and that the *Regular Frame of the World*, with a constant unalterable Connexion of Causes and Effects in it, gives us a truer and juster Idea of God, and is a better Argument of his Being, than any *Extraordinary Interposition of Providence*, which alters and perverts the course of Nature: To which I answer.

First, That I cannot see how it Derogates from *God*, to suppose his immediate Interposition in some Cases, or how his working of *Miracles* is a perverting of the Course of Nature, any more than it Derogates from the *Soul*, or the *Soul* perverts the Course of Nature, when by a Thought it changes or stops the Motion of the Animal Spirits, which according to their usual course would have moved otherwise: When the *Soul* exercises this Power over the *Body*, the *Sinews* and *Bones* continue as they were, and so do the bulk and principal parts of *Nature* for all *Miracles*. *God* does not order Men to be born of Beasts, nor change Beasts
into

into Men, nor create New Suns, nor annihilate any Systems of Matter to work *Miracles*; but by a Thought he separates or unites the insensible parts of Matter, he stops, retards, or quickens their Motion, or alters their Figures: This is *God's* common Method of working *Miracles*.

But, in the next place, what if we should say that *God* did every thing by an *immediate Will*? What if we affirm'd that he often Created some Beings and Destroyed others, that he changed the Laws of Motion, and suspended the Effects of it? None of these ways of acting can Derogate from *God*, forasmuch as they cannot be proved, either to imply a *Contradiction* in themselves, to be *inconsistent with the Happiness of God*, or to be *repugnant to the Goodness or Justice of his Dealings* with his *Intelligent Creatures*. These are the true and only *Measures* of all the other Notions we frame of the *Perfections of the Divine Nature*: And therefore when we say *God* cannot act *contrary to Nature*, we must mean it in one of these Senses, either that he cannot act what is a *Contradiction in it self*, or what is *contrary to his own Nature*, or to the *Nature* he has
T 3 given

given his *Intelligent Creatures*: But when any Changes or Alterations in *Material Beings*, consistent with the fore-mention'd Principles are said to be *contrary to Nature*, that is only a popular Expression which signifies that the course of things is different from what it constantly appeared to us before: but no colour of reason can possibly be given either from the *Properties of Body*, or the *Constancy of Appearance*, why such a change should not be made by God.

That *Miracles* are not, in their own Nature, a better proof of the *Being of God*, than the *standing Frame* and *regular Order* and *Disposition of things* is certain; but if the generality of Men are apt to *forget God*, notwithstanding they are surrounded with so many visible Evidences of his Being, Why is it not agreeable to the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God to raise and excite their Attention by new and surprizing Manifestations of his *Power*; the impression of which would be much livelier and stronger than those they received from a constant Repetition of the same appearances? But 'tis not to prove a *God* or *Providence*, or the *first General Principles of Natural Religion*, that *Miracles* are

are urged; these things are all so plain and easie, without such a confirmation, that they are altogether without excuse who do not believe them or act contrary to their belief; but when Men are *lost* and *gone out of the way*, and are *become altogether Corrupt*; when *through Blindness* and *Ignorance* they know not how to *serve God aright*, and when those who use their endeavours to do it can have no assurance of being accepted; if in compassion to this sad and distressed Estate of Mankind God is pleased to *reveal* himself to them, and acquaint them with a true and certain way to Happiness, which they were not able to find out of themselves, what Perfections of God is it contrary to to make such a discovery to his Creatures? And how could he take a more effectual way to convince them of the truth of the *Revelation* than by *Miracles*, which are *real Effects* of *Divine Power*, and which Men are readily disposed to acknowledge as *Infallible Signs* and *Indications* of it? If these were the *Works of God*, and might certainly be known to be so, as has already been proved in the former part of this Discourse, then were they very fit and proper Proofs that the Doctrine they

were intended to confirm *came from God*, though they were not brought about by an *immediate Interposition*, but were part of the *General Scheme of Nature*. And therefore, though it should be allowed to be a Derogation to God to make him the Author of those Works we call *Miracles*, by a *present and immediate exercise of his Power*; yet it can be no diminution to any of his Perfections to affirm, that *originally* at the beginning of the World, he ordered such Effects to proceed from the *General Laws of Nature*, at such a time, that they might be for *Signs and Tokens* to Mankind, that the *Revelation* which should then be given them came from him,

Another Objection made to the Argument of *Miracles* is, that *Miracles* have been wrought by other Men, as well as *Moses* and *Christ*, and as great as those that were Recorded of them; from whence it is inferred, that the *Doctrines* they taught are never the truer for their Working *Miracles*: To which I Answer, that the *Matter of Fact* is *none of it sufficiently attested*; a *great deal* of it manifestly *false*; and were it all true, the

the *Inference* drawn from it *does not hold*.

To make good this Charge, I shall instance in the *Miracles* attributed to *Vespasian* and *Apollonius Tyanæus*, which have been particularly made use of by the Enemies of our *Religion* to lessen the Credit and Authority of it.

Of *Vespasian* it is Recorded, That he once cured two Blind Men; but the strange and wonderful Works of *Apollonius*, fill a Book writ on purpose to give an account of them. Now as to *Vespasian's* Cure of the Blind, 'tis but one *single Miracle*, and therefore is very unjustly compared with that *Multitude of mighty Works* that were wrought by the Hands of *Christ*; neither is it so well attested, but Reasons may be given why it should be false, notwithstanding the reality of all the appearing Circumstances of it: Several Inducements might be alledged, that very probably disposed this Emperor to pretend to such a *Miracle*; 'tis very easie to conceive how his Design might be brought about in the Presence of a great many People without their discovering the Cheat; and, should any have found it out, 'tis very

very obvious to imagine why they did not Publish it: But nothing of all this would hold when applied to Christ, had he pretended to no more than the Cure of two Blind Men: A Man of his Character and Condition in the World, could not promise himself any Honour, Respect, or Advantage from such a Pretence; and should he have made this use of it, he would very probably have raised the Envy of all the People of the same Rank, and the Jealousie of his Superiors; upon these, and other Motives, as well as Natural Curiosity, a great many would have been very Induttrious and Inquisitive in searching into the Truth of the Fact; and whom can we imagine so far concern'd for such a Pretender, as to be privy or assisting to his Cheat at the first, or to conceal his shame after they had found it out: But, supposing an Account could be given in one or two Instances, how 'twas possible for *Christ* to pretend to such Works as were never done; there are abundance still remaining upon Record, that are manifestly incapable of such a Solution; which puts an unanswerable difference betwixt *the Miracles of Christ*, and the *Pretences of other Men*.

As

As to the Story of *Apollonius*, the whole Credit of it depends upon the Testimony of one single Author, who lived too long after him to be a competent Witness of the Truth of what he Relates, and was too Credulous and Partial to be believed if he had lived at the same time with him. The strange unusual Things Related to have been done by this *Apollonius*, bear no Proportion to the Miracles of *Christ*, either as to the *Number* of the Facts and Persons concern'd in them; the Wonderful and Extraordinary *Nature* of them, the beneficial Design of them, or the publick and hazardous *Manner* in which they were done; and a great many of these have been proved to be false upon examination, from the manifest inconsistencies and contradictions in the Relation of them.

But supposing the Miracles attributed to *Vespasian* and *Apollonius* were true in Fact, what Reasons can we alledge, either from the *Characters* of the pretended Authors, the *Ends* and *Designs* they acted upon, the *Consequences* and *Effects* of the Pretences, or from any other *Circumstances* of their Story, that the strange Things Recorded

Recorded of them, were not done by the Ministry of *Evil Spirits*?

Let us suppose farther, That the Facts were not only *real*, but true and proper *Miracles*, performed by the *express* and *immediate Assistance of God*; What can be inferred from thence? Not that the *Heathen Religion* was true; because these *Miracles* were not design'd or intended for a Confirmation of it: Not that the *Christian Religion* was purely *Humane*; because the whole End of *Christ's* working *Miracles* was to prove that his *Doctrine came from God*. There may be several Reasons given why it may please *God* sometimes to work *Miracles* indifferently by the Hands of *good* or *ill* Men, Men of a *true* or *false Religion*; but it cannot possibly be supposed of *God*, that he should employ *Good Men*, or concur with the *Wicked*, in working *Miracles*, in order to their *deceiving Mankind*, and establishing a *Lye* by such Evidence as cannot be disproved; and no Instance can be given where any one *true Miracle* was wrought by a Person that made use of it to prove any other *Doctrine* by, than what we have delivered in the *Scriptures*. By a *true Miracle* I mean such as is *as well attested*

attested to have been done as those Recorded in the *Scriptures*, and can *no more be accounted for*, without the *Power of God*, than they can; many of which I will allow to have been done upon other occasions, without any Application of them to the advantage of the *Religion* of those that performed them.

'Tis true indeed many *Signs* and *Wonders* may have been wrought for the Confirmation of false *Doctrines*, and may have deceived many whom *Simplicity* and *Bigotry* to the Cause they made for disposed to entertain them; but we have no Records of any such ill-intended *Miracles* left, which by the *Nature, Circumstances, Effects, or Attestation* of them, can dispose a rational Man to ascribe them to *God*. And, whatever Pretences of this kind there may have been, 'tis a very good Argument that the World can distinguish betwixt the *wonderful Works of God*, and the *little Feats of Men* and *Evil Spirits*; That there are now no *Opinions* or *Doctrines* whatsoever remaining, besides what are contained in the *Jewish* and *Christian Revelations*; nor any particular *Explications* of, or *Deductions* from them, which were at first Believed

Believed and Propagated upon the Strength and Authority of *strange and wonderful* Facts *publickly and really* done for that end.

The next Intimation made use of to overthrow the Truth of the *Scripture-Revelation* concerns the *Prophecies* which make a great part of it: And this, as well as the first Objection against *Miracles*, is wholly new, the Invention of these latter Days, wherein the Improvements of rational Knowledge have forced the Patrons of Irreligion upon new Absurdities. Now the Argument, as far as 'tis capable of being expressed in such a form, is this, That the *Prophecies of the Old Testament*, upon which the *Christian Religion* is principally built, proceeded from Impressions made upon the *Imaginations* of the *Prophets*; which Impressions were always agreeable to their several *Temper*s, *Complexions* and *Opinions*; from whence it must be inferr'd that such Visionary Scenes, and Figurative Expressions as these Prophecies are delivered in, could be attributed to *God* only in a *popular way*, as all other extraordinary and unusual Events were, and therefore cannot be made

made use of to prove a *Divine Revelation*, because they proceeded wholly from *Natural Causes* though unknown to us.

But, whatever of this nature is advanced by *Spinoza*, or whatever Inferences are drawn from it by others, who apply it further than he durst openly assert, nothing can be concluded from his Account of *Prophecy* to the Prejudice of the *Scripture-Revelation*; were all his Observations upon this Subject true, as 'tis manifest to any one that reads the Bible, they are not. For supposing all he says upon this Head were true, *viz.* That the *Prophets* were Persons of *livelier Imaginations* than others, (as 'tis plain of some of them that they were not) That the *Angry, Chearful* or *Melancholy Prophet* always Prophesied things *suitable to his particular Temper* (as there are several Instances to be given to the contrary) and that the *Jews* had a pious way of *Attributing every thing strange or unusual to God*, &c. What if all these things were so as *Spinoza* observes? The Knowledge which these *Angry, Chearful, &c.* Prophets, of lively Imaginations had of *Future Things* must be allowed to *come from God*, in a *different manner* from that whereby they received

received all their other Knowledge, as *Spinoza* himself plainly owns; and if it be so, 'tis a very good Argument that the *Doctrines* Preached by those Prophets were delivered to them *by God* also, *in the same way* that their *Prophecies* were; which is sufficient to inforce the *Obligation* of them upon us, whatever *Natural Causes* God was pleased to make use of in the *Revelation*; and that is all we contend for, or are concern'd to maintain.

This is all that either the *Ancient* or *Modern Enemies* of the *Christian Religion* had, or can have to object to the *Miracles* and *Prophecies* Recorded in the *Bible*; excepting what has been already Answered in the direct proof that was given of the Truth of them.

The other parts of *Scripture* are charged with almost all the Faults which any *Humane Writing* is capable of, *viz.*

Contradictions to Reason and Philosophy.

Contradictions of one part to another.

Mistakes as to the Authors of the Books, Connexion of the Parts, Chronology, Geography, &c.

Ridiculous and Improbable Stories.

Abfurd

Abfurd and Irrational Laws and Injunctions.

Trifling and Impertinent Reasons and Arguments.

Low and Unartful Language.

The Injustice of which Objections I shall shew very briefly, as lying very open and obvious.

As to *Contradictions to Reason and Philosophy* pretended to be in the *Scriptures*, nobody has been acute enough yet, or sufficiently instructed in the true System of things to make good this Charge. We have lived to see several *New Schemes, Hypotheses* and *Theories* of the World Confuted and Exploded; but the *Plainest, Simplest*, and *most Demonstrative Account of Nature* that is now extant, is found to be the *most agreeable to Scripture*, and answers all the Ancient Blasphemies against *Providence* which were grounded upon false *Hypotheses* then in Reputation.

But, after all, the *Scriptures* were not written to teach us *Philosophy*: If this had been the Design of them, no doubt but we had had a *truer Scheme of Knowledge* than any Philosopher has been yet able to give us; but then 'tis certain we should have

U

has

had *much less Religion*, if that and our *Philosophy* had been revealed to us together:

Had the *Language of Scripture* been every where adapted to the *true Nature of Things*, 'tis hard to conceive how it should ever have come to be believed. For, supposing these Notions to be true; That *the Earth moves*; That *the Sun is a Hundred thousand times bigger than the Earth*; That *the Moon and the other Planets are inhabited*; That *Beasts are senseless Machines, and meer Clock-work*, and the like: And supposing all the popular Expressions of *Scripture* concerning such Matters were changed, and suited to these Notions, would not all the *Learned* part of Mankind, who lived before these new Discoveries in *Nature* were made, have been apt to reject the whole *Revelation* as absurd, and unphilosophical? But if some of the *Learned* had been so sensible of their Ignorance of *Nature* and the *Power of God*, as to make all the *Prejudices of their Reason*, Submit to their *Faith*, 'tis hardly possible to imagine how *the People* should ever have been induced to believe such Opinions as shock those *Common Natural* Notions they have of Things, which come to them without teaching, and Opinions that

that will always seem to contradict their *Senses*. The greatest Evidence of *Miracles* would not be sufficient to convince the People of the Truth of such Notions as those before-mention'd; for though strange and wonderful Things which they *actually* and *certainly perceive* come to pass, may satisfy them, that as strange Things as these *may happen hereafter*; yet even such Signs and Wonders as these which they *see*, can hardly be supposed to convince them, that there are *at present* other strange Things which they *do not see*, and which they believe their *Senses* as capable Judges of, as of those which they *do see*.

But whether the *Scriptures* were believed in this Case by few or more, those who had not been disposed to like them, would have had greater, and more unanswerable Objections to make to them from *Reason and Philosophy*, than our present Unbelievers have: How could a faithful Christian who lived before *Copernicus* and *Des Cartes* have defended the *Philosophy of the Scriptures* against such as rejected the forementioned Notions, and exposed them as ridiculous and absurd? The bare Authority of the *Revelation* without the

Assistance of all our Modern *Experiments* and *Observations*, would have been less effectual to convince Gainfayers *then*, than it is *now*; because the Opinions *contrary* to the *Doctrines of Scripture* then would have been more easie and popular, than those *contained in Scripture*; and therefore if the *Scripture Notions* were not true, no Reason could be given why they should be there: For it could not *then* be said, as it is very justly and properly *now* in several Cases, that the *Expressions of Scripture* were suited to the common Notions of the People who were to read them: from whence it follows, that the *appearing Falseness* of the Opinions above-mentioned, if they had been found in *Scripture*, would have been a more puzzling Objection to the Christians of former Times, than the *allowed Falseness* of the Common Vulgar Notions of Philosophy, which the *Scriptures* are at present charg'd with, can be to us.

And what we suppose of the *Times before Copernicus*, would hold good of the *present* upon the like Tryal: For it is not to be contested, but there are a great many other true Notions in *Philosophy* hitherto unknown to us, which upon the first

first discovery, would appear as shocking, and contrary to all our former Knowledge, as the *Motion of the Earth, the Planetary Worlds, &c.* did to our Predecessors; and were these delivered in our *Bibles*, as we have supposed the other to be, they would furnish as much^r matter of Cavil to our Modern, and all succeeding *Scepticks*, as those would have done to the Philosophers of former Ages, till further Experience had reconciled them to their Reason; which could never be expected in all Points: For, had every Thing the *Scripture* has occasion to mention, been expressed according to the *true Philosophy* of it, the whole Race of Mankind could never make *Experiments* and *Observations* enough to satisfy themselves of the Truth of all the *Scripture-Notions*, without the *Authority of the Revelation*, as long as the World indures.

But beside this *general Defence* of the *Philosophy of Scripture*, it may be said, that several seeming *Contradictions to Reason*, which the Enemies of our Religion have laid a great stress upon, have been proved to be *true* and *consistent* by Learned Men, and some of them that were capable of it, *Mathematically demonstrated*? As

The same Thing may be answered to the next Objections made to *Scripture*, viz. That several Places which seem'd to contradict one another, have been plainly reconciled, and several things which have been look'd upon as *Mistakes*, as to the *Authors of the Books*, *Connexion of the Parts*, *Chronology*, *Geography*, &c. have been clearly proved to be none, by those who have particularly undertook the Examination of these Difficulties: And as to those Places which do not admit of such a Solution, all the Faults and Defects they are charged with, are wholly owing to the *Tradition* and *way of Conveyance* which was purely *Humane*, and were not in the *Original Revelation* which we say was *Divine*, and have proved to be so by many incontestable Evidences.

Allowing therefore, that the *Text of the Scriptures*, like that of other Books, hath received some alterations by *Time* and *variety of Copies*; That some of the *Rolls or Sheets of the Old Testament* have been misplaced; that some Things have been inserted afterwards; Words and Sentences have been left out, Letters have been changed, and other *Mistakes* have

have been made by *Transcribers*: That some of the Books, or some parts of them are ascribed to wrong Authors; and that it has been much controverted, whether some of them should be admitted into the *Canon*: Should we, I say, allow all this, I do not see what use could be made of it, to the prejudice either of the *Truth* or *Divinity* of the *Jewish and Christian Revelations*. For *variety of Copies* from whence all the alterations of the *Text* proceed, are a very great Argument of the *Sincerity* and *Importance* of the *Original*, as being the best Preservative against all Corruption in the Substance and *principal parts* of it: And the *Controverted Books* only shew what care and faithful Examination there was of every Book, before it was admitted into the *Canon*.

But, to give all the force and weight to these Objections which they can possibly have; should we reject all *Controverted Books* and *Passages* whatsoever, and should we establish *any Reading* we please where there is variety, only letting the *authentick, undoubted Places* be the Rule of Exposition to the *doubtful* (than which nothing can be more reasonable) in this Case I dare affirm, that not *one Article of Faith* or

Rule of Practice, or any of the principal *Facts* our Religion is built upon, would be cut off, but might be as evidently proved from *what remains uncontested* as from the whole. It does not therefore follow from those *Changes* and *Alterations* that have crept into the *Scriptures* since they were deposited in the hands of Men to keep, or the *Contests* they have had about the *Authority* of some parts of them, that what remains *unaltered* and *uncontested*, is not *true* and of *Divine Original*; because God has no where promised to exempt the Books, in which his *Revelations* to Man are preserved, from the accidents common to other Books.

Nay further, should we allow what some have the confidence to assert, That the *Sacred Writers themselves* were liable to the same Mistakes as other Men are, in the Relation of Matters of Fact from *their own Memories*, or the *Information of credible Witnesses*; it cannot be concluded from hence, that any of the *principal Facts* which make a necessary part of *our Religion* are false: Because these were all so *very extraordinary* and *notorious*, and so *impossible to be believed*, or pass'd by *without Censure* and *Contradiction*, if they could

could have been denied, that had the *Authors* of the *Books of Scripture* had no *peculiar Assistance from God* in the Composition of them, we can have no manner of Reason to disbelieve or question the Truth of any Thing of the *Substance* and *principal Parts* either of the *History* or *Doctrine* there delivered: For supposing those we call the *Sacred Writers* were not *Divinely inspired* (as we believe they were;) yet were they *capable*, and *faithful Witnesses* of what they write; and did not this appear to us from their *Way* and *Manner of Writing*, and from the *Testimony of others* concerning them, yet are the Accounts they give us of *such a Nature*, and Writ at *such Times*, that 'tis impossible they should ever have been *believed*, if they had not been *true*; from whence it follows, That the *History of the Scriptures* must be *true*, and the *Doctrines* they contain, *given by Divine Inspiration*, though the *Persons* that Recorded the *wonderful Works* and *Revelations of God* were not *Divinely assisted* in the same manner in the *Writing*, as they themselves, or others they write of, were in the first *Preaching* and *Publishing the Will of God*.

As to the remaining Objections to *Scripture*, viz. *Ridiculous* and *Improbable Stories*, *absurd Laws* and *Injunctions*, *Impertinent Reasons* and *Arguments*, *low* and *unartful Expressions*: All those will admit of one common Answer, and are easily and justly accountable for, from our *Ignorance* of the *Language* in which the *Scriptures*, and especially those of the *Old Testament* were writ, *Ancient Customs* and *Usages* in *speaking* and *acting*, and the *Temper* and *Circumstances* of the *People* where the Things were said and done.

The *Wisdom* of all *Laws* and *Institutions*, is to be judg'd of by the *Temper* and *Circumstances* of the *Persons* for whom they were made, particularly at the *Time* when they were made.

The *Eloquence* and *Propriety* at all *Discourses*, and the *Force* and *Weight* of *Arguments* depend likewise upon the *Character* of the *Persons* the *Discourses* were directed to, or intended for; and their *peculiar Disposition* and *Circumstances* at such and such *Times*.

Ridiculous and *absurd* are *arbitrary* and *relative Terms*, and vary according to the *different Notions* of the *Persons* that use them,

them, there being several Things, which to some appear *absurd* and *ludicrous*, which considered by others in different *Circumstances*, appear *proper* and *grav*.

From these Considerations, might all the particular Things objected under the forementioned Heads be answered, as a great many of them have been already, were we thoroughly instructed in those Matters which are absolutely necessary, in order to make any Judgment upon the Things in question, which at this distance from the first delivery of them, is in several Cases impossible.

But in defect of such Information as is necessary to give a *clear* and *particular* Account of all the Passages of *Scripture* excepted against by *Prophane* and *Cavilling Men*, 'tis sufficient to say *in general* what has been before unanswerably proved, that all the *principal Matters of Fact* Recorded in the *Holy Writings*, upon which the *Certainty of the Revelation*, and the *Obligations of the Religion* therein contained, are founded, are beyond all exception *true*; for the *Authority* of these, will bear down and over-rule all other *seeming difficulties* that occur in *Scripture*, which are not manifestly inconsistent with the

the first Principles of our Knowledge upon which all our *Faith* as well as *Reason* is grounded.

There are several Relations of Things, in the most approved Books, which I should not believe so readily if they were not supported by the Authority of the rest: But when I have unquestionable proof of the *Veracity* and *Wisdom* of the Writer in some things, I can easily believe other things which he says must be *true* and *wise* though they seem to me *foolish* and *untrue*. And therefore when I am *certainly convinced*, 'tis *God* that speaks, by *Infallible Signs*, and a great part of the Discourse appears to me *worthy of God*, I cannot doubt but all the rest must *proceed from God*, and be *worthy of him*, though it would not appear so without this support. Had the *Bible* came down to us with all the exceptionable Stories and Expressions put together, without the other parts of it, I could not have perceived it belonged to *God*, without many wonderful Signs to confirm it, and I should have been very distrustful of the Signs; but when I am thoroughly convinced of the *Authority of a Testimony* nothing but a *downright Contradiction* would thock my Belief. Did Twelve Men of known Integrity to me, affirm

affirm they heard an *As* or *Serpent* Speak, or any such thing as is Recorded in *Scripture*, I should believe them without any manner of *Scruple* or *Hesitation*; and according to the *Nature* and *Importance* of what was said I should judge it proceeded either from the *secret force of Nature*, or from *Evil Spirits*, or from *God*.

If therefore we are satisfied by undeniable Arguments, that the *Substance* and *Principal parts* of the *Scripture-History* are *true*, and consequently that the *Bible* is the *Word of God*; it necessarily follows, that all the questionable Places of it are capable of such a Solution as is very consistent with the *Wisdom* and *Designs of God*, and with all the *Principles of our Reason*, though we should not be able to give it: And indeed such Answers have been already made to several things which seemed most liable to Exception, that 'tis very easie to conceive how those that are yet unanswered might be Solved, were we furnished with all the Knowledge requisite for such a Performance: But it has not pleased *God* to give us such Light, and it does not seem Repugnant to any thing in the *Divine Nature* to deny it us; and therefore the *Difficulties of Scripture*,

pture, as well as those of *Natural Providence*, may be a proper Exercise of our *Faith*, but are a very unjust and unwarrantable ground of *Infidelity*; since in both he has vouchsafed us such plain and certain Manifestations of himself, as cannot be darkned by all that infinite abyss of Knowledge which is veiled and concealed from us.

I shall not therefore concern my self any further, to give a *particular Answer* to the many minute Objections that are made to *Scripture*; because if the Authority of the *Holy Writings* depended upon the Force or Invalidity of these Objections, in order to prove the Truth of those Writings, every one of them must be distinctly and satisfactorily Answered; and that is plainly impossible, by reason that they cannot all receive their proper Solutions without a through insight into the whole compass of *Humane Knowledge*, which no Man, or Generation of Men, is capable of; and without such a Penetration into the *Ways and Designs of God* as is not attainable but by *Revelation*.

But if it be urged that there are *some particular Objections* which do of themselves, without the assistance of any other Arguments,

guments, overthrow the *Credit and Authority* of the *Scriptures*, these having been never yet alledged, 'tis time enough to give an Answer to them when the whole Cause is put upon that Issue.

But, besides all this, a *particular Answer* to all or any Objections is a needless trouble, because the proof that has been given of the *Christian Revelation* is *sufficient* to Establish the Authority of it, notwithstanding any Objection that can be made to the *Books of Scripture*; which I shall endeavour more fully to make out under the next General Head of *Discourse*.

IV. Forurthly then I shall shew the *Sufficiency* of such a Proof as has before been given by *Matters of Fact*, to induce us to believe the *Christian Religion*, and render us inexcusable if we do not.

Now the *Matters of Fact* I have undertook to prove, lying out of the reach of our *own present Perceptions* and *Memories*, and being not Communicated to us by *Immediate Revelation from God*, we can be informed and assured of the truth of them

no other way than by *Humane Testimony*; the *Connexion of present Appearances with former*; and from the *Nature of things* either in *General*, or the *Particular Facts* in *Question*. If therefore it can be shewn that those *Matters of Fact* which make up the *Christian History*, and upon which the *Christian Religion* is *Founded*, are as well *attested* as any other distant *Facts* whatsoever; that there is as necessary a *Connexion* betwixt them and the present state of things in the *World*, as betwixt the present and any former *Appearances*; and that we have as much assurance both from the *Nature of things in General*, and *these in Particular*, that they are true, as we can have that any thing else is so at a distance from us: If, I say, it can be shewn that the *Proof* before given answers all these *Characters*, then does it evidently follow, that there is as much reason to believe the *Christian Religion*, as there can possibly be to believe any *Matters of Fact* out of the *Notice and Observation of the Living*; and that there are some such *Matters of Fact* as these, which deserve our assent to them, as well as any *Truths* concerning the *real Nature* of things, cannot be questioned.

i. First

i. First, Then as to *Humane Testimony*; What *true Matters of Fact* are there now believed in the *World* which are better attested than the *Christian* are? There is no *History* of former *Times*, now extant, confirm'd by such a *Cloud of Witnesses*, and there never were any *Witnesses* of such unquestionable *Characters*.

We have a great many *Authors* now extant, who had themselves a *Principal Concern* in the *Transactions* they write of; They were all *Persons* of great *Probity* and *Integrity*, of a *disinterested, undesigning Simplicity* of *Manners*, *Men* without *Guile*, and without *Deceit*; They were bred up in a different *Religion* from that they *Recommended* in their *Writings*; They were very much *Prejudiced* against the *Pretences* of their *Master* who came to instruct them in it; They were slow to believe the *Account* he gave of *Himself* and the *Gospel* he *Preached*; and the *Meanness* and *Poverty* of his *Condition* while he *Lived*, the *Scandal* of his *Death*, and the many *Afflictions* and *Dangers* his *Disciples* and *Followers* were exposed to after his

X

Death

Death, were very great Discouragements from imbracing his Doctrine.

The *History* these Persons acquaint us with, consists of such a multiplicity of Publick Notorious Facts, so casie to be known, so curious to be enquired into, and of such vast Consequence and Importance for all Persons to be rightly inform'd in, that every body might have disproved them if they had been False, and every body that did not believe them would have thought himself concern'd to have done it if he could.

After these *first Christian Writers*, we have a large Succession of *other Authors*, who Lived at *different Times*, during the space of Three Hundred Years, and in *several distant Countries* and *Nations* throughout the *Roman Empire*, who do unanimously acquaint us, that Copies of those *first Writers* were carefully preserved in every Place; and who confirm *their Characters*, and the Truth of *their Relation*; which they assure us were every where believed so firmly and heartily, that vast Multitudes of People, in all Places, forsook the Religion they had been bred up in, laid aside the old Laws and

and Customs they had lived by, restrained the Inclinations, and denied the Appetites they had indulged, and conquered inveterate Prejudices and Aversions, in order to comply with the *Doctrine* and *Institution of Christ*, according as it was delivered in the *Scriptures of the New Testament*.

And in the same manner we are informed, that during these Three Hundred Years, all sorts of *Christians* were exposed to great Troubles, Losses and Sufferings, upon account of their Profession; and that abundance of them indured various Tortures, and suffered Death and Reproach, for not renouncing their Faith; of which number were most of the Writers of those Times, of whose Sincerity, Piety, and Diligent Enquiry into the Truth of the *Christian History* and *Revelation*, we have ample Testimonies remaining: Several of them were likewise very Learned Men, of great Fame and Reputation for *Philosophy*, and who would not yeild to the Simplicity of the *Gospel* till over-ruled and bore down by the Irresistible Authority of Matters of Fact well proved and attested. All of them writ at such Times, and in such Places,

X 2

when

when and where every body that read what they had writ, was as capable of informing himself of the Truth and Integrity of the *Christian Tradition* as the Authors themselves were, there being a great many other Writers cited by them, and divers other Monuments and Records appealed to, which were then extant and publickly known.

It is moreover very remarkable, That, during this forementioned Term of 300 Years, while *Christianity* was new, and under Persecution, neither the *Jews* nor *Heathens*, those industrious Enemies and Opposers of the *Gospel*, who were every where mixt with the *Christians*, and were continually Disputing with them: This, I say, is a further confirmation of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*, that not one of all its Ancient Enemies, either *Jew* or *Heathen*, should ever deny or call in question the great and wonderful Facts 'twas built upon; but that several of them should corroborate the *Christian* Accounts by many Circumstances mention'd in their own Writings, as 'tis manifest they have done.

Thus stands the *first* and *earliest* Proof of the *Christian Religion* from *Humane Testimony*;

Testimony; which is further confirmed by an innumerable and continually increasing Company of *Writers*, and the *Constancy* and *Universality* of *Belief* ever since, which, by reason of some Opposition or other, has been, in every Age almost examined over again, and stood the Test of the most Malicious Examination.

2. In the next place then, without considering these *Humane Authorities* in particular, let us examine what *Connexion* there is betwixt the *present State of Christianity* in the World, and the *Ancient History* of it.

That the *Christian Religion* is now own'd and professed in a great many Countries; that, where-ever the *Christian Religion* is believed, there the *Scriptures of the New Testament* are acknowledged also as the Rule and Standard of it; and that all the wonderful Facts therein Recorded, are believed by *Christians* to have really happen'd at the Times and Places there mentioned, are Matters of Fact which every Body may, by his own Observation, find to be true, and I shall here take for granted.

This therefore being the present State of Things in the World, it necessarily follows from hence, That *the Christian Religion* had a Beginning: There was a Time when *the Christian Religion* was no where practis'd, nor any of those Facts, Recorded in *the New Testament*, believed. How then came it to pass, That any Body should *Contrive* and *Publisch* such a Scheme as this? And how came any Body to *believe* it when Published, if it had not been true?

'Tis plain that the *first Contrivers*, *Publischers*, and *Believers* of the *Christian Religion*, whoever they were, must have been either Persons of *no Religion at all* before, or of a *different* one from the *Christian*; they must have been either *Good Men* or *Ill Men*, such as lived up to the Rules and Principles of the *Christian Religion*, or contrary to them: But whichever of these Characters we suppose belong'd to the *first Christians*, I cannot possibly account for the *Present State of Christianity*, if the *Principal Facts* related in the *New Testament* were not *true*.

I cannot conceive that an *Arbeits*, or a *Wicked Man*, that was bred up in *different Notions of Religion*, and whose Practice was

was contrary to the *Christian Rules of Life*, could *invent* such a Scheme as contradicted and condemned all his former Opinions and Practices, or would have been at the pains to do it if he could. And I can as little imagine that there was any Person before the appearance of *Christianity* in the World, who could, by the strength of his own Capacities, without any *Divine Assistance*, find out such a noble Plan and Model of Humane Life as that contained in *the New Testament*, and by the extrarodinary force and goodness of his own Disposition, live up to it himself before he recommended it to others; and as impossible is it to suppose that such a good Man as this should throw off those contrary Sentiments and Impressions of Religion he had been brought up in, for being False and Ineffectual for the promoting a good Life; and at the same time forge a Set of the most unaccountable Lyes that were ever known, and make use of this *Imposture* to inforce the Belief and Practice of his new Principles, which are plainly and directly inconsistent with such Methods.

But could we suppose any Person capable of *framing* such a Scheme as the

Christian Religion, without the help of *Revelation* for the *Doctrines* of it, or *true History* for the *Facts* it is built upon; What *End* or *Motive* could be imagined sufficient to determine him to do it? He could not propose any *Profit* or *Advantage* to himself from a Work which he knew would render all the Promoters of it liable to Reproaches, Troubles and Afflictions, and every thing that was hard and grievous in Life: For this, whoever Published the *Christian Religion* first, assures us was to be the Lot and Portion of those that imbraced it: This is one of the Principal *Doctrines* of the *Gospel*; where we are commanded to quit all we Possess; to renounce all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of the World; to expect Tribulation and Anguish, Ignominy and Death, and to suffer all manner of Persecution gladly for the sake of the *Christian Profession*. How could a Man that made this a part of his Religion, and had foresight enough to know he should have occasion to practice it himself, think of advancing his Interest in the World by such an Invention.

And how can we imagine any uncertain, doubtful Prospect of Future Re-

putation

putation after Death should be strong enough to bear him up against all the sure and sensible Discouragements he was to meet with while he Lived?

As this cannot well be imagined, so neither is it probable to believe, that the meer *pleasure of deceiving* should put a Man upon the contrivance of such a Scheme as was very unlikely to take, very hazardous to the Impostor, and very beneficial to all that were deceived.

It is moreover very unconceivable how any Man should think of advancing the *present Interest and Welfare of Mankind* by perswading them to believe all the Wonderful Facts and Extraordinary *Doctrines* of the *Christian Religion*, which have no manner of relation to it; and how he should come to be so mightily for their Happiness in a *Future State*, which he had no certainty of from *Revelation*: Neither is there any reason to be given why he should imagine the belief of those Facts and *Doctrines* necessary to their Happiness in a *Future State*, if he had been sure there was one; nor why he should pitch upon the grossest Forgeries imaginable, in order to pro-

mote

mote the practice of such Vertues among Men as are directly opposite to the means he used for this end.

We cannot therefore account for the *contrivance* of the *Christian Religion* from any *End* or *Motive* that was likely to put a Man upon such a Work, because it is very manifest from the whole Tenour of this Religion, that the Author of it, if it had been an Imposture, could not have promised himself any kind of advantage from his Undertaking.

And upon further Enquiry and Examination, it will appear, That if any Man had been wise enough to invent such a Religion, and foolish enough to have had some certain aim and prospect in effecting it, his Success could never have been answerable to his Expectation. For how could such a *Religion* as the *Christian*, have ever obtained so general a Credit in the World, as we find it now has, if it had been purely *Humane Invention*? The *Morality* of it is so Pure and Holy, so contrary to all the prevailing Inclinations and Interests of Mankind in this Life, that we find it the hardest thing in
the

the World, by continual Care and Instruction, to bring Men to submit to it, who have been accustomed by Education to believe it *Revealed by God*, and Established upon the Conditions of Eternal Happiness and Misery in another World, who are confirm'd in that belief by the concurrent Faith of all they know and converse with, and who are left without a possibility of disproving the Truth of the pretended *Revelation*, if it had been at first an *Imposture*: How then can we imagine that the *Christian Laws and Rules of Life* should have been so easily received at their first Publication, so widely Propagated afterwards, and so absolutely and intirely submitted to, that they should become the standing unalterable Laws of so many different Countries and Nations as do now profess *the Christian Faith*; How, I say, could this have ever happen'd, if the first Set of Persons that imbraced this *Morality* had not been fully convinced that it had been expressly *revealed by God*, and enjoyned Mankind under the Sanction of *Eternal Rewards and Punishments*? And how could any Man be perswaded of this without believing those *wonderful Facts*, upon the Credit of which the Truth
of

of the whole *Revelation* is Founded? But if we suppose the *first Christians* that ever were, believed all those Matters of Fact, how can this be supposed of them except they were true? How can we possibly imagine that the *Principal Matters of Fact* related in the *New Testament*, which are now a necessary part of the Faith of all *Christians* should be believed by those in whose times the Scheme is laid, in contradiction to all their Senses, or first obtain Credit among those who lived afterwards, without any proof of their being done or believed before? And if we suppose the *Christian Morality* Entertained and Established in the World, without the present *History* we have of it, the Forgery of that afterwards would have been wholly unnecessary, and the difficulty of getting such a Forgery believed, much greater.

From hence then it plainly follows that there could never have been *such a state of things in the World* as we now perceive, if all the Principal Parts and Substance of the *Christian History*, as it is at present generally believed, were not true, and had some time or other really happen'd out according to the Relation we find given of them.

This

This does likewise further appear from the *way and manner* in which those *Books* that contain this History are Written; where we find so many extraordinary Marks and Characters of the Simplicity, Integrity, and undesigning Humility of the Writers, their hearty Belief of what they wrote themselves, and their great Zeal and Concern for the Good of Mankind, as plainly shew them to have been Influenced not only by the force of well-attested Truth, but by some *extraordinary and more than Humane Impressions*.

3. These are in short the Reasons we have to believe the *Truth of the Christian Religion*: The Validity and Force of which I shall endeavour to make out more fully under the Third Head; where I am to shew the *Sufficiency of the Proof* that has been given of the *Christian Matters of Fact* from the *Nature of Things*, upon which the certainty of all Matters of Fact, as well as other Truths, is ultimately founded.

Now the chief and immediate Reason of believing most Facts, being taken from the *Nature of Man*, and there being nothing we are so well acquainted with

as

as the common *Original, Capacities* and *Powers, Inclinations* and *Aversions* of *Mankind*, and consequently their *Ends* and *Motives of acting*, it will be easie to shew from hence, that the *proof of the Christian Religion before given*, is not only *sufficient* to determine our assent to it, but does in Evidence, and Multiplicity of Conviction, far exceed the Proof any other Matters of Fact are capable of.

In the first place then, let us consider why we believe any Matter of Fact, which never fell within our *own particular* and *immediate Cognizance*? Why do we so firmly believe the *Story of Julius Cesar*, and *William the Conqueror*, that *there is such a place as Italy or China, &c.*? Now the reason of this, upon examining our selves, we shall find to be, because a *great many Men* have acquainted us that there were formerly such Persons who did such and such Things; and that there are now such Places in the World, &c. which Men were *competent Judges* of what they tell us, had *sufficient Opportunities of knowing* the Truth themselves, *no Motives conceivable* that could dispose them to lye to others, and are *contradicted by no body of equal Authority* with them; these are all the grounds of
Credi-

Credibility, upon which *Matters of Fact* are generally believed; and no further Characters of Truth are required by one that is satisfied of these. But we have all these Reasons to believe the *Common Matters of Fact* related in the *New Testament*, in the fullest Force and Extent of them, and several other besides, as the *Incapacity of the Witnesses to deceive*, if they had been disposed to do it, the *greater Motives* they had *not to say* what they did, than *to say* it if it had been false, and the *greater Motives other Persons had to contradict* them if they could have been disproved. Let us examine all these *Characters of Truth*, and see how far the Proof of the *Christian History* exceeds that of other *Matters of Fact*; and how far the supposed Falseness of it, notwithstanding these Characters, is consistent with that certain Knowledge we have of *Humane Nature*.

As to the first Character required for the Proof of Matters of Fact, *the Number of the Witnesses*; there never was certainly so vast a Multitude of Persons, all unanimously agreeing to assert the Truth of so great a variety of Matters of Fact, as there is in the Case before us; because the Progress of *Christianity* was so swift,
that

that we cannot suppose more Persons could have been acquainted with the *History* and *Doctrines* of it in so short a time; and there never was such industrious Care taken to propagate the Belief of any other Facts and Opinions that we ever read of.

It is likewise as certain, that the whole Multitude of the *first Publishers*, and *Professors* of *Christianity* were as *competent Judges* of the Matters they bear witness of, as 'tis possible for any Man to be of any thing else whatsoever. We will only suppose now, that *Christ* and his *Apostles* and *Disciples*, pretended to such Things as are Recorded of them in the *Scriptures*, and consequently to believe their own Pretences; and that all others who profess'd the *Gospel of Christ*, did declare their Belief of all those Things which are related as said or done by *Christ* and his *Apostles*: And surely a Man may infallibly know his own Thoughts and Imaginations; he can tell whether he believes such or such a Thing or no, or at least he can be certain that he thinks or fancies he believes it; and, if there be any Intercourse or Communication betwixt Men, one Man may know that another pretends to believe or
do

do a Thing, whether he really believes or does it or no. If a Multitude of Men can be deceived in such Judgments as these concerning themselves and one another, 'tis evident that there is no such thing as Knowledge at all.

If therefore it must be allowed, that a vast Multitude of Persons did pretend to believe all those things that they are said to believe in the *New Testament*, it necessarily follows from hence, that they did really and truly believe them, or else they pretended to believe what they certainly knew to be false. But that they did not pretend to believe what they knew to be false will evidently appear from these further Reflections upon *Humane Nature*.

First, then 'tis certain that every Man must act for some *End* or *Motive*, and here is no *End* or *Motive* conceivable that could determine any of the *first Publishers* or *Professors* of *Christianity*, to pretend to believe those Facts which they knew to be false. All the *Ends* and *Motives* we can imagine any Man to act upon in such a Case, we have reckoned up before; and we find, that if we put ourselves into the same Circumstances with those *first Witnesses* of *Christianity*, it would
Y have

have been impossible for us to have been influenced by any of them to make the same pretences, being infallibly assured at the same time, that they were utterly false and groundless; from whence we conclude, that neither did they, since all Men are so made and contrived, as to be determined by the same *general Motives*, though, according to the *difference of the Objects* that affect them, and the *difference of the Imaginations* of those that are affected, the Influence may be stronger upon some than others.

If we consider the *Power and Force of Truth* in general, the natural *Ease and Pleasure* that accompanies *Sincerity*, and the *Difficulty and Reluctance* with which Men practise known *Deceit and Falshood*; we cannot but infer from hence, that it very rarely happens, that any Men come to find a pleasure in Lying, *purely for deceiving sake*, without any *further End or Prospect*; and all Observations upon the *History of Mankind* confirm this Conclusion; and therefore we judge it *contrary to the Nature of Man* to suppose there was a whole Age of such *Deceivers* as these, who pretended to believe a great number of *unprofitable Lyes*, which were
to

to bring them in no other Pleasure or Satisfaction than what every one found in deceiving others. But 'tis plain, that if *Christianity* was an *Imposture*, this must be supposed: For none of the *first Christians* ever pretended to any other Pleasures or Advantages of Life: They made it part of their Religion to renounce them all; and the World was not so kind as to force them to accept what they had voluntarily abandoned.

And if it be *contrary to Humane Nature in General*, to imagine that a *vast Multitude of People of different Tempers and Inclinations*, should all conspire together to pretend a Belief of what they knew to be false, without any further prospect of Pleasure and Advantage, than what immediately resulted from such Pretences; much more repugnant is it when we consider the *Characters* of these Pretenders; the greatest part of which were Persons of such *steady integrity* before, that Lying must have offered the greatest violence imaginable to their Consciences.

But further, supposing the *first Christians* had some *Motives* sufficient to determine them all to agree in the same false

Pretences, notwithstanding that great *contrariety* of *Interests* such a Multitude is commonly govern'd by; whatever Advantages they propos'd to themselves, they found such mighty disappointments every where in their Hopes, and indured such unspeakable Troubles and Afflictions for the sake of their Profession, that they had *stronger Motives* for their discovering and relinquishing the Cheat they had maintained, than they could have at first to begin it; and therefore, if none of them were induced to confess their Pretences false, in such occasions where other Men have been often tempted, or forced to disown the Truth, we must infer from hence, that they did really believe all they pretended to, or they were not like other Men, but of a *strange Nature*, different from whatever we have known or heard of.

This must be likewise said too of all the other People of that Age when *Christianity* was first Published, who *refused to believe the Christian Pretences*: For how otherwise can we account for their not contradicting and disproving them when they had all those *Motives* and *Reasons* for *discovering the Imposture*, which were manifestly

manifestly wanting for the *Invention* and *Propagation* of it.

From all which, I think we may with confidence conclude, that the *first Authors*, *Publishers*, and *Professors of Christianity*, did *really believe* all they declared and asserted: From whence it immediately and necessarily follows, that all the *Common Matters of Fact* which they believed to be true, were actually *true*, they having the same *Evidence of Sense* for them, as we have now, or any other Generation of Men ever had, for whatever fell under the Cognizance of their Senses; so that if they were deceived, we must call in question all our own *Sensations*, which are the Foundations of all our other Knowledge. And the same Evidence that they had for these *Common Matters of Fact*, they had also for all the *Extraordinary Facts* mention'd in the *Christian History*, so far as concerns the Things done, and the *Pretences of the Authors*; and as to the *Power* by which they were done, I am as sure they exceed all *Humane Strength* and *Skill*, as I am sure any thing else does. And then, according to the best and truest Notions we are able to frame of the *Divine Nature*, we cannot but judge they

were very proper Marks and Indications of *his Power*, manifest Tokens of *his Goodness* to Men, and so suited and adapted to their Capacities, that we cannot frame or imagine a way whereby *God* could have more effectually revealed himself to us, if he ever designed to reveal himself to us at all; and it appears very agreeable both to his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, that he should make such a *Revelation* as the *Christian Religion* is to us, as has been shown more at large before.

If therefore there was an Age when the several Persons mention'd in the *New Testament* did pretend to do what is there Recorded of them, and all the *principal Matters of Fact* which make up the *Christian History* were believed far and wide, according to the Relation there given, 'tis inconsistent with all the Principles of *Humane Nature*, and repugnant to the *Nature of God*, that they should be false, as far as we are able, by all the Knowledge we have of the *Nature of God* and *Man* to judge.

That there was such an Age as this, we have the constant, universal, and uninterrupted Testimony of all the succeeding Ages; and

and when a great many different Countries and Nations do all Unanimously agree to assert, that their Immediate Forefathers did receive such a *Religion*, consisting of a great variety of *Facts* and *Doctrines*; and all these being contained in certain Books, and Copies of those Books being dispersed throughout these several Countries, the *Faith* is every where the same: In such a case as this, it is not to be doubted, but so far as the succeeding Generation of Men agree in their Testimony concerning the Faith of their immediate Predecessors, so far they were of the same Faith with them. If this be not allowed, 'tis impossible to know any thing beyond our own Time, and no *Humane Testimony* is to be admitted upon any occasion, a greater and more unsuspected Testimony than this being utterly inconceivable: But, if such Evidence as this be certain and unquestionable, as indeed it is, then is the present universal belief of the *Scriptures of the New Testament* an undeniable Argument that there was a time when the *Principal Matters of Fact* there Recorded were pretended to be done, and were believed by vast Multitudes of those who lived at that

time, to be really done in the way and manner in which they are now related to have happen'd; and if they were then believed, they must be true for the Reasons before given.

Thus far the Sufficiency of the *positive* and *direct* part of the proof of the *Christian Religion* is manifested from the *Nature of Things*: And in the same manner it will appear, that what has been before offered to shew the *absurdity* of supposing the *Christian Religion* an *Imposture*, is sufficient to determine any Man to believe it.

For if we throughly and impartially consider the *whole Christian Scheme*, as delivered in the *Writings of the New Testament*, which we have before laid together in a short Draught and Representation of the Principal Parts and Characters of it; and if at the same time we take a just view of *Humane Nature*, we shall find it utterly impossible that such a Scheme as this should ever have been *contrived* or *believed* without any *Extraordinary Interposition of Divine Providence*.

All the Notions we have of the *Powers* and *Capacities* of the *Soul of Man*, will
not

not enable us to conceive how such a Set of Thoughts as compose the *Christian Scheme*, could be brought together by the meer *unassisted Force* and *Agitation of the Soul*, whatever *Internal Springs* we imagine that Force derived from.

But when we consider further, that if there had been any Man capable of such an *Invention*, there was no *End* or *Motive* sufficient to determine him to undertake it, and Conduct and Support him in the Management of the whole Work, we must conclude that it was not of *Humane Composition*. And this we are assured of, because there are but such and such Ends that Mankind can act upon, and none of these could have any influence in the *Contrivance* of the *Christian Religion* in the manner we find it delivered to us in the *New Testament*; for it is so Framed and Contrived in all its Parts and Circumstances; that 'twas impossible for any one that could be the Author of it, not to perceive that all the Ways and Methods he took of Establishing his Invention would most certainly and effectually defeat the End he aimed at, whatever we suppose that to be; and no Man could make use of such *means* for the obtaining
an

an End which he knew would destroy it.

But besides the difficulties of the *Invention*, which cannot be accounted for by all the knowledge we have of the *Nature of Man*, the *Propagation* of the *Christian Religion* does plainly surmount all *Humane Art and Power*. For supposing the *first Christians* never so well inclined to believe *Christianity* when it was proposed to them, 'tis impossible for Men to believe what they will. The Evidence of some things is so great, that we cannot resist; and, on the contrary, there are some things of such a Nature, that no *Byass* or *Prejudice* whatsoever is strong enough to make us believe them without their proper Evidence; and such are all the *Principal parts* of the *Christian History*, as appears from the Reflections before made upon them. But if we consider the *first Christians*, as being all strongly disposed to reject the *Christian Religion* before they embraced it, as 'tis certain they were, whoever we suppose them to be, then was their difficulty of believing much greater: From whence it is necessarily infer'd that if the *Principal Matters of Fact* contained in the *Christian History* had
not

not been proved to be true, when they were first Published, they could never have been believed; and if they could not have been truly and really believed, 'twas full as impossible that great Multitudes of People should pretend to believe them when they did not; because all the *Reasons* and *Motives* that can be supposed for such Pretences, could have no more Influence in the *first Profession* than they had in the *Invention of Christianity*, and there they had none at all, as we have shewn before.

Thus does it plainly appear from the whole *Frame* and *Texture* of the *Christian Religion*, the *Nature* of the *Facts* and *Doctrines* contained in it, and the *manner* in which it is delivered to the World, compared with the *Nature of Man*, that the *Christian Religion*, as we now find it contained in the *Scriptures* of the *New Testament*, was *Discovered*, *Published*, and *Propagated* in the way and manner there Recorded: From whence I shall infer, that it certainly came from God, for the *Reasons* given in the former part of this Discourse, concerning the *Nature of God*, and *Evil Spirits*, which I shall not repeat here; because if the first Point be granted,
this

The Certainty of the
this Inference, I believe, will not be disputed by any Man.

Now that the Arguments here taken from the *Nature of Man* have all the force and weight that is laid upon them, I shall further endeavour to make good, by shewing that we have as much reason to conclude that these are Just and True, as we have that any other Arguments drawn from the *Nature of Things* are Valid: In order to which end I shall take the liberty to go over the chief Proofs of the *Christian Religion* again, and consider them with this particular View.

Let us then examine what ground we proceed upon in our reasoning upon other Matters, and how we arrive at any certainty concerning them. How come we to affirm that a *Body* of such a *Density* and *Bulk* is of such a *Weight*; that a *Body* of such a *Weight*, has such a *force in Projection*; that such a particular *Body*, in such and such Circumstances, will certainly produce such *Effects*; that 'tis impossible that such a *Body* should exceed such limits in its *Motion*, and the like? Now the only reason we have to conclude such Proposi-

tions

tions concerning *Bodies* to be true, upon which all the fine *Mathematical Demonstrations* in *Natural Philosophy*, and all the *useful Inventions* in *Mechanicks* are grounded, is this, That all the *Observations* and *Experiments* that have ever been made upon these things do assure us, that they have always been after this manner; and the like will hold in our Reasonings from *Humane Nature*.

I can no more believe the *whole Christian Scheme* an *Imposture* of mere *Humane Contrivance*, than I can believe that all the *Materials* which compos'd the *City of Rome* met together, and put themselves into that *Form*: For as I cannot see what should give those *Materials* a determinate *Motion* towards the building that *City*, no more can I comprehend what should influence or determine a *Man* to *Frame* and *Contrive* such a *History* and *Religion* as the *Christian*. And, as 'tis impossible to believe that, if all the *Materials* necessary for the *Building of Rome* had, by some extraordinary *Motion*, been carried to that *Place*, they would have fashioned themselves and fell into that exact *Form* we find that *City* built in; so likewise is it equally impossible to conceive, that if there was any *End* or *Motive*

in

in Nature sufficient to determine a Man to invent such a Religion as the *Christian*, he should have made and contrived it, in all its Parts and Circumstances, just such as it is delivered to us in the *Scriptures*, and that so contrived it should have been *Entertained, Propagated, and Fixed* in the World upon lasting Foundations.

Now the reason why I conclude both these things equally impossible is, because there never was any thing like either of these Events ever known to have happen'd in the World, and because upon the utmost stretch of Thought, grounded upon the most intimate Knowledge we can have of the *Nature* of the Things concern'd, and the greatest compass of *Observation* that can be made upon the course of things in the World, it cannot be conceived or imagined that such Events as these should ever happen.

That there never was an *Instance* of any thing like the *Christian Scheme*, which was proved or allowed by any body in the World to be an *Imposture*, I shall take for granted, since none of the *Enemies of Christianity* have ever produced one.

As for *Mahometism*, which some have had the impudence to compare with *Christianity*,

Christianity; so far as both they and we allow it to be an *Imposture*, it can have no manner of place here as a *Parallel Instance*. For it is on all hands granted that there was such a Man as *Mahomet*, who lived at the Time and Place 'tis pretended by his Followers he did; 'tis granted likewise that he wrote the *Alcoran*, and pretended to the things there Recorded of him; and that his Religion prevailed, and was Propagated in the way and manner there related and described by him: But, in the present supposition of the *whole Christian Scheme's* being an *Imposture*, it must be affirmed that *all the Scriptures of the New Testament*, and the *whole History* therein contained, are meer *Forgery* and *Invention*, without any Foundation of *Truth* in the *Common Matters of Fact* there Recorded, which makes the case of *Christianity*, in all the important variety of Circumstances and Events possible, unlike that of *Mahometism*.

And as no *Instance* of such an *Imposture*, as is here pretended, can be given out of the *History of former times*, so likewise is it utterly impossible to imagine that such an *Instance* as this could ever happen at all.

To give our selves a fuller and more sensible Conviction of this, let us take as exact and extensive a view as we can of the *State of the World*, just before we affirm that *Christianity* was discovered, or at the latest Period of Time mentioned in the *New Testament*; Let us consider the General Temper, Inclinations, Opinions, and Interests of the *Jews* at that time, together with the highest Improvements in Learning and Religion then amongst them; Let us make the same Reflections upon the *Roman State and Government*, and the Principal *Nations and Countries* within that Empire: Then let us carefully weigh and examine the *Christian History and Religion* contained in the *Scriptures* of the *New Testament*; let us represent to our selves, in one continued Prospect, all the Principal *Facts* there Recorded, drawn forth in all their variety of Circumstances, the whole System of *Doctrines and Rules*, in their just Dependance and Connexion, the *Characters of the Persons* concerned in the Publishing and Establishing them, together with the *way and manner* in which all these things are Written; and when we have done this, let us truly and impartially ask our selves

selves whether we can possibly conceive how any Person could at that time *Invent* and *Publish* that whole Scheme of Things at *Jerusalem, Rome*, or any other part of the *Roman Empire*, without any ground of truth to build upon; and, supposing it Published, how it could be *Believed* so firmly, and *Propagated* so far and wide, that it should be *fixt* and *continue* in all this part of the World to this day, without any Footsteps or Motives remaining whereby we might be able to detect the *Imposture*. This, I say, appears to me as hard to conceive, as that *Rome* should build it self; and I am verily perswaded would appear so to any one else, that had as fully and impartially considered the Matter as I have endeavoured to do.

If we date the *Imposture* later, the same difficulty will attend the *Invention* and *Propagation* of it, and we shall be further puzzled to account for all the *Signs* and *Monuments* of *Christianity*, which will appear to have been before the Period assigned for its *Original*, wheresoever we place it.

But if we deal as fairly by *Christianity* as we do by *Mahometism*, and allow the *Common Matters of Fact* Recorded of it

Z

to

to be true; if we grant that there was such a Man as *Christ*, who lived at the Time and Place 'tis affirmed by *Christians* he did; that he and his *Disciples* pretended to what is Recorded in the *Scriptures* of the *New Testament* of them; that those Books were written by the Persons whose Names they bear; and that the *Christian Religion* spread and prevail'd over the World in the way and manner, and by the means of those Pretences we have there an account of: Granting, I say, all these things, as by the general acknowledgement of all sorts of Persons, and the impossibility of their being false just before proved, they must be granted: From hence it necessarily follows that all the other *Extraordinary Facts* are true, and consequently that the *Christian Religion* came from God, and lays a necessary Obligation upon Mankind to believe it, and conform themselves to it.

This is certain in the same way of Reasoning we used before, because there never was an *Instance*, and it cannot be conceived there ever should be one, where such *Marks* and *Indications of Truth*, as accompany these things, should all belong to an *Imposture*.

Upon

Upon this account therefore it is that we affirm all these things to be impossible; *viz.*

That Persons of such *Characters*, as *Christ* and his *Disciples* were represented to be, should *invent* and *contrive* the *Christian Doctrine* and *Institution*, or *perform* those things that are Recorded of them, merely by their own *Skill* and *Power*.

That *Christ* and his *Disciples* should *pretend* to have done such *Extraordinary Facts* as are attributed to them in the *New Testament*, if they were not the true and immediate Instruments by whom they were done.

That such Multitudes of Persons as we there Read of, should *believe* these Facts, and imbrace *Christianity* upon the Credit of them if they were not true, or should *pretend to believe* them if they were not really perswaded of their truth.

And if all the *Principal Facts*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, were certainly true, as far as the Persons concerned in bearing Testimony to them were capable of perceiving their Truth; It is likewise impossible but the *whole Christian Religion*, and all the Conduct and Management

nagement in the *Discovery* and *Propagation* of it must *come from God*.

All these Propositions we are firmly assured of upon this ground, *viz.* because, if we suppose the contrary of any thing here alledged, no *Parallel Instance* can be given to prove the truth of what we suppose; and if we represent any of these Cases to our selves fairly in all its Circumstances, we cannot possibly conceive it should ever happen.

'Tis true indeed there have been Persons of low Fortunes and mean Employments in the World, who have, by the meer force of their *Natural Genius*, spoke Wisely, and acted Gallantly, upon some Occasions; but 'twas never known, and 'tis impossible to conceive, that Persons of no Learning or Education, who knew nothing beyond the mean Affairs of their own Village, and never Convertt with any of higher Improvements than themselves; it is impossible, I say, to imagine that such Persons as these should be able, by the *meer strength* of their *Natural Parts*, to Compose such *Poems* as *Virgil's*, and such *Oration*s as *Tully's*, and should likewise at the same time exceed all others in the Skill of *Explaining hard Authors*,

hors, and in the Knowledge of *Physick*: But 'tis much harder to conceive, that *Christ* and his *Disciples*, being Persons of such Education and Character, as they are represented to us to be, could, by their *own unassisted Capacities*, Compose the *Christian Religion*, Interpret *Ancient Prophecies*, Foretel *Future Events*, Cure all manner of *Sick and Maimed*, and perform all those *other Mighty Works* that are Recorded of them.

We have heard of several Persons who have pretended to *Revelations*, to *Prophecies*, to *Miracles*, and to all of them falsely, without any ground for their pretences; but there never were any who pretended to *such Revelations*, *such Prophecies*, and *such Miracles*, as we find in the *Scriptures of the New Testament*, so many, and so publick, so far exceeding all the conceivable Power of Art and Confederacy, so liable to discovery and contradiction, if they were false; so hazardous to the Undertakers, and so beneficial to the World, in such a continued Series, all of them concurrent to the same End, and accompanied with such other Circumstances as these are related to be. Whoever will be at the pains to consider all
this

sure Grief and Pain cheerfully, and be ready, upon all occasions, to lay down their Lives for the Profession of such Matters of Fact, as they are all infallibly convinced are false, and which, they are sure all their Persecutors have the same Reason to know are false that they have: To affirm or imagine that any Men can act upon such disproportionate Motives as such Men must be supposed to act upon, is full as absurd and ridiculous, as to suppose that the Sea may be restrained with Bars, and that the Hills and Mountains are lighter than the Dust of the Balance.

But if it be granted, as we have shewn it must, that all those who *pretended to say and do* such strange Things as are related of them in the *New Testament*, and those who *pretended to be persuaded* of the Truth of what was said and done, did all *really and truly believe* what they pretended to; then is it impossible to conceive, that the Things thus *believed to be true*, should notwithstanding be *false*. There are, it is confessed, no Opinions so extravagant and absurd, but a great many Persons may be throughly persuaded of the Truth of them;

them; but there never was an Instance of such *Stupidity* or *Enthusiasm* yet, where such Facts as those related in the *New Testament*, were by great Multitudes believed to have happen'd within their own immediate Cognizance, when no such Things did really and truly happen at all: And 'tis impossible to conceive there ever should be such an Instance as this in the World, without a through change of *Humane Nature*, and all the *Powers* and *Faculties* of it: And we have no more reason to think it was so in the Case before us, than we have to believe that there was a Time when the *Earth* and all the *Bodies* belonging to it, did exist in the same State of outward appearance we now perceive them without *Motion*, *Figure*, or *Extension*.

And, if all the *Principal Matters of Fact*, both *Common* and *Extraordinary*, were *really true*, or did really and certainly happen, so far as *Humane Perceptions* are to be relied on; it cannot be doubted but *God* was the *Author* of the *whole Christian Scheme*, because we have no *Example* of any such Scheme as this, that was ever made by any other Power but the *Divine*. We cannot, by the utmost Know-

Knowledge we have of all the Powers that be, conceive that any Power less than the *Divine*, could produce such an Effect; or that any other, besides such as were Commission'd by him would have produced it if they could. By what we know of the *Nature of God*, the Work appears very worthy of him, and very agreeable to all his *Attributes*; and we cannot possibly imagine what more proper and effectual ways God could have taken to manifest himself to us, if he was pleas'd to vouchsafe us that Favour.

These are the Reasons upon which we conclude that *the Christian Religion came from God*, supposing all the *Facts* before-mentioned to be true, as I think they have been proved to be; which Proof being allowed, we have as much Reason to believe that *the Christian Religion proceeded from God*, as that *the World was Created by him*.

Thus does it plainly appear from the *Nature of Things*, that the Proofs before given of the *Christian Religion*, severally examined, were all very well founded. And now, if we take a just view of them, and consider them all together, we shall

shall be obliged to make the following Conclusions.

1. That there never was any Thing discovered, or so much as suspected to be an *Imposture*, that had so many *Marks* and *Characters of Truth* upon it, as the *Christian Religion* has.

2. That there never were any *true Matters of Fact* so well attested, or that were capable of such a Proof, as the *Christian Facts* are: There being no Ancient Facts which have so many sensible *Monuments* and *Effects* of them left, and in the Proof of which, Mankind was so nearly and necessarily concern'd.

3. That it is impossible to *conceive*, or frame any Notion how, or in what manner the *Christian Religion* might possibly have been an *Imposture*, notwithstanding all the present *appearances* of its being true.

And, if all these Conclusions are right, as I am throughly and irresistibly convinced they are; and, I think, have proved them so to be; there can be no room left to disbelieve the *Christian Religion*, without distrusting *all our Knowledge*, and renouncing *all pretences to Reasoning*.

But

But, supposing these Conclusions were not any of them fully proved, and it could be shewn, That something else, which had once all the *appearance of Truth* that *the Christian Religion* now has, had afterwards been detected to be false; that some other Ancient Matters of Fact are as well attested and proved to be true, as the *Christian* seem to be; and that 'tis possible to imagine, which way *the Christian Religion* might come to obtain its present Credit in the World, notwithstanding it was at first an *Imposture*, none of which I am sure can be proved: Yet, even in this Case, the Proof that has now been given of *the Christian Religion*, is *sufficient* to build our Faith upon; because the most that can be infer'd from all these Arguments, is only this, That there is a *bare possibility* in the *Nature of Things*, that the *Christian Religion* may be false: But he that from hence should conclude, that it was really so, without any other Reasons to support his Opinion, and in opposition to all that multiplicity of Proof that has been offered for the Truth of it, must not pretend *Reason*, but only *Resolution* for his *Infidelity*.

Such

Such therefore is the *Sufficiency* of the Proof before given, whatever be the *Nature* or *Kind* of it; or however it may be thought to differ from, or fall short of the *Demonstration* used in other Matters, that we are utterly *inexcusable*, if we do not believe the *Christian Religion* upon it, and *God* may justly *Condemn* us for our disbelief, and that upon these two accounts:

1. Because we believe *other Matters of Fact* upon *less Evidence*; and,
2. Because we are obliged to believe *such Facts* as have these *appearances of Truth*, which the *Christian Religion* has, though they should really be *false*.

1. That we believe Matters of Fact upon *less Evidence* than the *Christian Religion* is received upon, is manifest, by what has been before proved, that no Matters of Fact have or are capable of so great; and therefore, to confirm this Point, I shall only bring that one Instance of *Mahometism*.

Now 'tis certain that those who look upon the *Christian Religion* as an *Imposture* do

do at the same time profess to believe all the principal Parts of the *History of Mahomet*: Such as his Pretences to *Revelation*, his Writing the *Alcoran*, and his Propagating the Belief of the things contained in it, in the way and manner therein mentioned: These, I say, they do not in the least question, notwithstanding that the *Mahometan Religion* pretends to a *Divine Original* as well as the *Christian*, and is in like manner address'd to Mankind under the Promises and Threatnings of *Future Happiness* and *Misery*; though it is withal a very absurd Composition in it self, and of very pernicious Consequence to the World to be Believed and Establish'd. It is therefore very unreasonable for Men that believe these things, to deny the *Common History of Christianity*; such as the Pretences of *Christ* and his *Disciples* to *Revelations*, *Prophecies*, and *Miracles*, the Writing of the *Scriptures* of the *New Testament* by those whose Names they bear, or at least by some of *Christ's* immediate Disciples; and the Propagation of the *Christian Religion* according to the Times, Places, Ways and Methods Recorded in those Books: 'Tis very unreasonable

reasonable, I say, for Men who believe the *History of Mahometism*, to question the truth of these things; because they are attested by a much greater variety of Books and other Monuments, and a greater multiplicity of the Copies of the *Scriptures*; all which Testimonies we are sure, by a numerous succession of others, were extant nearer the date of the several Facts attested, and in an Age of Learning, among People of much higher Improvements than the first *Mahometans* were; and moreover because it is certain that the Pretences of *Christ* were more difficult to be Feign'd by himself, or Forged by others afterwards; that the Promises and Threatnings of the *Gospel* are of more Concern and Importance to be enquired into; and the Establishment of *Christianity*, whether true or false in its *Original*, would so certainly contribute to the Happiness of Mankind, that 'tis one very good Argument of its being true, that it is impossible to make and contrive any other Scheme every way so suitable and agreeable to the truest Interests of *Humane Nature*.

From whence I conclude, that we cannot question the Truth of the *History*
of

former Discourse, that we are necessarily concerned to know, whether there be a *God*, or no; whether he *requires* any thing of us, if there is; and whether he has appointed any *Future State* of Life for us. And these things our Reason has assured us are true, and fit to be believed, notwithstanding any *Suspensions* we may have to the contrary, because we venture all our Happiness by disbelieving them: And upon the same Score it is, that the *Christian Religion* challenges our Assent to it; because, if all the fore-mentioned Principles be true, we venture our Happiness as much in denying it. For, if this does not contain the *Will of God*, it is impossible to know what is required of us; because we can never give so strong, and certain a Proof of what our Particular Duty to God is without *Divine Revelation*, as we can that the *Christian Revelation* is true. We are therefore in as high a manner obliged to believe *Christianity* as *Natural Religion*; because the Proofs of that are very near, if not quite as strong, as those that are brought for the other, and our Happiness is more certainly ventured here than there, for this reason; that, if
the

the *First General Principles of Religion* should be false, he that denies them will suffer nothing for his denial; but, if those be true, and the *Christian Religion* should be false, he that rejects that, runs as great a hazard as if it had been true; because God will certainly Judge him according to the *Evidence*, and not according to the *Reality* of things: And therefore he that believes in *God* is obliged to believe in *Christ* also; since 'tis certain that the *Christian Religion* has a great many Extraordinary *Marks and Characters of Truth* to recommend it, and is pressed upon our Belief under the Considerations of *Eternal Happiness* and *Misery*, and we have nothing to oppose to all the *appearing Evidence* it is built upon, but barely a *Suspicion*, that notwithstanding what appears to us, it may *possibly* be false.

The two first of these Assertions are manifest; and the Truth of the latter will be very visible to any one, that will give himself the trouble of considering *all the Objections* that have ever been made to the *Christian Revelation*; which taken altogether, will not so much as make out the *meer possibility* of the *Christian Scheme*:

being *false*; but amount to no more than this, that something else, like something contained in the *History of Christianity*, has been proved to be false, therefore the *Christian Religion* is an *Imposture*.

For all that has ever been urged against the *Truth of the Christian Religion* is, in short, but this; that *Histories* have been *false*; *Prophecies* and *Miracles* have been *counterfeit*; there have been *false Pretences to Revelation*; *Books* have been *forged*; *strange Things* have been *said and done by Men*, and *stranger by Evil Spirits*: But it can no more be infer'd from hence, that the *Christian History* and *Revelation*, and all the *Christian Prophecies* and *Miracles* are *false*, and the *Scriptures of the New Testament* are *forged*; than it can be concluded that *all Men* are *mad or asleep*, because there have been several in these Conditions that have thought themselves *awake* and in *their Senses*; or that all the Arguments and Proofs made use of in *Mathematical Knowledge* are *false*, because some pretended Demonstrations have been *Undemonstrated* and *Confuted*: And yet this is the utmost defence that *Infidelity* can make for it self, as has before been

been more particularly shewn. Wherefore they are utterly inexcusable, whoever they are, who believe *there is a God*, and *that he is a Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him*; and yet reject so plain and *evident a Revelation* of himself as the *Christian Religion* is.

But there are very few, I believe, of this Character to be found in the *Christian World*: 'Tis more reasonable to think, that those among us, who will not have the *Son of God to Reign over them*, have as little regard for *the Father that sent him*; and that if they will not *hear Moses and the Prophets*, nor be *persuaded by one that rose from the Dead*, neither will they *understand the Eternal Power and Godhead by the things that are made*. And if this be the Case of our *Modern Deists* and *Unbelievers*; if their *Minds are Blinded*, and their *foolish Hearts Darkned* to such a degree that they cannot perceive God in any of the other ways he has took of *Revealing* himself to them, we must leave them to be convinced by the last *Revelation* that will be made of *the Righteous Judgment of God*, when they shall be forced to *Believe and Tremble*.

FINIS.

BOOKS Printed for Tho. Bennet.

Folio.

T *Huidides Greek and Latin*, Collated with five entire Manuscript Copies, and all the Editions Extant: Also, Illustrated with Maps, large Annotations, and Indexes; by *J. Hudson*, M. A. and Fellow of *University Coll. Oxon.* To which is added an exact Chronology, by the Learned *Hen. Dodwell*; never before Published: Printed at the *Theater. Oxon.*

Octavo and Twelves.

Sermons and Discourses upon several Occasions; by *Dr. Stradling*, Dean of *Chichester*: Together with an Account of the Author; by *James Harrington*, Esq;

Sermons and Discourses upon several Occasions; by *Dr. Meggot*, Dean of *Chichester*.

The Meditations of *Marcus Aurelius Antonius* the *Roman Emperor*; Translated out of *Greek* into *English*, by *Dr. Causabon*, with Notes. To this Edition is added the Life of the Emperor, with an Account of *Stoick Philosophy*; as also, Remarks on the Meditations: All newly written by *Monsieur and Madam Dacier*.

The Inspiration of the *New Testament* Asserted and Explained, in Answer to the Six Letters of Inspiration, from *Holland*, &c. by *Mr. L. Ash.*

THE
CERTAINTY and NECESSITY
OF
Religion in General, &c.

The Contents.

I <i>Introduction shewing the design of the Discourse, and the Method in which it is Prosecuted.</i>	Page 1.
<i>An account of the Nature of Man, so far as concerns Religion.</i>	p. 9.
<i>Of the Nature of God.</i>	p. 16.
<i>Of the Relation there is betwixt God and Man.</i>	p. 18.
<i>A direct proof of the Being of God.</i>	p. 19.
<i>Considered as</i> { <i>Possible,</i> <i>Probable,</i> <i>Certain.</i>	p. 20. p. 26. p. 40.
<i>The certainty of God's Existence proved, Indirectly and Negatively, by shewing that none of those Suppositions which exclude the Being of God can be true.</i>	p. 57.
<i>Matter alone considered at rest could not be Eternal, and in time produce the Present Frame of the World.</i>	p. 59.
<i>'Tis impossible to account for the Production of the World,</i>	

The Contents.

- World, by the Atheist's Hypothesis of moving Atoms.* p. 61.
- 'Tis absurd to suppose that the World has Existed Eternally, under the same Form we now behold it, without a God.* p. 64.
- The⁶ Eternal Coexistence of Matter and Mind, improbable.* p. 71.
- Supposing it probable, neither Matter alone, nor Matter and Motion, nor the present Constitution of things could have been Eternal Independently of God.* p. 77.
- The Original of all things from God, further evinced from General Reflections.* p. 81.
- A positive and direct Proof of Religion drawn from the Natures of God and Man, and the Relations there are betwixt them.* p. 91.
- Of the Nature and Ground of Obligation, together with the Right and Power of Obliging.* lb.
- That Man is obliged to order his Life according to the Will of God, is proved.* p. 102.
- From the Natural Judgments we make concerning our Actions.* p. 105.
- From the End and Design of God in making us, which appears by several Tokens and Indications* p. 117.
- in the Frame and Disposition of our Mind,* p. 118.
- and in the Oeconomy and Constitution of Humane Society.* p. 125.
- From the Nature of Religion it self, a regular practice of which conduces to the greatest Happiness we are capable of in this Life.* p. 129.
- And from the certainty of a Future State which is proved,* p. 137.
- From*

The Contents.

- From the defect of a General and Regular Practice of Religion here.* p. 138.
- And from the General Wants, Necessities and Imperfections of our present Nature* p. 141.
- From all which Considerations it appears, that 'tis more for our Happiness to live Religiously then otherwise, and therefore we are obliged to live so.* p. 146.
- The Certainty and Necessity of Religion further shewn, from the pernicious effects of all kind of Irreligion, with respect to the Happiness of Mankind.* p. 149.
- The absurdity and folly of all the Grounds and Pretences of Irreligion, and whatever is alledged in defence of it.* p. 181.
- Irreligion not capable of any direct proof.* p. 183.
- The usual Ways and Methods of defending it Improper and Insufficient.* p. 187.
- Ridiculing Religion proves nothing against it.* lb.
- Requiring a more certain and Mathematical proof of it unreasonable.* p. 188.
- Schemes and Hypotheses to account for the present state of things, without God and Religion, absurd and inconsistent.* p. 192.
- The chief and most common Objections against Religion answered, viz.* p. 200.
- Mysteries, seeming Inconsistencies, and Absurdities in Scripture.* p. 201.
- Extravagant Notions and Pernicious Doctrines maintained under the name of Religion.* p. 202.
- Variety of Opinions among the Professors of the same Religion.* p. 204.
- Foolish*

The Contents.

- Foolish and Ridiculous Arguments urged in defence of it.* p. 205.
- Scandalous Lives of great pretenders to Piety and Virtue.* p. 206.
- Religion the effect of Fear and Education.* p. 209.
- Religion a politick Contrivance.* p. 211.
- The absurdity and folly of Irreligious, Principles and Practices demonstrated from General Reflections upon the different Grounds and Foundations Religion and Irreligion stand upon; and the different Conduct of those that act under the Influence of the one and the other.* p. 213.
- Irreligion further exposed from the causes and Reasons that induce Men to take up Atheistical and Prophane Opinions.* p. 227.
- The chief Causes of Atheism shewn to be these two, The Fear of an after reckoning for a wicked Life, and the Vanity of appearing greater and wiser than other Men.* p. 230.
- The Doctrines of Irreligion the sole result of Prejudice, and not deliberate reasoning more plainly made out.* p. 239.
- From the Character and Capacities of the Atheists.* lb.
- From the manner and process of their Infidelity.* (p. 242.
- And from the Confession of several Atheists themselves.* p. 246.
- An account of the Notions of Atheism and Deism, and how they are to be distinguished.* p. 249.

THE

THE CERTAINTY

Of the
Christian Revelation,
And the
Necessity of Believing it, &c.

The Contents.

- T**He Connexion of this Discourse with the former. Page. 1.
- The Method laid down for the Establishing the Certainty of the Christian Revelation.* p. 3.
- An Abstract or Summary of the Christian Scheme, as it is delivered in the Books of the New Testament.* p. 8.
- The General Subject of the several Books or Volumes of the New Testament.* p. 9.
- The Character of Jesus Christ.* p. 19.
- A short Account of his Doctrine or Gospel.* p. 31.
- The Character of those that believed in him, and that assisted him in the Publishing and Propagating his Gospel.* p. 42.
- The Character of those that Persecuted Him and his Disciples, and opposed the Establishment of his Religion.* p. 50.
- The way and manner in which the Books of the New*

The Contents.

<i>New Testament are writ, with all the important Circumstances which refer to the form and composition of those Writings</i>	P. 51.
<i>All the Principal Matters of Fact related in the New Testament shewn to be true, by a plain direct proof, according to this distinction of them premised; viz: Common Matters of Fact, Miracles and Prophecies, Divine Assistance and Revelation.</i>	P. 59.
<i>The Common Historical Facts mentioned in the New Testament, proved to be true in the following manner.</i>	P. 60.
<i>The Original of Christianity rightly assigned in the New Testament.</i>	P. 61.
<i>A Survey of the Christian Religion in the time of Constantine.</i>	P. 70.
<i>The Christian Faith the same in the time of Constantine as it was at and immediately after the first Publication of the Gospel.</i>	P. 74.
<i>This Proposition made out from the constant Tradition of such a Belief, together with many sensible Infallible Effects of it.</i>	P. 75.
<i>And from many other extrinsick Signs and Monuments remaining at the Meeting of the Council of Nice under Constantine.</i>	P. 105.
<i>Such as were several Customs and Usages, Relicks, Buildings, and other the like Monuments:</i>	P. 107.
	P. 108.
<i>Books and Written Records of several kinds, viz.</i>	P. 109.
<i>Copies of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.</i>	P. 110.
	Publick

The Contents.

<i>Publick Acts and Records belonging to Societies:</i>	P. 113.
<i>Genuine Writings of Orthodox Christians:</i>	P. 119.
<i>Books Written by Hereticks:</i>	P. 132.
<i>Jewish and Pagan Books.</i>	P. 133.
<i>Forged and Suppositious Writings of uncertain Authors.</i>	P. 137.
<i>The Miracles and Prophecies Recorded in the New Testament shewn to be true Facts, according to the Relation there given of them.</i>	P. 140.
<i>An Account by way of Introduction of what is meant by Miracles and Prophecies in this place.</i>	P. 141.
<i>And what kind of Evidence these Facts are capable of.</i>	P. 143.
<i>The Miracles considered by themselves, according to the different Periods in which they were done, and the different Persons they were done by.</i>	P. 144.
<i>The Prophecies considered apart according to the same distinction of Times and Persons.</i>	P. 158.
<i>The Truth of these Extraordinary Facts, call'd Miracles and Prophecies, and the Reasonableness of those Grounds upon which the first Christians believed them, evinced from General Reflections upon the Scripture-account of them.</i>	P. 161.
<i>What is said in the New Testament concerning Divine Assistance and Revelation, proved to be true.</i>	P. 183.
<i>The Miracles Prophecies and Doctrines Recorded in the New Testament (which are all the Matters to be inquired into under this Head) did certainly proceed from God.</i>	P. 185.
<i>The Person themselves who appeared to be the immediate</i>	

The Contents.

- mediate Authors of them, might be infallibly satisfied that whatever of this kind they said or did was from God.* p. 186.
- Others may be likewise convinced of the same Truth by a certain proof of the following Points, viz.* p. 194.
- That the Miracles, Prophecies and Doctrines contained in the New Testament could not be the Work and Contrivance of meer Men.* p. 195.
- That God was the Author of them all.* p. 222.
- And that 'tis absurd to ascribe these things to Evil Spirits.* p. 242.
- The Truth of the Christian Revelation delivered in the Books of the New Testament proved indirectly, by shewing the absurdity of a contrary Supposition, and the Weakness of all the Objections raised against Scripture and Revelation in General.* p. 245.
- The Scriptures of the New Testament could not possibly be Forged and Invented.* p. 250.
- Because there is no end or design imaginable sufficient to have determined the supposed Author of this Work to have undertaken it.*
- And because further, if the principal Matters of Fact, both Common and Extraordinary, had not been true, it would have been utterly impossible that the Christian Religion should ever have been Believed and Propagated in the World.* p. 264.
- The principal Objections against Revelation, and the Scriptures answered, viz.* p. 272.
- That the Miracles and Prophecies mentioned in Scripture, are no Proofs of a Divine Revelation.* p. 276.
- And*

The Contents.

- And that there are such Faults observable in the other parts of Scripture, as shew the whole to be a pure Humane Composure.* p. 288.
- The sufficiency of the proof before given of the Christian Revelation fully and undeniably made out.* p. 303.
- From Humane Testimony.* p. 305.
- From the Connexion of present Appearances with former.* p. 309.
- And from the Nature of Things in General, and the particular Facts in Question.* p. 317.
- The Arguments taken from the Nature of things further made good; by shewing that they are as just and concluding in the case of the Christian Religion as any other Arguments drawn from the Nature of things are.* p. 332.
- The sufficiency of the Proof before given is such, that God may justly condemn us for not believing the Christian Religion upon it.* p. 349.
- Because we believe other Matters of Fact upon less Evidence; and* Ib.
- Because we are obliged to believe such Facts have those appearances of Truth, which the Christian Religion has, though they should really be false.* p. 352.

F I N I S.

BOOKS Printed for Tho. Bennet.

THE Lives of all the Princes of *Orange*, from *William* the Great, Founder of the Common-wealth of the United Provinces; to which is added, the Life of his present Majesty King *William* III. from his Birth to his Landing in *England*. By Mr. *Tho. Brown*. Together with all the Princes Heads, taken from the Original Draughts, by Mr. *Robert White*.

A Voyage to the World of *Des Certes*: Translated from the *French*, by *T. Taylor*, M. A. of *Magd. Coll. Oxon*.

Thirty Six Sermons, upon several Occasions; in Three Vol. by *Robert South*, D. D. The second Edition.

The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in general; or, the first Ground and Principles of Humane Duty Establish'd. In Eight Sermons, Preached at *St. Martins* in the Fields, at the Lectures, for the Year 1697. Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq; By *F. Gastrel*, B. D. and Student of *Christ Church Coll. Oxon*.