THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

### FOR THE TRUTH OF

REASON and COMMON SEESE

## APPE AI.

TO

OR, AN

The Scripture Testimony Examined and confirmed by plain Arguments:

### IN TWO DISCOURSES.

## By DAVID JENNINGS, D. D.

### A NEW EDITION.

#### Londen:

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#### THE

## EDITOR's PREFACE.

THE successive attacks of Infidels, on the Divine Authority of the Old and New Testament, have occasioned the publication of many elaborate defences of Revealed Religion. These publications being recondite and expenfive, have not been much perused; and indeed if they had been more generally read, it appears to me, that many of these publications would rather injure than ferve that caufe which they were professedly defigned to promote. For whilst some of these writers contend, in a learned and judicious manner, for the genuineness of those books, which are comprized in the Old and New Testament, they give up their divine inspiration; and thus unintentionally betray Christianity into the hands of its enemies. The Infidel from hence may take occasion to fay, " The writers of the Bible declared, that they were Divinely Inspired; but, according to your account, they were not; if they could tell one fallehoud A 2

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falsehood to serve the zause in which they were enlisted, why not tell a thousand?"

That the writers of the New Testament believed themselves divinely inspired, is clear from their writings; in which there are many declarations to this effect. (Eph. iii. 4, 5.) Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the myslery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the fons of men; as it is now revealed unto his holy Aposles and Prophets by the

Spirit.

And the Old Teftament was written by holy men of God, who fpake as they were borne on by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. i. 21.) Origen, who lived in the third century, obferves, "That if a man would not confeis himfelf to be an Infidel, he must admit the infpiration of the Scriptures." By Dr. Doddridge it is remarked, "Nothing can be more evident, than that a firm and cordial belief of the INSPIRATION of the Sacred Scriptures is of the highest moment, not only to the edification and peace of the Church, but, in a great measure, to its very existence. For if this be given up, the authority of Revelation is ener-



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vated, and its use destroyed: the star, which is to direct our course is clouded; our compass is broke to pieces; and we are left to make the voyage of life in sad uncertainty, amidst a thoufand rocks, and shelves, and quicksands."

As Dr. Doddridge believed in the infpiration of the Scriptures, fo did Dr. Jennings, and they both confidered it as a very important article of their faith. If what the Doctor has faid in these Sermons does not directly tend to confirm this doctrine, it does ultimately; and the kind of evidence which he adduces in defence of Divine Revelation, is eafy to be comprehended by every class of readers. The method in which he treats the subject is perspicuous; the style is plain and familiar, and the whole is animated by a fpirit of ferioufness and benevolence. As the tract is of intrinsic value, fo I think its republication is by no means unfeasonable. If it should convert one Infidel; if it should confirm any who are in a state of suspense and hesitation; if it should excite gratitude to God in the minds of those Christians, whose hearts are establisched with grace, it will afford satisfaction and pleafure

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pleasure to the Editor, that he has been necesfary to its re-publication.

## Benjamin Cracknell.

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Wareham, July, 1796.

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# THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

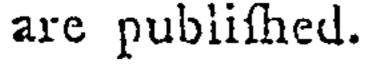
HE apparent Increase of Infidelity, or at least of the open Profession - Contraction the open Profession of it, of late Years, among fuch as difrelifh, the Purity of the Scripture Precepts, cannot but be matter of deep Concern with all, who honour God, who love the Lord Jefus Chrift in Sincerity, and who have Compassion on their fellow-Mortals, whofe dangerous Condition they fee and bewail, while the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them who believe not. To this pious and charitable Concern it is, doubtlefs, owing, that I have been earneftly folicited to publish these two Sermons. I hoped to have been excufed from publishing any thing more during the now flort remainder of my Life; for my Years are too many, and my Time is too much filled up with my flated Bufinefs, to admit of that Polifhing which is expected in Difcourfes that appear in Print. But there is a Sort of Importunity which it is hard to refift, and there are Friends to whom one knows not how to deny any thing; and therefore these Sermons, which were preached without the least View to their being made more public, must now venture into the World. I am well aware that fome Perfons may



### viii THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

judge it to be needlefs and impertinent to publish these plain Difcourfes, on an Argument which has been fo well, and fo much more fully handled in feveral Books already extant: But it has been alledged that those larger Treatifes are feldom read by the common Pcople, among whom the Faihion of Deifm, and of contemning the Scripture is very much fpread, and has infected even the lower Claffes of Mankind; and therefore it has been much defired that thefe Sermons might be published, in a small Volume by themselves; in hopes that fo little and cheap a Book may be read by many, who will neither be at the expence of procuring, nor at the Pains of reading larger Volumes. Some good Succefs which, I am informed, God was pleafed to give to these Sermons in preaching, is an Encouragement to hope that He may also be pleafed to make them of Use in reading.

As in this Publication I have gratified the Defire of many of my Christian Friends; so I hope that, in Return, they will gratify my Defire and Request, which is, that they will join with me in earness Prayer to God for his Blessing on these Sermons, that so they may be some Means of stopping the Progress of Infidelity, of recovering such as are already taken in the Snare of the Devil, and of establishing the Faith of the People of God; and so, though not otherwise, will they also do honour to the Judgement of those at whose Defire they



### D. JENNINGS.

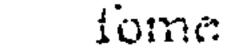
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## SERMON I.

JOHN XXI. 24.

We know that his Testimony is true.

THUS St. John folennly afferts the truth of what he had written in the former in the he had written in the foregoing hiftory, concerning the life, death and refurrection of Jesus Christ. He had not written these things upon hearsay and uncertain report, but upon his own certain knowledge; they were no other things than what he had feen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears, which he had looked upon, or attentively confidered, and which his bands had, as it were, bandled of ile word of life, as he fpeaks in the first verse of his first Epistle; and therefore he had the fullest assurance of the truth of the teftimony which he had given concerning them. But his form of expression, we know, has led some to suppole that this last chapter, or at least the two last verses of it, were written by some other hand, and figned by





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fome other of Chrift's disciples then living, as their attellation to the truth of St. John's Gofpel: but I fee no reason for such a supposition, since St. John himfelf ules exactly the fame form of expression in his Epiftle, " That which we have feen and heard, declare "we unto you." St. Paul also writes in the fame manner, 1 Thell. ii. 18. "Wherefore we would have " come unto you, even I Paul." Perhaps St. John ules we instead of I in the text, partly to denote the general affent which men give to fuch fort of teftimony as he had given concerning Chrift. The teffimony of a man of unblemilhed character, who was an eye-witnefs of facls, is generally credite 1; few, if any, will doubt but such a man's testimony, on his own perfonal knowledge, is true; and fuch was the teflimony which St. John had given, and written in this hiftory concerning Jefus Chrift; therefore we all know, or it is the common fense of mankind in fuch matters, that his teflimony is true. And especially St. John meant to declare his own certainty of these things, as he had done before, chap. xix. 35. "He " that faw it bare record, and his record is true; and he " knoweth hat he faith true." St. John was affured, beyond all doubt and hefitation, that his teffimony concerning Chrift was true: but how are we to be affured of it? That is the quedion which I propose to handle in this difcourse. What evidence have we of the truth of the Gospel, upon which we may make these words our own, and fay, rue know that his tejimory is

### true?

true? Now, in difcourfing on this point, I fhall not confine myfelf to St. John's teftimony, and to those things only which he has recorded in his hiltory of Christ; but I shall take in also the testimory of all the other Apollies and facred writers, concerning all things which are contained in the Holy Scriptures; and I hope to shew you (to the conviction of any fuch as may doubt of this teltimony,' and for the further establishment of the faith of these who believe it) that it is true; fo that as they, the Apollies, ventured their lives and their fouls upon it, we may fafely do fo too.

Here, that we may proceed by regular fieps in our enquiry into the truth of this testimony, or of the Scripture Revelation, we shall first confider the probability of it, and then, fecondly, the certainty of it; that it is probable to be true, and then that is more than probable; so that we also may fay, upon fufficient evidence, we know that this testimony is true.

First, As to the probability of this testimony, or of the Scripture Revelation. We hear of fome things which are fo utterly improbable to be true, that we do not think it worth while to give ourfelves any trouble to enquire about them, but reject them at once as mere fable. So fome perfons treat the Golpel; but fuch perfons are grievoufly, and, it may be feared, fatally mistaken; for there is much more probability,

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at least, that this testimony is true, than what they think for. For,

1. It is very certain that we greatly needed fuch a teftimony or revelation from God as the Bible is. It is certain, I fay; however confidently fome will affert that the light of natural reason alone is sufficient to teach men all their duty, and to guide them in the way to happinefs. Were that true, and could it be made to appear to be true, we would give up the Bible at once; for it is not to be thought that God would fend us a Revelation which we had no need of. But how plainly does the contrary appear to be true? For look into any heathen nation, where the light of divine Revelation never came, and fee what mere human reafon did, or has ever done, to make men wife, and good, and holy, to show them their duty, and to prevail with them to praclife it. What do we fee in any of those nations, but the most senseles idolatries, and most immoral practices? The Apostle gives us the true picture of the gentiles, and of the manner of their life, in the r Pet. iv. 3. "They walked in lasciviousness, lusts, "excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abo-"minable idolatries," and fo they do still, and fo it may reafonably be expected they always will do, until God shall please to send his Gospel among them. Now, can we be fo vain as to think that our reafoning powers are fo much better than theirs, that if we had been left, as they are, to the mere unaffifted light of

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natural reason, we should have spelt out our duty and our immortal interest better than they have done? No, no, human nature and human reafon are much the fame all the world over. I doubt not but the molt favage nations of heathens have as good natural geniules among them as are to be found in the politer nations of Christians. What then is it that has made the difference betwixt us and them? Why are not we practifing the fame fenfeles idolatries that. they do? Why are not we as flupidly ignorant of the things of God, and the duties of morality and religion. as they are? It is doubtlefs Revelation that has made the difference; it is because God has given us the light. of his glorious Gospel, which he has not given to. them; otherwife we have no reafon to think but we. fhould have been as ignorant as they are. It is a common faying, and a very true one, there is no argument. against master of fast: Now the fast is, that there neither is, nor ever was, any nation under Heaven on which the light of revelation had not fhined, but what was, in the general, thus flupidly ignorant and wicked. How natural then is the inference? How fair the conclusion? That if we were not favoured with the light of the Gofpel, we should have been such as those Heathens are. This then, methinks, might be enough to convince us, that we needed a revelation. from Gcd, and that the light of reafon only is by no : means fullies nt to guide men in the way of truth;. duty, and nappinefs.

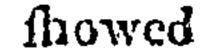
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And further, it should seem that men have generally been sensible of their need of a revelation from Heaven, from the many pretended revelations which have been broached in the world, and the readinefs with which they have been received by multitudes of people. Whence is it that the Alkeran \* of Mahomet, for instance, which abounds with fuch fenfeless rhapfodies and idle tales, has been received as a divine revelation by fo many nations? Does not that plainly fhew that they are fensible of their need of a revelation from God, to inftruct them in their duty, and the way to happiness; and that the light of their unaffisted reason is not fufficient for that purpose? and therefore, rather than have no revelation, they will take up with fo wretched a forgery; fo that, in this matter, we might appeal to the common sense of mankind, that we stand in need of a revelation from God.

Again, another argument to prove our need of fuch a testimony, or revelation from God, as the Gospel is, may be, that without it we should have no sufficient encouragement to practise our duty, even though we knew it. Suppose the light of reason only could have

\* I call it the Alkoran, in compliance with cuftom, though it would be more proper to fay, the Koran; for the particle Al, in the Arabic language, fignifies the, and Koran is a Reading, or that which ought to be read. But, as feveral English readers would hardly know what book, was meant by that title, I choose to give it the common title which custom has made familiar to us.



fhowed us, in all cafes, what is our duty to do, yet, without those motives and encouragements which the Gospel gives, I know not what should move and encourage us to practife it. What encouragement could finners have to repent, and return to God and their duty? What ground of hope of the pardon of their fins, and of future bleffedness? Surely none that was fufficient, none that would be effectual to move them

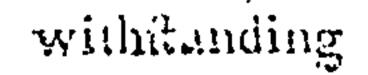
to religion. Here I might eafily fhow you the infufficiency of the light of nature, and confequently the necessity of a revelation from God, in a great many particulars; but it may be fusicient to instance in these two, first, A revelation from God was necessary to give us any reasonable hope of the pardon of our fins. And, fecondly, To give us any well-grounded hope of a future state of blessedness. These are two of the most animating principles of all religion and virtue, and for both we are plainly beholden to revelation.

First, A new and super-natural revelation from God was necessary to give sinners any reasonable hope of the pardon of their fins; and without that there could be no religion in the world; no encouragement to repent and to do any duty at all: but the finners of this world, if they were not abfolutely stupid and thoughtless about their fouls and eternity, would fink into defpair, as the damned in hell do. Our own confeiences will tell us that we are finners; that we have broken our Maker's law; that we have most ungratefully and shamefully alienated

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alienated our hearts from his love, and our lives from his fear, that we have walked contrary to God; and therefore, as he is a just and holy God, our own reason will also tell us that he must needs be highly displated. wish us. That we have been finners against God, is a truth too plain and certain to be contradicted : even the Heathens univerfally acknowledged it, and few, if any men in their fober fenfes, have had the front o deny it. But how fhall we know whether God is difpoled to pard in our fins, and to become reconciled unto us? What encouragement fhall we have to repent. of our fins, and to return to our duty to him? Will natural reason tell us this? Could we know it without a revelation from Heaven? I do not fee that we poffibly could: for if we could obtain a certainty of pardon without a revelation, we must either gather it from the effential goodness of God, or from the visible effects of his goodness and bounty to us; but I do not fee how we could gather it from either of them. As for the effential goodnefs of God, we know, our reafon will tell us, that justice is as effential to his nature as goodnefs; and what reafon will inform us that God will raife the honour of his goodness on the ruins of his juffice? or that he will glorify one of his attributes at the expence, and to the diffuenour of another of them? Whi reafon tell us, that if we are forry for our fins, and repent, fo good a Being as God is, will doubtless forgive us ? but does repentance fatisfy human Governments? Do they not often punish criminals not-





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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED.

withstanding they repent? And does not the honour of the Law and Government require that it should be fo? And may not the righteous Governor of the World do fo too? Forgiveness is to be fure the effect of God's goodness; but what then, does it flow from the neceffity of his nature, or from his free will? Most certainly to forgive fin is an act of his will and grace? Has not God a right and a power to punish his rebellious creatures? Certainly he has: and how can reason only tell us that he will ever depart from that right?

Again, can reason tell us what fins God will par-

don, whether all, or only *fome*? and how often he will repeat his pardon, in cafe we relapfe into fin, and repeat our transgreffions, which is the case with men continually? Or will it tell us on what terms God will forgive us, if he will forgive us at all? I can find no fatisfactory answers, from the dictates of reason only, to any of these enquiries. It is certain the Heathens, who had not the light of revelation among them, were greatly at a lofs concerning all thefe matters. "Who " can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away " from his anger that we perifh not?" faid the Heathen King of Nineveh, Jonah iii. 9. That was the farthest that reason could go in this matter. Who can tell whether God will be prevailed upon to pardon our fins or not? Perhaps he will, but perhaps he will not; a poor encouragement this to repentance. We cannot

## then infer, with any certainty, that God will pardon fin

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fin from the goodness of his nature; because he is just as well as good : neither can we infer it, with any more certainty, from the visible effects of his goodness which we fee in the world around us, and which we ourfelves experience in other matters. We plainly perceive, indeed, and we feel, that Ged is kind and good; for he loads us daily with his benefits, he gives us rain and fruitful feasons, and many other bleffings in this world: but do we not fometimes feel, to our colt, that he is a just God too? or whence come all our calamitics and afflictions? Had it not been for fin we had known no forrow. "Affliction cometh not out of " the duft, nor trouble out of the ground \*;" none of thefe things befal us without the appointment of God. Must not then our afflissions be confidered as manifest tokens of the righteous judgment of God upon us for our fins against him? However, does not God infli& visible punishment on some sinners in this world for their fins? And can reafon affure us that he will not do the fame to all finners in the world to come ? and though he defers our deferved punishment for a time, how are we fure that he will never inflict it? A condemned criminal is obliged to his prince for a reprieve; but he cannot infer from it that he shall certainly be pardoned: and especially if, after the reprieve, the ungrateful wretch commits new crimes against his. prince, (as man, ungrateful man, does against God,)

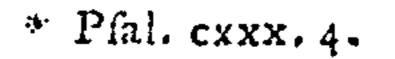
\* Job v. 6.

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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. II

a reprieve for a time would be but a feeble ground to build his assurance of pardon upon. And no better ground is that on which finners against God are apt to build their hope of his pardon; namely, because he does not execute judgment upon them fpeedily, but fuffers them flill to enjoy the bounties of his providence. So that the farthest reason alone can carry us in our hopes of pardon from God, is only thus far, who can tell? it may be God will pardon us, and it may be he will not. Who can tell but God may repeat, and turn away his anger, that we perchont? But is it not altogether as reafonable to fay, on the other hand, Who can tell but that God will not turn and repent, nor turn away his anger from us, and then we muft perifh everlastingly? Elessed be God for his Gospel, for that revelation of his mind, and will, and grace, which clears up all these difficultie, which assures us that "there is forgiveness with him "," and which flows us the way in which we may obtain it. And now do not you plainly fee that a revelation from God was highly necellary for this purpole? Molt certainly it was. Man could have had no fufficient motive nor encouragement to repentance and religion without it.

If it fhould be objected here that the Heathens, who had no fuch revelation of the grace of God, yet did not defpair of his mercy; but many of them had very con-



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fident hopes of pardon and of happinels in a future ftate. I anfwer, that as to the wifer and more knowing part of them, it is not true that they were very confident; but very far otherwife, we hear them, in their writings which are come down to our times, freely acknowledging their great uncertainty about these matters; and I am much inclined to think that what hopes they had were originally derived from revelation. They were all the posterity of Adam and of Noah, to whom God gave a revelation of his grace; and so much of that revelation was continued by tradition, in all their tribes and nations, as to give them some hope that God was inclined to pardon and forgive finners.

The other inftance which I mentioned of the infufficiency of the light of natural reafon only to make men wife unto falvation, is,

Secondly, Concerning a flate of future bleffednefs. You cannot but be fenfible that it is a matter of mighty importance, in order to animate and encourage men to the practice of all duty towards God or man, that they fhould be well perfuaded and fatisfied of a future flate; that there is a reward for the rightcous; and that our labour fhall not be in vain. When Afaph once doubted of a future flate, it quite difpirited and difcouraged him from all duty and goodnefs. "Verily,' fays he,

## " I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my "hands

#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. 13

"hands in innocency." Pfal. Ixxiii. 13. Take away the doctrine of future rewards, and you cut the nerves of all piety and virtue. "He that cometh to God " must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of " all them that diligently feek him." Heb. xi. 6. But now we not only believe, but we know, or we plainly fee with our own eyes, that good and holy men are not rewarded by the bounties of Providence in this life and world, more than the most vile and profligate; but " all things here come alike to all, end there is one "event to the righteous and the wicked\*." Well, but fince there is no proper reward to the righteous in this world, may we expect it in another? What can reason tell us? Why, perhaps we may; that is the most it can fay to this matter. Who can tell but God may pardon our fins, and exempt us from future punishment? But will he also receive us into his favour, and make us happy for ever? That is a farther doubt, which reason alone can never satisfy. It would be tedious, and almost endless, to recite all the feveral paffages which might be collected from the wifeft of the Heathen Writers, in which they express their doubt and uncertainty as to this matter 7, "Who knows but "death may prove to a man the greatest good," faid one of their most celebrated moralist, Plato; and that

#### \* Ecclef. ix. 2, 3.

+ The Reader may fee a judicious Collection of passages to this purpole, from the best of the ancient Heathen Writers, in Mr. Nathaniel Toylor's Prefervative against Deisn, Chap. II.



was the most that any of them could fay. What a feeble ground of hope, what a poor encouragement to goodnefs was this? And yet this was all that their reafon could discover to them about a future state. Most certainly then we may conclude, that if God did really intend mercy and falvation for any of the finners of this world, he would let them know, by a revelation from himfelf, that he is inclined to pardon their fins, and to receive them into his favour, and to make them happy in his prefence for ever. There was plainly an absolute necessity of a new revelation, after men had turned finners and rebels against God, in order to their recovery to holinefs and happinefs; and in order to excite, to animate and encourage them to all the duties of morality and religion; and therefore upon this one supposition, that God had a merciful defign towards any of the fallen human race, a new revelation might most reasonably be expected from him; for we do not fee how his merciful defign could have been answered without it. This therefore affords one very probable argument that there is fuch a revelation of the mind and will of God, which he has given unto men.

And now the question is, where this revelation, or testimony from God, is to be found and met with? We fay it is in our Bible, the Mahometans fay it is in their Alkoran, and there are nations of heathens who have what they pretend to be a revelation from Hea-

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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED: 15

ven among them Let us now enquire which of all these bids fairest to be the true testimony of God. This brings me to a second remark, on the side of the Scripture Revelation, namely,

II. That it is every way worthy of God. Since a revelation from God was necessary, and might reasonably be expected, we may fairly conclude that fuch a revelation is in the world; and it is an argument of ftrong probability, in favour of our Bible, that it is every way worthy of God: it is such a revelation as we might expect that God would make, if he were pleafed to make any at all; for it directly relieves us in all those difficulties which we fo much wanted to be informed and fatisfied about. It affures us that there is forgivenefs with God for finners in this world, and it directs us to a certain way and method of obtaining it. It fhows us how God has most wifely and graciously contrived a way for reconciling and uniting the intereft and honour of his goodnefs and juffice; fo that he can now pardon finners and receive them to his mercy, and yet allert and vindicate the honour of his justice and his law; and that was by "fetting forth his own "Son to be a propitiation for our fins, laying our ini-" quities upon him," and inflicting upon him a punishment which was equal to what our fins had deferved. So the Bible tells us, that " the Lord hath " laid upon him the iniquity of us all ";" that " the

> \* Ifaiah liii. 6. C 2 <sup>cf</sup> Son

"Son of God was made fin for us"," "fuffered the "just for the unjust;" that " he was wounded for " our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, the " challifement of our peace was upon him, and with " his stripes we are healed "." It directs us to faith in Chrift, as the way of obtaining the pardon of our fins and reconciliation with God; and it affures us that whofoever believes on Chrift fhall be pardoned and faved. Now this is the very thing which we fo much wanted to be informed of, the grand enquiry which fome of the more thoughtful heathens were fo anxious about, but in which they were never able to obtain any satisfaction. "Wherewith shall I come before "the Lord, and how myself before the high God? " Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with " calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleafed with " thoulands of rams, or with ten thoulands of rivers of "oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, "the fruit of my body for the "fin of my foul?" So Balak, a heathen prince, under a pang of conviction of fin, inquired about forgiveness, Micah vi. 6, 7. Will God forgive me at any rate? If he will, what must I do to obtain forgiveness from him? His prophet Balaam was not able to refolve him: he could direct him to nothing more, nor further, than to " do juf-"tice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his "God," verse 8. But alas! this makes no atonement

## \* 2 Cor. v. 21. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. † Isaiah liii. 5.

for fins past; and therefore it must leave it utterly uncertain whether God will pardon or no. It is the Gofpel, and that only, that tells us wherewith we may come before the Lord, and find mercy and acceptance with him. That tells us of an atonement which has been already made for our fins, and which God will accept in behalf of all those who believe in his Son Jefus Chrift. This is that wherewith we are to come before the Lord, upon which we are to truft, and which we have to plead with him; and then we are promifed and affured that we shall find mercy.

Again, the Bible reveals to us a future state, both

of happiness and of milery; of happiness to the good, of mifery to the wicked; and both are as plainly defcribed as our weak capacities can at prefent take in.

The laws and rules of duty which the Bible contains are all worthy of God, as they are all agreeable to the perfections of his nature. They are rules of purity, fuitable to the holinefs of God; they are rules of righteousness, agreeable to his justice; they are laws of kindnefs fuitable to his goodnefs. How often, and how earneftly, is univerfal love and benevolence recommended and preffed in the Bible? Love is there made the very fum and fubstance of all our duty; it is faid to be the fulfilling of the Law. How worthy then is this law of that God whose nature is love?





Again, the doctrines of the Bible are every way worthy of God. They no way contradict, but very much improve and heighten our rational ideas of his nature and perfections: they clearly shew us how the honour of the divine justice and holiness are fully secured, while finners are pardoned and received to his mercy; and how the feemingly opposite claims of the feveral attributes of God are all reconciled in our redemption by Jefus Chrift. In fhort, if we compare both the precepts and doctrines of the Bible, with all the notions of God which reason can give us, sure we must own that it looks very like a transcript of the divine mind, for it is every way worthy of God. It is just fuch a revelation as we wanted, and fuch as might reafonably be expected that God would give to men. It is highly probable therefore, to fay no more at prefent, that this is indeed a revelation from God.

III. I would obferve, and I will boldly venture to fay farther, that there is no other book, or no other fystem of religion in the world, that pretends to be a revelation from God, which is worthy of him, and therefore none to be compared with our Bible. As for the old Pagan fystems of religion, we are fure they could not come from the only living and true God, because they enjoined men to worship many false Gods. They could not come from a holy God, because they recommended vice and immorality; as drunkenness at the festivals of Bacchus, one of their gods, and lewdness at the fest-

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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. 19

tivals of Venus, one of their goddess. The moral rules of one Zoroaster, who taught the ancient Perfians their religion, are faid to be the purest of any of the Pagan fystems; but yet his fystem was fufficiently difgraced from the honour of being a divine revelation, by its allowing of incest, of the groffest kind. The only book now extant, which pretends to be a competitor with our Bible, that is worth mentioning, is the Alkoran, or Bible of the Mahometans, which Mahomet pretended to have received by immediate revelation from God: but if you compare this book with our Bible, it will be eafy to fee which is most worthy of God, and which is most likely to come from him. It is allowed there are in the Alkoran fome fine fentences, and fome good moral rules and precepts, here and there interspersed; but by far the greatest part of it is fuch incoherent jargon, fuch tedious repetitions of the fame things, and fuch nonfenfical rhapfodies, as that no reafonable man, who is not blinded by prejudice, can think that it came from God. Befides, there are many flat contradictions in it; fome laws delivered, and afterwards contradicted again. The greatest part of the future happines it promises is quite ridiculous, as, confifting of sensual pleasures, and those of the groffest kind. As to the laws and rules of morality which this book contains, though they may be generally pretty strict and good, yet there is one exception, which is enough to difcredit the whole, as to its pretence of coming from God, which is, that the Alkoran



allows of polygamy: it permits each man to have four wives at once, which we are fure is against the Law of Nature, and therefore it could not come from the God of Nature; fince he has made no fuch provision in nature as four wives for each man, nor any thing like it; for there are no more females born than males,. nor indeed quite fo many\*; therefore polygamy is evidently against the Law of Nature; and therefore, I fay, the Alkoran, which allows it, cannot be a revelation from the God of Nature. And indeed, the author of this book feems to have been fenfible that it. would not bear a strict enquiry into its truth and authority; and therefore he forbade his disciples ever to. doubt of it, or dispute about it. This method looks. very fuspicious; this is not like our Bible, which exhorts us "to prove all things, that we may hold fast: "that which is good." I Theff. v. 21. And it commends the Bereans for their diligently fearching into the evidence of that revelation which was brought them by an Apostle of Christ, Acts xvii. 11. And now, can

\* This is an observation that has long been made, and any onemay fatisfy himfelf of the truth of it by the weekly and yearly bills of births and burials which are published in London; for by them it appears that there are conflantly more males born than females by one in about fourteen; which is a wonderful inftance and evidence of the care of Providence, in preserving the due proportion of the two fexes to each other, by this furplus of males to balance the. walte of that fex above the other, by feas and wars, and fome other untimely deaths, which several dangerous trades expose the men to.

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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. 21

it be any matter of doubt with us which of these two, the Bible or the Alkoran, is the true tellimony of God? Upon the whole then, it appears, that as our Bible is every way worthy of God, and is such a revelation as we might reasonably expect from him, so there is no other book, or system of religion in the world, which is worthy of God, or can be supposed to come from him. I now add once more,

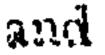
IV. That none but God himself can reasonably be supposed to be the author of our Bible. If it is not the word of God, whofe is it, and what is it? Why, it must then be all a forgery; and a very wicked forgery, to be fure, it would be, for any man or men to write a book of their own heads, and to father it upon God, and tell the world they received it by revelation from him. Now what fort of men will you suppose these writers of the Bible to be, if they were not infpired by the fpirit of God? They must be either good men, or bad men. To suppose that any good and honest man would be guilty of fuch a wicked forgery, is contradiction and nonfenfe; that could never be. A good and honeft man, we are fure, would not fay that he had received a revelation from God, when he knew he had not. We are very fure therefore, that if the Bible was not the testimony of God, it was not written by good men. Shall we suppose then that it was written by bad and wicked men? But read the Bible, *fearch the Scriptures*, and then judge whether that be at all probable. Would

#### wicked

wicked men have written against all manner of fin, and laid down fuch pure and excellent rules of holinefs as the Bible does? What wicked man would have put fuch fentences as these into a book of his writing? " The Lord hateth all workers of iniquity \*; the co-" vetous whom the Lord abhorreth<sup>†</sup>; there is no peace " faith my God to the wicked ‡. Whoremongers, " adulterers, drunkards, and liars, shall have no part " in the kingdom of God and of Christ," and a great deal more to the fame purpose. What wicked man would have preferibed fuch excellent holy rules as thefe? "Whatfoever you would that men should do " unto you, do you also so to them §. Avenge not « yourselves, neither give place unto wrath \*\*. Ren-"der not evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but " contrariwife bleffing tt. Give diligence to cleanse "yourfelves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, " perfecting holines in the fear of God ‡‡, for with-• out holinefs no man shall fee the Lord [[]." Now can. you think that any wicked man would ever have written fuch things as these? Is it at all probable that a. company of wicked men would have confpired thus to expose themselves, and to render themselves and their own character odious? Besides, what view could any. wicked defigning men have in making fuch a forgery,

Pfal. v. 5. + Pfal. x. 3. ‡ Ifaiah xlviii. 22.
 || 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, Rev. xxi. 8. § Matt. vii. 12.
 \*\* Rom. xii. 19. ++ 1 Pet. iii. 9. +‡ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

|||| Heb. zii. 14.



### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. 23

and palming it upon the world for a divine revelation? For what plan is there in all the Bible of advancing men's fecular intereft? What fcheme of worldly power can be found there? Thofe who endeavour to ground worldly power on the doctrine of Chrift, as the Papifts do, alledge the authority of Fathers and Councils to fupport their claim; for they well know that nothing of that fort is to be found in the Scriptures. Upon the whole then, it is utterly improbable that the Bible was a contrivance and forgery of wicked men : and if neither good men nor wicked men were the proper authors of it, it must furely come from God. And we may conclude, that in composing the Scriptures boly men of old fpoke, and wrote as they were moved by the Hsly Ghoft.

Here let us ftop, and recollect how far we are advanced in the argument to prove that the Scriptures are the true Teftimony, or Word of God. We have proved that fome revelation from God was neceffary for man, in his prefent ftate, as a guilty, finful, and ignorant creature; and fuch all men certainly are. Therefore, upon the fuppolition, which none of us are backward to make, that God had a merciful delign towards any of the fallen human race, a revelation from him might reafonably be expected. We have flewn you that our Bible is every way worthy of God; and that no other book in the world, that pretends to be a

## revelation from God, has any thing like fo good a

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claim to that honour as our Bible has. We have thown that it could not be the contrivance and forgery either of good or of bad men; and therefore, in all probability, it must be the testimony of God.

Suppose we were to rest the matter here, and that we had not fuch strong positive evidence of the truth of the Scriptures, as I hope to shew in the next difcourse that we have; but it was only highly probable they are the true word of God. They may be true, and it is very probable they are true: suppose this was all we had to fay for the Scriptures, what then? Should any of us do wifely and prudently to defpife and reject them? Or would it not rather be our wifdom to follow the rule of these Scriptures, and endeavour to have our hearts and lives conformed to them. I remember a little ftory in a celebrated Author: " A " lewd young fellow feeing an aged hermit go by him! \* barefoot, Father, says he, you are in a very misera-" ble condition, if there is not another world: True, " fon, fays the hermit, but what is your condition if " there is "." Suppose there is such another world as the Scripture tells us of a Heaven and a Hell, endle happinels and glory for the good, and endless miler and torment for the wicked; only suppose this should be all true, as most probably it is true, what a despe rate rifk does the ungodly finner run? Was the Bibl

\* Spectator, No. 575.

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all a forgery, still the good man, the Christian, runs no rifk at all: let that be how it will, he is fafe; and his Bible affords him a thousand supports and comforts, and pleafing hopes, to fweeten the prefent life as it goes on. But suppose this Eible should prove to be the true testimony of God, as I make no doubt but it is, what will become of the profane feorner, the wicked transgressor of the law of God, the despiser of Christ and his Gofpel? The Bible fays, "The wicked thall " be turned into hell, with all those that forget God\*;" " that he who believeth the Gofpel fhall be faved, but "he that believeth not fhall be damned!," " fhall be " punished with everlasting destruction from the pre-"fence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power<sup>‡</sup>." Certainly, in a matter of fuch importance, the fafe way is the wifest way. " The fear of the " Lord that is wildom, and to depart from evil is un-" derstandings." Surcly there was great reason for the Pfalmist to fay, "Have all the workers of iniquity "no knowledge"?" Are they fools, or are they mad men, to run such a desperate risk of eternal damnation? To choose so dangerous a road before a fafe one, which is also the most easy and pleasant. For "Wildom's ways are ways of pleafantnefs, and all " her paths are peace"." " But the way of tranff greffors is hardtt," and dreadral will the end of it be.

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\* Pfal. ix. 17. † Mark xw. 16. ‡ 2 Thefl. i. 9. § Job xxviii. 28. || Pfal. xiv. 4. \*\* Prov. iii. 17. + : Prev. x.i. 15.





But the extreme folly of these sinners will appear in a still stronger light, when we come to consider the certain evidence and proof we have that the Holy Scriptures are the true testimony and revelation of God; which is to be the subject of the next Discourse.

#### THE END OF THE FIRST DISCOURSE.



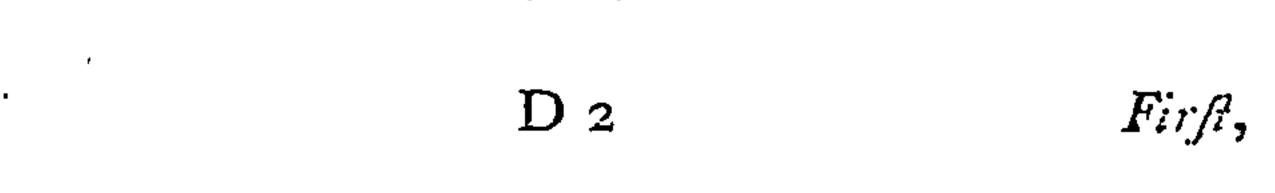
## SERMON II.

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JOHN XXI. 24.

## And we know that his Testimony is true.

CT. John, who wrote this hiftory of the life, and V death, and refurrection of Christ, wrote not upon hearfay, but upon his own certain knowledge; and therefore he was perfectly fure that what he had teftified was true. But how shall we be affured that it is true? That is the question which I have proposed to handle from this text. In difcourfing on which I proposed, not to confine myself merely to St. John's testimony, and to those matters only which he hath recorded in this hiftory of Christ; but to take in alfo the testimony of the other Apostles and facred writers, concerning all things which are contained in the Holy Scriptures. Here it was proposed to confider,



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First, The probability of the truth of this testimony, or of the foripture-revelation; and, *fecondly*, the certainty of it.

It has been shown in the former discourse, that it is, at least, highly probable that the Scriptures are true; or that they are a revelation fent us by the God of truth, as----because a revelation from God was necellary for men in their present fallen state; and therefore it might reasonably be expected from him, -----becaufe the Bible is every way worthy of God; and therefore it bids fair to be a revelation from him, ----- becauie no other work in the world, that pretends to be a revelation from God, has any thing like fo good a claim to that honour as the Bible has, ---- and because neither good men nor bad men can reasonably be supposed to be the proper authors of the Bible; therefore, in all probability, it is the testimony of God himfelf, and those holy men, who wrote the Scriptures, wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghoft. I proceed now,

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Secondly, To show the certainty of this testimony; or to offer some more certain and conclusive arguments for the truth of the Holy Scriptures. It is not only highly probable, but it is very certain that this testimony is true; for we have the most substantial evidences that we could expect, or even desire, in such a case, to prove to us,

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#### EXAMINED AND CONFIRMED. 29

that the Bible is indeed the word of God, a revelation which he hath fent us. Here I will begin,

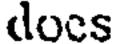
First, With the character and conditions of the writers of this testimony, who folemnly declared that they wrote it by the infpiration of God. Now the question is, whether they are to be believed in what they teffify? It was shown in the last Discourse that it cannot be suppofed that any good men would be guilty of fo wicked a forgery, as to father their own conceptions and writings upon God, and to fay, that they received what they wrote from God, when they knew they did not: and it is as improbable, and indeed impossible, that the Bible could be the contrivance of any bad men; for had wicked men framed a book to impose upon the world, under the notion of a revelation from God, we are morally fure they would have made it more favourable to their corrupt inclinations and lufts; and, we may be very fure, they would not have facrificed their worldly interest, and their very lives to this their testimony, as it is certain feveral of the writers of the Bible did, if they had known it to be a forgery. The only possible supposition then that can be made, in case the Bible is not a revelation from God, is, that the feveral writers of it were Enthuliasts, men of a distempered brain, who fancied they were infpired when they were not. Such perfons there doubtlefs have been, whose heads were turned, and who fancied themfelves to be infpired, and that they had a revelation from God, when there was

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nothing more in it than their own crazy imagination. Now can we suspect that this might be the case with the writers of the Bible? Can we fee any reason to furmise that they were such deluded Enthusiasts? Or have we not the best evidence in the world that they were sober, cool-headed men, who knew what they faid, and were certain of what they wrote? For this I may appeal,

1. To their manner of writing, and to the subjects which they wrote upon. For those facred writers did not only deliver doctrines from God, and foretel things to come, but they also related, and have recorded feveral facts and matters of hiftory, which, at the time when they wrote them, could eafily have been disproved, if they had not been true. Such as Mofes's hiftory of God's delivering the Ifraelites from the bondage of Egypt, by a long train of miracles, and of his conducting them through the Wilderness for forty years, in a very extraordinary manner. The hiftory which the Apostles wrote of the life, miracles, death, and refurrection of Chrift: and they appeal to many hundreds of living witneffes for the truth of what they related; as the Apostle Paul does, 1 Cor. xv. 6. where he fays that Chrift was seen alive, after his death, by above five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom were flill living at the time when he wrote this. Now this was fair and open dealing, to appeal to hundreds of living witnesses, for the truth of a matter of fact: and



does this look like enthuliastic delusion? No certainly, Enthuliasts, and perfors of a distempered brain, are apt to deal in whinistical speculations and prophecies, and not in relating plain matters of fact, in which they might be contradicted by living witness, if what they say be not true. Again, let me observe to you farther,

2. That as the facred writers appear to be men of a found mind, and fober judgment, fo they also appear to be very honest and upright men. Witness their so often relating their own faults and failings, and those of

their dearest friends. For instance, Moses, whose writings make fo confiderable a part of the Old Teftament, how often does he, on one occasion and another, fpeak of his own weakneffes and miscarriages, and those of his nearest kindred? as, in the third chapter of Exodus, he relates how backward and unwilling he was to obey the command of God, when he called him to deliver Israel. In the latter end of the fourth chapter, he has recorded his own finful neglect of God's ordinance, in not circumcifing his fon. In Numbers xx. he relates the ftory of his own finful paflion, for  $\cdot$ which God was angry with him; and in chapter xii. of that book, he has faithfully recorded the fedition of his own brother Aaron, and his fifter Miriam, for which God fmote her with the plague of leprofy. Mofes was fo far from the vanity of most other historians, who

# commonly labour to aggrandize their own nations, that

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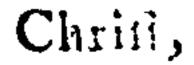
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a good part of his hiftory is taken up with the account of the perversenes, the stubborness and the idolatries of his own people Ifrael. Surely this has very much the air of an impartial and true hiftory.

The fame thing is to be observed of the writers of the New Testament, the Apostles of Christ. How freely do they publish their own faults, their pride, their ambition, their emulation, and the like? What a fhameful story do they tell of themselves! that, a little before the death of Chrift, "there was a strife among " them which of them should be accounted the greatest", and how. at the time of his last sufferings, one of their number betrayed their Lord, another denied him, and all the reft of them for fook him and fled t. St. Matthew leaves a censure upon his own life, viz. that he had been a publican, whic was an office of very bad repute. And fo does St. Paul, who writes himfelf the chief of finners, and who has recorded it in his writings, once and again, that he had been a blasphemer of Christ, and an injurious perfecutor of the Church of God. Now thefe are fuch inflances of humility and honefty as were never found among imposions, and writers of forgery. They always take care of their own reputation in the first place; whereas it is plain these writers have no regard to their own reputation, but to the honour of God and Christ. Therefore, as Nicodemus faid to

> \* Luke xxii. 24. + Matth. xxvi. 56.



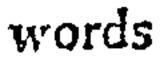


Chrift, "We know that thou art a teacher come from "God, for no man can do the miracles thou doft. ex-"cept God be with him \*." So we have good reafon to fay, concerning thefe writers of the Bible, we know that no man could, at leaft we are fure that no man would, have written fuch things of their own heads, and if they had not been inftructed what they fhould write by the fpirit of God. Again,

3. The perfect harmony and agreement of the Several books of the Scriptures with one another, is a very substan-

tial evidence that they were not the fruit of men's own fancies, but that they were all distated by one and the fame *fpirit.* For fuppole the feveral writers of the Fisly Scriptures, from Moles to John, who lived in fuch remote ages from one another, had written only their own feveral fancies and opinions, it is more than a hundred to one that they would have often contradicted one another; for mens fancies and opinions are as different as their faces are, and it may be more fo. We should then have had one fett of notions and doctrines in one book, another opposite sett of doctrines in another; whereas the Bible is plainly all of a piece, and the feveral books of it perfectly harmonize with one another. The doctrines are the fame from the beginning to the end. The fame things which were reprefented by types in the Old Testament, are delivered in plain

4 John III. 3.



words in the New Testament. There is a wonderful harmony and agreement among all the writers of the Bible, which affords a good argument to prove that they were all instructed and inspired by one and the fame spirit. We hardly find two other mens writings on the same subject, without some clashing and contradicting one another; whereas in all the vaft variety of subjects which the Scripture treats of, there is no fuch clashing and contradicting; but the facred writers of both Teltaments deliver the same doctrines, and do, in effect, speak the same things. Now it is not to be conceived, it is not in the least credible, that the mere fancies of so many different men should it.u: harmonize with one another. I remember to have read a few lines of one of our English Poets, in which this argument is beautifully expressed.

Whence but from Heaven should men urskill'd in arts, In different nations horn, in d fferent parts, Weave fuch agreeing truths ? or how? or why? Should .Il conspire to cheat us with a lie? Unask'd their pains, ungrate ul their advice, Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price. DRYDEN,

And this hints a further argument to prove that the writers of the Bible were instructed in what they wrote by the spirit of God, viz.

## 4. That they could be under no temptation, from any prospect of worldly advantage, to impose upon others, b ventin

venting that for a revelation from God which was not. For what could they propose by writing a book fo oppolite to the lufts and natural inclinations of men as the Bible is? and what did they gain by it? What indeed, in this world, but reproach, perfecution, poverty and death? and all this they contentedly fubmitted to and bore, for the truth which they had received and delivered from God. Many of them fealed their testimony with their blood; which is the ftrongeft alfurance of honefty and fincerity that men could give in fuch a cafe. Could we suppose them cunning enough to have contrived the Bible of their own heads, and wicked enough to have written it in the name of God; yet what motive could they have fo to do? Would they take all that pains only to ruin themfelves in this world, and to damn themfelves in the world to come? We cannot fure suppose such monsters in nature, as the facred writers must have been, if the Bible be not the word of God.

Thus we have made it appear, — That the writers of the Bible were men of found mind and fober judgment; — that they were honeft and upright men. — We have obferved, that the perfect agreement of the feveral books of the Scripture with one another, is a very fubftantial evidence that they were not the fruit of mens own fancies and opinions, but that they were all written under the infpiration of one and the fame fright. And further were have obferved that the face

## spirit.—And further, we have observed that the sacred

writers

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writers could be under no temptation, from any profpect of worldly advantage, to impose such a forgery upon the world, as the Scriptures must needs be, if they are not the word of God. From all which there arises a strong argument in proof of the divine authority of the Bible.

A fecond argument may be taken from the contents of the Bibl itfelf, or from what it contains. Here many learned men have taken notice of the very language and ityle in which the Scriptures are written, which feems to have fomething in it more than human, a certain majefty and grandeur, and emphatical propriety in the very words and language of the Bible, which are very much fuperior to all mere human writings whatever. But this evidence lies chiefly before those who are skilled in the orininal tongues, in which the Bible was written; for there is no translation that comes up near to the beauty of the original; and therefore I will not now infiss upon it.

But the apparent defign and tendency of the Scriptures affords a very confiderable argument for the truth of them; for they molt evidently tend, throughout, to advance the glory of God, and to promote our conformity to him. That is the fum of what the Scripture aims at in every page. It displays the glory of the feveral perfections of God, much beyond what the book of nature, or any other book in the world, ever did or



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could do. The Scripture teaches us to admire, to adore and to praife God, as well for all the good that we do, as for all the good that we obtain, or hope for. "Who made thee to differ from another, and what haft " thou that thou didst not receive from God \*, of him, " and through him, and to him are all things. To him " be glory t." So fpeaks the Scriptures. And as it tends to advance the glory of God, fo alfo to promote our conformity to him, and to recover us from the ruins of our fall: to make us holy as God is holy; and thereby to fit us for his prefence in Heaven; "To "make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light ‡. This is, most apparently, the defign and tendency of the Bible from one end to the other. It is a defign most worthy of the holy and bleffed God, and fuch, as we cannot but conclude, must come from him.

A further argument for the truth of the Scriptures, taken from the contents of them, may be founded on the Scripture prophecies, and the punctual fulfilment of them. What David speaks of the knowledge of God, concerning the conception and formation of his body, may be very well applied to his fore-knowledge of the future events of time, as it appears in the Scripture prophecies, Pfal. cxxxix. 15, 16. "My fubiliance "was not hid from Thee, when I was made in fecret,

\* 1 Cor. iv. 7, + Rom. xi. 36. ± Col. i. 12.



" and curioully wrought in the lowest parts of the " carth ; thine eyes did fée my substance, yet being " imperfect, and in thy Book all my members were " written, which in continuance were fashioned, when " as yet there was none of them." In like manner it plainly appears, from the Bible itfelf, that, "Whoever "" was the author of that Book, he faw the fubstance " and frame of the future events of Providence, while " they were fecrets to all men; and he wrote them " down in his Book, as in time they fhould come to be " fashioned, while as yet there were none of them." And that could be no other than the omnifcient God. We may challenge all other books in the world as God challenges the idols of the Heathens in Ifaiah xli. 22, "Let them bring forth and fhow us what fhall 23. " happen: flicw the things that are to come hereafter, " that we may know that ye are Gods." Now this is what the Scripture has done, in abundance of cafes; from whence we know that it is the word of God. It would be much too tedious to mention all the Scripture prophecies which have already had their punctual accomplifhment: I will only therefore inftance in two or three, and they shall be predictions of such future events as no human, nor indeed any created wifdom could poffibly forefee: events that had no connection with natural caufes, by which they might be gueffed at before-hand; but fuch as, to our view of things, were merely accidental; or fuch of which there was no probability at the time when they were foretold; or fuch

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as depended on the free will of man in acting, which therefore could be forefeen and foretold by none but that God who knoweth man's thoughts afar off. Of this fort is that remarkable prophecy concerning Cyrus; and his reftoring the Jews from their captivity, and rebuilding their temple, Isaiah xliv. 28. " Thus faith " The Lord of Cyrus, He is my shepherd and shall per-" form all my pleafure, even faying to Jerufalem thou 44 shalt be built; and to the Temple thy foundation " shall be laid." Now it is remarkable, that this prophecy was given out long before the captivity of the Jews began, when as yet there was no likelihood of any fuch thing as that they should be carried into captivity, and their temple destroyed, and need to be rebuilt again. And it is still more remarkable, that this prophecy was given out a hundred years, at least, fome fay two hundred years, before Cyrus was born; and therefore, probably, long before his parents were born; and then, who could foretel there would ever be fuch fuch a man in the world, and that his parents, who were at liberty to call him by what name they pleafed, would call him Cyrus; and that he fhould be fo kindly affectionate to the Jews, though he was a Heathen, as not only to give them free liberty to return to their own land, but to encourage and affift them in building their Temple. None could foresee, none could foretel all this, but God himself. From hence therefore we may furely conclude, that the Scripture, in which all E.2.

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this was foretold fo long before it came to pafs, is the word of God.

I might instance again, in that famous prophecy which was delivered by Jacob, concerning Shiloh, or the Messiah, Gen. xlix. 10. "The scepter shall not " depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between " his feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the ga-"thering of the people be." Now at the time when this prophecy was delivered there was no manner of likelihood that the posterity of Jacob should ever have a scepter among them. However, if such an unlikely thing fhould come to pafs, that any of these shepherds, or their posterity should rife to be kings; there was no likelihood that the feepter fhould be in the hands of Judah; for he had three elder brethren, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, who, in all human probability, would be preferred before him. When Mofes recorded this prophecy, fome hundreds of years after it was first given, there was still no likelihood of the scepter's ever being in the tribe of Judah; for Mofes, who was then the supreme magistrate under God, was of the tribe of Levi, Joshua, his successor, was of the tribe of Ephraim; and when afterwards God appointed them a king, it was Saul, who was not of the tribe of Judah, but of Benjamin; and yet at length, against all human probability, the tribe of Judah did actually obtain the fupremacy; and the fcepter did continue in it, in one form

form of government or another, until Chrift came\*... So that you fee, here was a prophecy of an event, very long before it came to pafs, which no human fagacity could possibly forefee. But God, who had appointed. it, he forefaw it, and he only could foretel it: therefore the Scripture, in which this prophecy is contained, must needs be the word of God.

We will go on now to mention two or three prophecies of the New Testament, which will as infallibly prove *that* also to be the word of God. As our Saviour's prediction of the destruction of the Temple, and the utter ruin of the Jewish state and nation, when, at the time of his delivering that prophecy, there was no appearance, nor human probability, of any such thing. His prediction of the wonderful spread of the Gospel, after his departure; and the vast increase of his church, which he compares to a grain of mussiand feed, which grows up, in a few months, to be a large and spreading tree. Now nothing was more improbable, to all human reason, than such an increase of the

\* It is not necessary, to the punctual fulfilling of this prophecy, that the perfons, in whose hands the scepter was, should be all of the tribe of Judah, as indeed they were not; for the Almonean Princes, or Maccabees, who were chief Governors upwards of a hundred years, were priefts of the Tribe of Levi: but still the Tribe of Judah was the State, and the Government was in it, until Judea was reduced into the form of a Roman Province, which was after the birth of-Christ,

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church of Christ, after he, the founder of it, had been crucified, as an infamous malefactor: and yet fo it came to pass, just as he had foretold it would be. Again, the rejection and dispersion of the Jews are foretold, both in the Old Teftament and in the New: and it is also foretold, that in time (the time that God has appointed for that great event) there shall be a general conversion of the Jews; they shall be again received into the church and favour of God; and all " Ifrael " fhall be faved"." Now, though this prophecy is not yet accomplished, yet the steps of Providence which are leading to it are fuch, and fo wonderful, that one cannot but believe that it shall be accomplished in the appointed time. I mean, God's preferving the Jews a distinct people, separate from all others, though fcattered abroad into all lands; and that for fo many hundred years together. It is a most marvellous thing, fuch as no hiftory of any other nation or peopla in the world can fhow the like.

Again, the prophecy of the man of fin, which is delivered by St. Paul. 2 Theff. ii. and which is fo plainly fulfilled in popery, in every particular of it, amounts, I think, to no lefs than a demonstration that the Apoftle wrote under the infpiration of the Holy Ghoft. For I am fure no human wildom or fagacity would have conjectured that fuch a monster as popery should ever

\* Rom. xi. 26.

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rife out of christianity\*. Now from these Scripture prophecies, and many more which might be mentioned, there arifes a more fubstantial evidence of the truth of the Scriptutes; or that they are indeed the word of God. And thus you fee, in a few instances out of many, that the Scripture has foretold fuch things as none could possibly foresee, and therefore none could foretel, but God.

Thus we have proved the truth of the Scriptures from the character and condition of the writers, --- and from the contents of the Scriptures themselves. I shall add but one proof more, which arifes,

Thirdly, from the good effects which the Scriptures have produced. Here let us first take notice of that miraculous testimony which God gave to the word of his grace, by the wonderful fuccels of the Golpel when it was first preached; and then we shall speak of the more stated and ordinary effects of it in other ages.

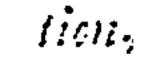
I. I fay the truth of the Gofpel was miraculoufly evidenced by the wonderful fuccefs of it, when it was first preached by the Apostles. Miraculously, I fay, for

\* See Dr. Benfon's Differtation on the Man of Sin, at the end of his Paraphrase on the second epistle to the Thessalonians; in which it is flown, with convincing evidence, that all the characters of the Man of Sin, in that prophecy, do exactly fuit to popery : and therefore we cannot doubt but that popery was intended by it.

#### I look

I look upon the fuccefs of the Apostles preaching to be a greater miracle than any other which they wrought. I am fure that our Saviour gives it the preference to all the miracles which he himself had wrought, John xiv. 12. He faid to his disciples, "He that believeth on me,. " the works that I do fhall he do likewife; and great-"er works than these shall he do, because I go to the "Father." Plainly referring to the conversion of finners, by their preaching of his Gospel, after his afcenfion to heaven. Never was there any event of Providence, never any work performed among men, inwhich there were fuch evident traces and tokens of a divine power concurring, aiding, and fucceeding, as in. the wonderful fuccefs of the Apoftles preaching : hereby God did, in a most furprising manner, give testimony to the word of his grace. Let us here fingle out a few inftances, relating to their preaching and their fuccefs, which manifest that the hand of the Lord was with them, as,

**1.** Confider what difficulties those preachers of the Gospel had to encounter with. They were fuch as made their fuccefs exceedingly improbable. For the world was generally funk into the dregs of idolatry and wickednefs; and nothing could be more contrary to the corrupt inclinations of mankind, than the doctrine which the Apostles preached. It was no fine story to please the flesh, and humour fenfuality; but quite the contrary, it taught and it required self-denial and mortifica-



tion, and universal purity. This doctrine, therefore, must needs be very unpopular. And further, it would be no little prejudice against it, that the author of this doctrine was but a mean and obscure person, and a man of a very obnoxious character, Jefus, the fon of a carpenter, who had been accured, by his own countrymen, of treason and blasphemy, and had been condemned by Pilate, the Roman governor, to fuffer the most painful and ignominious death. Now, to invite men to become disciples to this Jesus, after he was crucified and dead, how preposterous would it seem? to tell men that they must trust for eternal life and falvation, on one that could not, or however did not, save himself from being put to death, who would not laugh at fuch a wild propofal? "We preach Chrift crucified unto the Jews " a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness"."

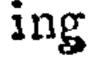
Let it be observed again, That the doctrine and preaching of the Apostles were vigorously opposed by men of figure, and that they were perfecuted whereever they came. Then was remarkably fulfilled that prophecy, Pfalm ii. 2. "The Kings of the earth fet "themfelves, and the rulers took counfel together " against the Lord, and against his anointed." And what hope could the Apostles have of any fucces of their preaching, under all these disadvantages and difcouragements, when their doctrine was fo unpopular

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in itself, and when the whole world, in a manner, stood against them. And further let it be considered,

2. What fort of men these first preachers of the Gospel were. If any enterprise ever required men of education and learning, of power and interest, to render it fuccefsful, furely this did. But were the first preachers of the Gospel such men? No, far otherwise. Chrift commissioned and fent forth a few filbermen to preach his Gospel; men of mean rank and condition, without credit or interest, without the authority of power, or the charms of eloquence: these were the men whom Chrift fent forth to preach his Gofpel, and to fet up his kingdom in the world; to confound  $\mathcal{J}u$ daism and overturn Paganism. "You see your calling, " brethren," fays the Apostle, " how that not many " wife men after the fleih, not many mighty, not many " noble are called," or rather, it should be rendered, " are employed in calling you." I Cor. i. 26. Thefe are the men that are fent to confute the learned rabbi's and the famous philosophers. Was ever any thing fo unlikely, and improbable? The heavenly treasure is placed in earthern veffels like Gideon's lamps in earthern pitchers, "that the excellency of the power might ap-" pear to be of God." 2 Cor. iv. 7. Let us now fee,

3. What fuccess they had. Here we see the power of God shining out very illustrious, by which he gave testimony to the word of his grace. For, notwithstand-



ing all these difadvantages and discouragements, the fuccels of their preaching was altonishingly great. They made profelytes and converts to the faith of the Golpel by hundreds and thousands at a fermon; and spread their doctrine in a few years over most countries of the then known world. And the change it wrought in the hearts and lives of men was very wonderful. It was fuch indeed as was not possible for any power but that of God to effect. Wherever the Gofpel came, it transformed Pagans into Christians. They renounced the religion of their anceftors, in which they had been educated; and " turned from their idols to " ferve the living and true God\*. All the power of human learning and eloquence, could not stand against the power of the preaching of these poor fifthermen; and notwithstanding the mighty opposition that was then made to the Gofpel, in every country where those preachers came, yet it spread through the world with amazing swiftness. Tertullian, who lived in the next age after Christ, has these words in his apology, which he addresses to the heathen magistrates, " If," says he, we were enemies to your state, you might well scek 'new cities and countries to govern; for you would <sup>i</sup> have more enemies than friends in your empire. We have filled your towns, your cities, your provinces, your caffles, your camps, and your courts; only we have left your idol temples to yourfelves; all other

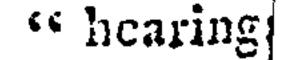
. \* I Theff. i. 9. " places

" places are full of chriftians." Thus was the *little* flock of Chrift encreafed in a few years; fo mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Now we mult furely be blind, if we don't fee there was fomething more than human in all this. And thus was the truth of the Gofpel attefted from Heaven, by the miraculous fuccefs of the firft preachers of it. And if the Gofpel be true, the whole Scriptures are the true word of God: for Chrift "came not to deftroy the Law or the "Prophets, but to fulfil them \*;" and the new Tef-"tament gives teffimony to the Old, that " all Scrip-"ture was given by infpiration of God †;" and " that "holy men of old fpake as they were moved by the "Holy Ghoft ‡."

Thus you fee the miraculous fuccess of the first preachers of the Gospel gives a strong evidence to the truth of it, and of the whole Scriptures. Let us also,

II. A little attend to the more flated and ordinary effcEts of the word of God, which are common to all ages. It is most commonly by means of this word that finners are converted, that dead fouls are revived and raifed to newnefs of life. So it was in ancient times. " Of " his own will begat he us with the word of truth." James i. 18. And fo it is still. " Faith cometh by

\* Matt. v. 17. + 2 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ 2 Pet. i. 21.



" hearing: and hearing by the word of God\*." It is alfo by this word, that the fouls of good people are edified and comforted, that the divine life of grace is advanced, and at length ripened into the heavenly life of glory. As when John the Baptist sent some of his difciples to Chrift with this question, "Art thou he that " fhould come, or do we look for another?" Our Saviour returned no other anfwer, but this, "Go and " fhew John those things which you do hear and see, " the blind receive their fight, the lame walk, the le-" pers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised " up, and the poor have the Gofpel preached to them." Matt. xi. 4, 5. That was enough to fatisfy any confiderate perfon, that Jesus was the Christ; for the miracles which he wrought were too great and glorious for an impoftor; and befides in them an ancient Scripture prophecy, concerning the promifed Meffiah, was very literally fulfilled, viz. "When he, their God, " will come and fave them, then the eyes of the blind -" shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be un-" stopped, &c." Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. " So, if the ques-" tion be put, whether these Scriptures are the word of "God, is it not fufficient to fay? Hereby dead finners " are often raifed to newnefs of life; the eyes of those " whom the God of this world had blinded are opened; \* hearts, which were full of uncleannefs, are purified; " and poor dejected fouls are wonderfully fupported and comforted. And can we think that the tree

\* Rom x. 7.

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" which bears fuch good fruit as this, is of any other " planting than God's? Are these the effects of the "words of men only? No, what man could fpeak " the dead to life, or the forrowful and dejected, into " joy and comfort?" But this is what the Bible has done in a thousand instances. Therefore such as have experienced the power of those divine truths, which the Scripture teaches, in their own fouls, need no other evidence to prove to them that the Bible is the word of This is that Witness, which St. John speaks of, God. which the believer has in his own heart, I John v. 10. " He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the wit-" nefs in himfelf." And it is fuch a witnefs as no bribes can filence, no fophistry of men, or devils, can confute: it is the most confirming testimony of all others, to the man that has it; who has heard, as it were, God speaking to him by his word, to whom the word of God has been an effectual means of drawing his foul to him. But this witness is like that " white " ftone, with a new name written upon it, which no "man knoweth faving he that receiveth it\*." It is in vain therefore to alledge this testimony to unbelievers, who have never tafted of the grace of God, nor experienced the power of the Gospel upon their own fouls; ·but to those who have experienced it, none is so fatisfactory, none to confirming. As when tome of the Corinthians, who had been converted by St. Paul's preaching, were tempted to doubt of his commission to be an



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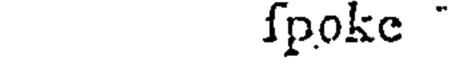


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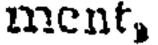
Apostle of Christ, he advises them only to examine themfelves, as to the effect of his ministry upon their own fouls, 2 Cor. xiii. 3, 5. " Since you feek a proof • of Chrift's speaking in me, examine yourselves whe-" ther ye be in the faith." For if Chrift had fpoken effectually to their fouls by St. Paul's preaching, fo as thereby to convert them, and implant in them faving faith, they could not have a better evidence that Chrift owned him for his Apostle, and had spoken by him: fo, if at any time a doubt is fuggested to your minds, about the truth of the Scriptures, examine yourfelves as to the effect they have had upon your own fouls. Has God, by them, awakened you out of your carnal fecurity? Has he, by them, raifed you up to newnefs of life? Has he, by them, spoken peace and comfort to your fouls, when they were in diftrefs and trouble? Has he, by them, fanctified you, and fupported you hitherto? What ftronger evidence can you have, that thefe Scriptures are the word of God?

Thus I have finished the argument which I proposed from my text. And now, upon the whole, cannot we make thefe words our own, and fay, "We know that "this teftimony is true?"

For the improvement of this subject let us Firft, Reverence and prize the Bible. Read it and regard it, not as the word of men, but of God; as if God himself was speaking to you from Heaven, as he F 2



spoke to Moses, or as Christ spoke to Paul. Read this word of God with reverence, and fpeak of it with reverence: never turn any of the words of Scripture into a *jeft*, nor use them to adorn a piece of wit; but let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wifdom. Confider your Bible as the oracles of God; and give it due reverence, for its author's fake. And how fhould you prize it on account of its vast usefulness? Was there a book written that could teach you a fure and certain way to be rich and profperous in this world, who would be without it? But this book, the Bible, will teach you much more important and useful lessons than all that; for it will make you wife unto falvation. it will teach you how you may be reconciled to God, whom you have fo grievoully offended; how you may obtain his favour, which is better than life, and how you may escape his wrath, which is worse than death. This book is your best, and your only fure guide in the way to immortal life and bleffednefs. Reverence and prize the Bible as the book by which you fhall be judged in the laft day; when "the books shall be " opened (the book of Scripture no doubt for one) and " the dead fhall be judged out of those things which are " written in the books, according to their works \*." Open it therefore beforehand. There you may fee what your doom is then likely to be; and if you find that you are in danger of being condemned in the judg-



ment, and doomed to everlasting punishment, this book will show you how you may fly from the wrath to come, and obtain eternal life. Or if you can find your own character among the Scripture-characters of the children of God, and the heirs of his heavenly kingdom, how will that raife and enliven your hopes? How will that support and comfort you under all your worldly troubles? How will it fweeten this mortal life, when you can fee it flowing on apace to an immortal life of glory? Reverence and prize the Bible therefore, as the grand charter of all your bleffings, and of all your hopes; and therefore,

Secondly, Be very thankful to God that you have the Bible. Be thankful that he has been pleafed to give us a new revelation, after we had caft off the knowledge of the Most High, and brought such difinal darkness on cur minds by fin; that he has given us fo clear a revelation of his goodnefs and love, to encourage our return to him, and our trust upon his mercy for pardon and eternal life; and that he has marked out the way to eternal life, so plain before us, in his word. Be thankful to God, and blefs his name, that he has given you fuch abundant evidence, that these Scriptures are indeed his word; so that you may, most safely, venture your fouls and your eternal falvation upon them. Be thankful that you have the free use of the Scriptures; that your lot was not cast either into a Heathen country, where the Bible is not heard of, or into a Popific



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country, where it is little more than heard of; where it is locked up from the people, and they are not fuffered to read it. How gracioully has God diffinguished you from Heathens and from Papifts. And, efpecially, if he has been pleased to attend his word with an efficacious bleffing to your fouls; if God has begotten you again by his word of truth, how are you diftinguished from many others who dwell in Protestant countries, who may have the free use of the Bible, but have noheart to use it; and whose dreadful condemnation it will be, that light came into the world, the light of the glorious Gospel shone all around them, " but they lov-"ed darknefs rather than light, becaufe their deeds "were evil "." You have reason to regard the Bible as an invaluable bleffing, as the greatest and best gift of. God next to the gift of his Son; and without which you would have known nothing of Chrift, and of falvation by him. Thanks be to God for this his un peakable gift.

Thirdly, Manifest your high esteem of the Scriptures, and your thankfulness for them, by your diligent use of them. Read and study the Bible, set your hearts to it, for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life. Let it be as the man of your counsel, your constant guide in the way of your pilgrimage. Labour to understand what you read; and pray for the teaching of

\* John iii. 19.

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the good spirit of God to open your understanding, that you may understand the Scriptures; and alfo, to fet home divine truths upon your hearts, that fo, "while you " behold in the glafs of the word the glory of the Lord, " you may be changed into the fame image from glory " to glory"." Be not fatisfied with all the knowledge you can gain by reading and studying, without feeling the power of divine truths upon your own hearts, in your growing conformity to a holy God, your delight in his word and ordinances, your fubmission to his will, and obedience to his precepts, and in the devout afpiration of your fouls after a more intimate communion with him, and a more perfect enjoyment of his . prefence and love; and fo shall your fouls be nourifbed up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine, until you come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Chrift; when all dark nefs shall be diffipated by the light of heavenly glory; and when your faith shall be changed into vision, and your hope into everlasting enjoyment.

• 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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