

THE
REASON
OF
FAITH;

OR,
AN ANSWER

UNTO THAT ENQUIRY,
*Wherefore we believe the Scripture to be
the Word of God.*

WITH THE
CAUSES AND NATURE
OF THAT FAITH WHEREWITH WE DO SO.

WHEREIN
The Grounds whereon the Holy Scripture is believed
to be the Word of God with Faith divine and super-
natural, are declared and vindicated.

By JOHN OWEN, D.D.

ABRIDGED
By JOHN KIRKPATRICK.

*If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be per-
suaded though one rose from the dead. Luke xvi. 31.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE desirableness of a new Edition of Dr. Owen's REASON OF FAITH, as what might be particularly useful to the cause of Christ, in the present day, being suggested to the Editor; and he, recollecting to have heard a late celebrated character * speak of it as a book of very considerable merit, resolved, should it agree with his own views, to present one to the world as soon as possible. He has now executed his intention, and should it meet with the approbation of the religious public, he designs to add *shortly* what was intended by the Doctor as a second part, entitled, *Evangelii Interpretum; or, The Causes, Ways and Means of understanding the Mind of God as revealed in his Word, with Assurance therein; and a Declaration of the Perspicuity of the Scriptures, with the external Means of the Interpretation of them.*

The subjects here treated of, the Editor conceives are of such a nature, as not only to fortify the mind, but powerfully to impress the heart; whilst they repel the impious attacks of infidelity,

* The late Mr. Fell, of Hornerton.

lity, they nevertheless state the inefficacy of moral certainty, the result of all external arguments ; and therefore lead the mind to contemplate that evidence which the scripture gives of itself, as the word of God ; and declare the nature, excellency and importance of that faith which gives every assurance that the revelation of God in the scripture is both the wisdom and power of Jehovah.

Whilst the generality of the publications which have been offered to the attention of the public, have rather been designed to guard the *outworks* of christianity ; this here offered is immediately calculated to engage the practical understanding, and to possess the soul with such views and evidences of the divine authority of the scriptures, as to render it like a rock, impregnable, by the most boisterous and violent attacks of infidelity and deism.

With respect to the abridgment itself, the Editor has to observe, what he has principally rescinded are his occasional remarks upon the church of Rome, which, though they might be highly proper at the time they were published, now appear unnecessary ; he has likewise abbreviated several paragraphs, which seemed redundant and prolix, and entirely omitted the Appendix,

dix, which consists chiefly of *Latin* and *Greek* quotations from the antients; which, as their authority, possibly, would not be considered of any great weight with those, who are convinced that the truth of God stands not in need of human attestation; so their continuance might appear very useless to the bulk of christian readers. As the book originally does not so evidently preserve the method first proposed, the Editor hopes for being now thrown into distinct chapters, with distinct titles, it will not be less acceptable.

Having thus given an account of the rise and execution of this little volume, the Editor has only to solicit the candour of the public, and to intreat what he esteems infinitely of more importance—the blessing of God.

J. K.

Sutton Ashfield.

THE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHEREAS an opposition unto the scripture, and the grounds whereon we believe it to be a divine revelation, has been, and still is continued amongst us; a continuation of the defence of the one and the other cannot reasonably be judged either needless or unseasonable. Besides, most of the discourses published of late on this subject have had their peculiar designs; that here tendered has not been expressly engaged. Some have pleaded those rational considerations, whereby our assent unto the divine origin of the scripture is fortified and confirmed against the objections of such, whose love to, and resolution to live in sin, tempts them to seek for shelter in an atheistical contempt of the authority of God, evincing itself therein. But as these are not utterly neglected in the ensuing discourse, so the peculiar design of it is of another

ther nature. For the enquiries managed therein, namely, What is the obligation upon us to believe the scripture to be the word of God? What are the causes, and what is the nature of that faith whereby we do so? What it rests upon, and is resolved into, so as to become a divine and acceptable duty? do respect the consciences of men immediately, and the way whereby they may come to rest and assurance in believing. And seeing, that many are often shaken in their minds with those atheistical objections, which they frequently meet with, and cannot extricate themselves from those ensnaring questions they are attacked with; not for want of a due assent unto the scripture, but of a right understanding what is the true and formal reason of that assent; what is the firm basis that it rests upon, and what answer they may directly and peremptorily give unto that enquiry, *Wherefore do you believe the Scripture to be the Word of God?* I have endeavoured to give them those directions herein, that, upon a due examination, they will find compliant with the scripture itself, right reason, and their own experience. I am, therefore, not without hope, but that this small discourse may have its use, and be given out in its proper season.

son. Moreover, I shall acquaint the Reader with the occasion thereof. About three years since, I published a Book about the dispensation and operations of the Spirit of God. That Book was only one part of my design on that subject. The consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of illumination, of supplication, of consolation, and as the immediate Author of spiritual offices, and gifts extraordinary and ordinary, is designed unto the second part of it. Hereof this ensuing discourse is concerning one part of His work, as a Spirit of illumination, which upon the earnest request of some acquainted with the nature and substance of it, I have suffered to come out by itself, that it might be of the more common use, and more easily obtained.

J. O.

May 11th, 1677.

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CHAP. I.

The Subject stated.—Remarks preliminary.

THE work of *illumination* on the minds of men is eminently ascribed unto the *Holy Spirit*; or the efficacy of the grace of God by him dispensed*. The objective cause and outward means of it, are the subjects at present we design to consider. And it will issue in these two enquiries.

I. On what grounds, or for what reason, we believe the scripture to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural, as required of us in a way of duty.

II. How or by what means we may come to understand aright the mind of God in the scripture.

I. On what grounds, or for what reason, we believe the scripture to be the word of God with faith
divine

* Eph. i. 17, 18. Heb. vi. 4. Luke ii. 32. Acts xiii. 47, xxiv. 45. xxvi. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

divine and supernatural, as required of us in a way of duty.

By *illumination*, we understand that *supernatural knowledge* that any man has, or may have, of the mind and will of God, as revealed by supernatural means, for the rule of his faith, life and obedience. And this, so far as it is comprised in our first enquiry, we intend at present to declare, only premising a few things.

First, Supernatural revelation is the only objective cause and means of supernatural *illumination*. There is a natural knowledge of supernatural things; and that both *theoretical* and *practical** : And there may be a supernatural knowledge of natural things †. But unto this *illumination* it is required, both that its object be things supernaturally revealed ‡, and that it be wrought in us by the supernatural efficacy of the Spirit of God ||. This *David* prays for § : *Reveal, or uncover mine eyes*, bring light or spiritual understanding into my mind, *that I may behold with open, or uncovered face*, the vail being taken away ¶, *wonderous things out of thy law*. The light he prayed for *within* did merely respect the doctrine of the law *without*. This the apostle declares **. The various supernatural revelations that
God

* Rom. i. 19. ii. 14, 15. † 1 Kings iv. 31—34. Exod. xxxi. 3—6. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. || Eph. i. 17, 18. 2 Cor. iv. 6. § Psal. cxix. 18. ¶ 2 Cor. iii. 18. ** Heb. i. 1, 2.

God hath made of Himself are the sole object of supernatural illumination.

Secondly, This *divine external revelation*, was originally given, by various ways, unto sundry persons ; partly for their own guidance, and partly by their ministry to be communicated unto the church. So it was to *Enoch*, the seventh from *Adam*, who, thereon, prophesied to the warning and for the instruction of others *. And to *Noah*, who became thereby a *preacher of righteousness* †. And to *Abraham*, who in consequence commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord ‡. And other instances might be added ||. And this course God took from the first promise to the giving of the law, before any revelations were committed to writing, for the space of two thousand four hundred and sixty years. Several things may be observed of this divine dispensation ; as,

1. That it did *sufficiently evidence itself to be from God*, unto the minds of those unto whom it was granted, and unto theirs also unto whom it was communicated ; for if it had not been so, men would never have been able to assure themselves, that they were not *imposed upon* by the crafty deceits of *Satan* ; especially in such revelations as seemed to contain things contrary to their reason, as in the command given to
Abraham

* Jude 14, 15.

† 2 Pet. ii. 5.

‡ Gen. xviii. 19.

|| Gen.

iv. 26. v. 28.

Abraham for the sacrificing of his son. Wherefore these immediate revelations had not been a sufficient means to secure the faith and obedience of the church, if they had not carried with them their own evidence that they were of God. This evidence was that of *faith*, and not of *sense*; as is that which we have now by the scriptures. It is not like that which the *sun* gives of itself by its light, which then needs no exercise of reason to assure us of; for sense is irresistibly affected with it. But it is like the evidence which the *heavens* and the *earth* give of their being made by the power of God. This they do undeniably and infallibly, when we consider and contemplate them*. God so gave out these revelations of Himself, as to require the exercise of the faith, conscience and obedience of them unto whom they were made, and therein they gave full assurance of their proceeding from Him. So He tells us, that his word differs from all pretended revelations, as the *wheat doth from the chaff*†.

2. The things so revealed were *sufficient* to guide and direct all persons into the knowledge of their duty towards God, in a way of faith and obedience. God from the beginning gave out the knowledge of His will, by *sundry parts and degrees*; yet so that every age had light enough to guide them in the whole of their obedience, and unto their edification.

They

* Psal. xix. 1, 2. Rom i. 19. † Jer. xxiii. 28.

They had knowledge to enable them to offer *sacrifices* in faith, as did *Abel*; to *walk with God*, as did *Enoch*; and to teach their families the fear of the Lord, as did *Abraham*. The world perished not for the want of a sufficient revelation of the mind of God at any time. Yet, when we consider those divine instructions which are upon record, that God granted unto them, we are scarce able to discern how they were sufficiently enlightened in all that was necessary for them to believe and practise. But they were unto them as *a light shining in a dark place*. Set up but a candle in a *dark room*, and it will sufficiently enlighten it, for men to attend their necessary occasions therein; but when the sun is risen, and shines in at all the windows, the light of the *candle* grows so dim and useless, that it seems strange that any could have received advantage thereby. The *Sun of righteousness* is now risen upon us, and immortality is brought to *light* by the gospel.

3. There was during this season a *sufficient ministry*, for the declaration of those revelations which God had made of Himself. There was the *natural ministry* of parents, who were obliged to instruct their children and families. This began in *Adam*, who received the first promise, and every thing necessary unto faith and obedience. And they had the *extraordinary ministry* of those to whom God entrusted

new revelations, and who became *preachers of righteousness* to the rest of mankind. From the giving of the *first promise*, to the writing of the law, there were always some, who receiving divine revelations immediately, were a kind of infallible guides to others. If it was otherwise at any time, it was after the death of the *Patriarchs*, and before the call of *Moses*. But by whomsoever the given instructions were received, they had a sufficient outward means for their illumination, before any divine revelations were recorded by writing. Yet,

4. This way of instruction, as it was in itself *imperfect*, and liable to many disadvantages, so through the weakness, negligence and wickedness of men, it proved *insufficient* to retain the knowledge of God in the world. For under this *dispensation* the generality of mankind apostatized from God, and thereon He restrained them not, but *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways* *; and he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, *to walk in their own counsels* †. Through the imperfection of this dispensation, men broke off the more easily from God. If it should be said, that since the revelation of the will of God hath been committed to writing, men have likewise apostatized from the knowledge of God, as is evident in many nations, which once professed:

* Act: xiv. 16.

† Psal. lxxxi. 12.

feſſed the goſpel, but are now overrun with *Heatheniſm*, *Mahometiſm*, and *Idolatry* : I ſay, this hath not come to paſs through any defect in the way or means of *illumination* ; but God hath given them up to be deſtroyed for their *wickedneſs* and *ingratitude* ; and, unleſs *we repent, we ſhall all likewise periſh* *.

Thirdly, God hath gathered up into the *ſcripture* all divine revelations given out from the beginning of the world, and all that ever ſhall be to the end thereof, that the church may be thoroughly inſtructed into the *whole mind and will of God*, and directed in all that worſhip of Him, and obedience unto Him, which is neceſſary for acceptance with Him here, and to bring to the eternal enjoyment of Him hereafter. Whereupon, He commanded His people of old, to attend with all diligence to His word, as written for their inſtruction and direction in faith and obedience ; annexing all ſorts of promiſes to the performance of this duty †, and expreſſly forbids them to add any thing thereunto, or to conjoin any thing therewith ‡ ; which He would not have done, had He omitted other divine revelations *before given*, that were any way neceſſary for the church. As He Himſelf added many new ones, ſo He gathered in all the old from the repository of *tradition*, and fixed them in a writing given by divine inſpiration. And ſeeing the full revelation of the whole mind of
God,

* Rom. i. 18. 2 Theſ. ii. 11, 12. † Deut. vi. 6, 7. ‡ Deut. iv. 2. xii. 32.

God, was committed unto and perfected by Jesus Christ * ; so the revelations of God by Him, whether in His *own Person*, or by His Spirit unto His apostles, were likewise by divine inspiration committed to writing. This is expressly affirmed concerning what He delivered in His own personal ministry †, and may be proved by uncontrollable arguments concerning the rest of them. Hence, as the scriptures of the Old Testament were shut up with a caution unto the church to adhere unto *the law and testimony*, with the denunciation of a curse to the contrary ‡, so the writings of the New Testament are closed with a curse on any that shall presume to add any thing more thereunto ||.

Fourthly, The scripture is now become *the only external means of divine supernatural illumination*, because it is the only repository of all divine supernatural revelation §.

Fifthly, In asserting the scripture to be the *only* external means of divine revelation, I do it not *exclusively* of those instructions of God which are *subordinate* unto it, and appointed as means to make it effectual unto our souls :—As,

1. Our own *personal endeavours* in reading, studying and meditating on the scripture, that we may come to a right apprehension of the things contained
in

* Heb. i. 1, 2. † Luke i. 4. Acts i. 1. John xx. 31.
‡ Mal. iv. 4, 5, 6. || Rev. xxii. 18. § Psal. xix. 7, 8. Isa.
viii. 20. 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17.

in it. It is known to all, how frequently *this duty* is pressed upon us, and what promises are annexed to the performance of it*. Without this, it is in vain to expect *illumination* by the word. And therefore we may see multitudes living and walking in extreme darkness, when yet the word is every where *nigh* them : bread, which is the staff of life, will yet nourish no man who doth not provide, and feed upon it ; no more would *manna*, unless it was gathered and prepared.

2. The *mutual instruction* of one another in the mind of God out of the scripture, is also required thereunto. For we are obliged by *the law of nature* to endeavour the good of others in various degrees ; as our children, our families, our neighbours, and all with whom we have any converse. And this is the principal good, absolutely considered, that we can communicate to others ; namely, to instruct them in the knowledge of the mind of God. This whole duty, in all the degrees of it, is represented in that command, *Thou shalt teach my words diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* †. Thus when our Saviour found his disciples *talking by the way*, he appearing as a private man, instructed them into the sense of the scripture ‡. And the neglect

* Deut. vi. 6, 7. xi. 18, 19. Josh. i. 8. Psal. cxix. Col. iii. 16. 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Deut. vi. 7. ‡ Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 32.

neglect of this duty is one cause of that great darkness and ignorance which yet abounds amongst us.

3. The *ministry of the word* in the church is that which is principally included in this assertion. The scripture is the *only* means of illumination, but it becomes *so principally* by the application of it unto the minds of men in the ministry of the word *. The church, and the ministry of it, are the ordinances of God, that His mind and will, as revealed in His word, may be made known unto the children of men. And that church and ministry, whereof this is not the *first* and *principal design*, is neither appointed of God, nor approved by Him.

Sixthly, That the *scripture*, which thus contains the whole of divine revelation, may be a sufficient external cause of illumination unto us, two things are required.

1. That we *believe it to be a divine revelation*, immediately proceeding from God Himself, and not from the folly or deceit, nor from the skill and honesty of men †. It tenders no light or instruction under any other notion, but as it comes directly from God ; not as the word of man, but as *it is indeed the word of the Living God* ‡. And whatever any one may learn from it, under any other consideration,

* Matt. v. 14, 15. 2 Cor. v. 18—20. Eph. iv. 11—15.
 1 Tim. iii. 15. † 2 Pet. i. 19—21. Heb. i. 1. 2 Tim.
 iii. 16. Isa. viii. 20. ‡ 1 Thes. ii. 13.

deration, belongs not unto the illumination we enquire after*.

2. That we *understand the things contained in it*. For if it be unto us a *sealed book*, whatever visions or means of light it has in itself, we shall receive no advantage thereby†. It is not the words themselves of the scripture, but our understanding them that gives us light; *the entrance of thy word giveth light*‡. So the disciples understood not the testimonies of the scripture concerning the Lord Christ, until He expounded them unto them||. We have the same instance in the *Eunuch* and *Philip*§. To this very day the nation of the *Jews* have the scriptures of the Old Testament, and the outward letter of them in such esteem and veneration, that they even adore and worship them, and yet they are not enlightened by them. And the same is fallen out among many that are called christians, or they could never embrace such foolish opinions, and practise such *idolatries* in worship as some of them do. And this brings me to my design for which we have been thus far making way; and it is to shew, that both these are from the Holy Ghost; namely, that we *truly believe* the scripture to be the word of God; and that we *understand savingly* the mind of God therein; both which belong unto spiritual, divine illumination.

CHAP.

* Neh. viii. 8. Isa. xxviii. 9. Hof. xiv. 9. Prov. i. 6. Psal. cxix. 34. Matt. xv. 16. 1 John v. 20. † Isa. xxix. 11, 12. ‡ Ps. cxix. 130. || Luke xxiv. 27, 45. § Acts viii. 31—36.

CHAP. II.

What it is infallibly to believe the Scripture, as the Word of God, affirmed.

IN our *believing*, or our *faith*, two things are to be considered. 1. *What* it is that we believe. 2. Wherefore we so believe. The first is the *object* of our faith, the latter the *reason* of it. The object of our faith, is the things revealed in the scripture. That God is one in Three persons, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the like *propositions of truth*, are the *object* of our faith, or that which we believe. And the *reason* why we believe them, is because they are proposed in the scripture. Thus the apostle expresses the whole of what we mean : *I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures* *. Christ's death, burial and resurrection, are the things proposed unto us to be believed, and so the *object* of our faith. But the reason why we believe them is, because they are declared in the *scriptures* †. Moreover, if we be asked a *reason* of our faith or hope, or *why* we believe the things we so profess, as God to be One in Three persons, Jesus Christ to be the Son of God ? we do
not

* 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. † Acts viii. 28—30.

not answer, because it is so, and we believe it ; this would be foolish : But we must give some other answer unto the enquiry. The proper answer contains both the *reason* and *object* of our faith ; that which it rests upon, and is resolved into.

2. We do not in this enquiry intend any kind of persuasion or faith but that which is *divine* and *infallible*, both from its object and cause. Whatever persuasion outward reasons may beget in the minds of men, that the things which they profess to believe are true, yet, if they are alone, it is not *divine faith* whereby they believe, but that which is merely *human*, as being resolved into human testimony ; or, it is only an opinion on probable arguments ; for faith cannot be of any other kind than is the *evidence* upon which it is founded. Yet, I doubt not, but that some who have never further considered the reason of their believing than the teaching of their instructors, have yet that evidence in their own souls of the truth and authority of God in what they believe ; that with respect thereunto, their faith is *divine* and *supernatural*. The faith of most hath a beginning and progress not unlike that of the Samaritans *.

3. When we enquire after faith that is *infallible*, or believing *infallibly*, which, we shall shew hereafter, is necessary in this case, we do not intend an *inbe-*

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* John iv. 40, 41, 42.

vent quality in the subject, as though he that believes with faith *infallible*, must himself also be infallible; much less do we speak of *infallibility* absolutely, which is a property of God, who alone, from the perfection of His nature, can neither deceive nor be deceived. But it is that property of the assent of our minds unto divine truths, or supernatural revelations, whereby it is different from all other kinds of assent whatsoever. For the nature of every assent is according to the evidence upon which it proceeds. This in divine faith is divine revelation; which being infallible, renders the faith that rests on it infallible also. No man can believe that which is false with *divine faith*; for that which renders it divine, is the *divine truth* and infallibility of the ground and evidence upon which it is built. But a man may believe that which is true, infallibly so, and yet his faith not be infallible. That the scripture is the word of God, is infallibly true; yet the faith whereby a man believes it, may be *fallible*; for it is such as is its evidence, and no other: he may believe it on tradition, on the testimony of the church, or on outward arguments, all which being fallible, his faith is so likewise. Wherefore unto this faith divine and infallible, it is not required that the person in whom it is, be infallible; nor is it enough that the thing itself be infallibly true; but it is necessary, moreover, that the evidence whereon

whereon it is believed be infallible also. So it was with them who received divine revelations immediately from God : it was not sufficient that the things revealed unto them were *infallibly true*, but they were to have infallible evidence of the revelation itself; then was their faith infallible, though their persons were fallible. With this faith a man can believe nothing but what is divinely true, and therefore it is infallible : and the reason is, because the *veracity* of God, who is the God of truth, is the only object of it. Hence saith the prophet, *Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established* *.

4. The *authority* and *veracity* of God revealing that which it is our duty to believe, is the *formal reason* of our faith. The only reason, why we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that God is one single essence subsisting in Three Persons, is because that God Himself, *who is truth—the God of truth, who cannot lie* †, *whose word is truth* ‡, and whose Spirit is *truth* §, hath revealed these things so to be; and our believing them on that ground, renders our faith *divine* and *supernatural*. Our faith is also *supernatural*, with respect to the production of it in our minds by the Holy Ghost; and *infallible*, with respect to the formal reason of it, which is divine revelation; and is *divine* in opposition unto

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that

* 2 Chron. xx. 20. † Deut. xxxii. 4. ‡ Tit. i. 2. John xvii. 17. § 1 John v. 9.

that which is merely human on both accounts. As things are proposed unto us to be believed as true, faith in its assent respects only the truth and veracity of God ; but whereas faith is required of us in a way of obedience, and is considered not only *physically* in its nature, but *morally* also as our duty, it respects the authority of God, which, I therefore join with the truth of God, as the *formal reason* of our faith *. And these things the scripture pleads for, when faith is required of us in a way of duty. *Thus saith the Lord*, is that which is proposed unto us as a reason why we should believe what is spoken ; whereunto sometimes other divine names and titles are added, signifying his *authority* who requires us to believe. *Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel †*. *Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ‡*. *Believe in the Lord your God ||*. The word of the Lord precedes most revelations in the prophets ; and other reasons why we should believe, the scripture proposes none. Yea, the interposition of any other authority between the things to be believed and our souls, besides the *authority of God*, overthrows the nature of divine faith.

5. It follows that the faith whereby we believe any divine supernatural truth, is resolved into the scrip-

* 2 Sam. vii. 28. † Isa. xxx. 15. ‡ Isa. lvii. 15.
 || 2 Chron. xx. 20.

scripture, as the only means of divine revelation affecting our minds and consciences with the authority and truth of God ; or the scripture, as the only immediate, divine and infallible revelation of the mind and will of God, is the first, immediate and *formal object* of our faith. We believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God ; the ground or reason thereof, is, because of the authority of God commanding us, and the truth of God testifying thereunto. But how, or by what means are our minds and consciences affected with the authority and truth of God, so as to believe with respect unto them, in that way, which makes our faith divine and supernatural ? It is alone by the divine, supernatural and infallible revelation He hath made of this sacred truth, and of His will in the scripture.

6. Should it be asked, upon *what reasons* we believe the scripture to be a divine revelation, proceeding immediately from God ; or to be that word of God which is truth divine and infallible ? we answer, it is *solely* upon the evidence that the Spirit of God *in and by the scripture* gives unto us, that it was given by immediate inspiration from God ; or, the ground and reason whereon we believe the scripture to be the word of God, are the authority and truth of God evidencing themselves in and by it unto the minds and consciences of men. Hence, as our faith is resolved into the authority and vera-

city of God, in whatever we assent unto, as proposed in the scripture ; so in like manner, is this also of believing the scripture itself to be the infallible word of God ; seeing, we do it on *no other grounds* than its *own evidence* that it is so.—This is that which is principally to be proved, and therefore to prepare for it, and to remove prejudices, something is to be advanced.

CHAP. III.

Revelation by no means void of cogent external arguments.—Some of them considered.

THERE are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from *external considerations* of the scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God. All these are *motives of credibility*, or effectual persuasives to account and esteem it to be the word of God. And although they neither are, nor is it possible they ever should be, the ground and reason whereon we believe it with faith divine and supernatural ; yet are they necessary unto the confirmation of our faith against temptations, oppositions and objections. I shall treat on those which appear most cogent, and that in them wherein, in my apprehension, their strength lies. And
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I shall do this to manifest *that* although we plead that no man can believe the scriptures to be the word of God with faith *divine, supernatural and infallible*, but upon its own *internal divine evidence and efficacy*, yet we allow, and make use of all those external arguments of its divine truth and divine origin, which are pleaded by others ; ascribing as much weight and force unto them as they can do, and acknowledging all the persuasion they can beget. Only we do not judge *them* to contain the *whole* of the evidence which we have for faith to rest upon, or to be resolved into ; yea, not *that* at all which renders it divine, supernatural and infallible.

The rational arguments, we say, which are, or may be pleaded in this matter, with the human testimonies whereby they are corroborated, may and ought to be used and insisted on ; and it is but vainly pretended, that their use is superseded by our other assertions ; as though where faith is required, all the subservient use of reason were absolutely discarded, and our faith thereby rendered *irrational*. The assent unto the divine origin and authority of the scriptures, which the mind ought to give unto them, we grant to be of as high a nature as it is pretended to be ; namely, a *moral certainty*. But we assert, that there is an assent of another kind unto the divine origin and authority of the scriptures required of us ; namely, that of faith divine
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and supernatural, which shall also be declared and proved. But yet, as was said before, because their property is to *level the ground*, and to remove the rubbish of objections out of the way, that we may build the more safely on the sure foundation, I shall mention some of those which I esteem justly pleadable in this cause.

1. The *antiquity* of these writings, and of the divine revelation contained in them, is pleaded in evidence of their divine origin. And it may be so deservedly. For where it is *absolute*, it is unquestionable : God himself makes use of this plea against idols : *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no Saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god amongst you : therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God **. That which he asserts is, that He alone is God. This He calls the people to testify by this argument, that He was amongst them as God, that is, in the church, before any *strange* god was known or named. And so it is justly pleadable in the behalf of this revelation of the mind of God in the scripture ; it was in the world long before any pretended revelation. Whatever therefore ensued with the like design, must either be set up in competition with it, or in opposition unto it. Whereas this revelation, in the first
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* Isa. xliii. 10, 11, 12.

books of it, is acknowledged to be more antient than any other writing in the world, and may be proved so to be : therefore it is beyond all reasonable apprehension that it should be of human origin. For we know how low and imperfect all human inventions were at the first, how rude and unpolished, until time, observation, following additions, and diminutions had formed, and improved them. But this writing coming forth into the world absolutely first of its kind, directing us into the knowledge of God and ourselves, was at once so complete and perfect, that no art, or wisdom of men, could ever yet find any just defect in it, or was ever capable to add any thing unto it, whereby it might be improved. Neither from the beginning would it ever admit of any additions, but what came from the same fountain of divine revelation and inspiration. This argument is pursued by many at large, with great variety of *historical* and *chronological* observations. And it hath been so scanned, that nothing but the giving of it a new dress remains for present or future diligence. But an additional force will present itself, if we consider the character of the people amongst whom this revelation first appeared in the world, and the time when it did so. When some nations had so improved and cultivated the light of nature, as greatly to excel others in wisdom and knowledge, the people of the Jews were ignorant and barbarous. And the more wise these na-
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tions conceived themselves, the more they despised others. Indeed the Jews were utter strangers unto all those arts and sciences, whereby the faculties of men's minds are naturally enlarged. Nor did they pretend unto any wisdom whereby they might stand in competition with other nations, except that which they received by divine revelation. And this God Himself had taught them to look upon and esteem as their only wisdom before all the world *. Now we shall not consider what were the first attempts of other nations in expressing their conceptions of divine things, and the duty and happiness of men, but only remark, that the *Egyptians* and *Grecians* were those who vied for reputation in the improvement of this wisdom. But it is known that the utmost productions of their endeavours, were things foolish, irrational and absurd, contrary to the Being and Providence of God. And we may notice, that what they attained unto, in the fulness of time, by all their improvement of science, wisdom, mutual intelligence, experience, communication, study and observation, where they had added to, and taken from the inventions of all former ages from time immemorial; yea, when they had discarded whatever they found by experience not suited to natural light, and the common reason of mankind; after all it must be confessed, that the apostle passed
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* Deut. iv. 6, 7, 8.

a just censure upon them, and on the utmost of their attainments ; namely, that *they waxed vain in their imaginations—and that the world by wisdom knew not God.* Whence then was it, that in one nation, esteemed barbarous, and really so, with respect to that wisdom, those arts and sciences which ennobled other nations, without converse, communication, learning or experience, there should at once proceed such a law, doctrine and instructions concerning God and man, so stable, certain and uniform, as should not only incomparably excel all the productions of human wisdom unto that purpose, and those advantaged by time and experience, but also abide invariably throughout all generations, so as that, whatever hath been advanced in opposition unto it, hath quickly sunk under the weight of its own folly?—This one consideration gives sufficient satisfaction, that this book must be an immediate emanation from God.

2. It is apparent, that God, in all ages, has exerted his power and care in the preservation of this book. Were not the *bible* what it pretends to be, it would have been unbecoming the Divine Being, and his Providence, not to have blotted it out of the world long since. For God to permit a *book* to continue, from *the beginning of time*, that falsely pretended to His name and authority, and thereby to seduce so great a proportion of mankind into a ruinous apostasy from Himself; and also to expose
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a great multitude of the wisest and best of them, unto all sorts of *cruel miseries* for their attachment to it, seems not to be consonant with that infinite wisdom, goodness and care by which he governs the world.

Further, The malicious craft of Satan, and the power and rage of mankind, have combined to the ruin and utter suppression of this book; and sometimes proceeded so far, as that there was no apparent way for its escape; yet through the watchful care and providence of God, it has been preserved unto this day, and shall be to the consummation of all things:—*Till Heaven and Earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.* Should there be any, that will not ascribe this preservation of the books of the *bible*, not only in their being, but in their purity and integrity, unto the care of God, it is incumbent on them to assign some other cause proportionate to such an effect. For my part, I cannot but judge that he that does not see the hand of divine providence stretched out in the preservation of this book, for thousands of years, and that through all the deluges and calamities that have befallen the world, with the *weakness of the means* thereunto, and the interest of those in whose power it was to have corrupted it; namely, the apostate churches of *Jews and Christians*, as connected with the open opposition that hath been made

made against it, does not believe there is such a thing as divine Providence at all.

It was first written in the very infancy of the *Babylonian Empire*, with which it afterwards coterporized about nine hundred years. By this monarchy that people, which alone had these *oracles of God* committed unto them, were oppressed, destroyed, and carried into captivity. But this book was then preserved amongst them, although it condemned them, their gods, and religious worship; and as such, could not fail to enrage their minds. Satan also had *enthroned* himself as the object of their veneration and worship. In the whole world there was nothing that judged, opposed, and condemned him, or them, but this book only, which now was absolutely in their power. But through the mere provision of divine care it outlived that monarchy, and saw the ruin of its greatest adversaries. So did it during the continuance of the *Persian Monarchy* which succeeded, whilst the people were still under the power of idolaters, against whom this was the only testimony in the world. By some branches of the *Grecian Monarchy*, a most fierce and diligent attempt was made to have utterly destroyed it; but still it was snatched by divine power out of the furnace. The *Romans* destroyed both the people and place designed until then for its preservation, carrying the antient copy of the law in triumph to *Rome* at

the conquest of *Jerusalem*. And they exercised a rage against it for fundry ages, with the same success of former enemies. From the very first, all the endeavours of mankind that professed an open enmity against it have been frustrated. And those also to whom it was outwardly committed, as the *Jews* first, and the antichristian church afterwards, not only fell into opinions and practices absolutely inconsistent with it, but also built all their present and future interests on those opinions and practices; yet none of them durst ever attempt the corrupting of one line in it, but were forced to attempt their own security, by a pretence of *additional traditions*; and keeping the book itself, as much as they durst, out of the hands, and from the knowledge of all those, who were not engaged in the same interest with themselves. Whence could all this proceed, but from the watchful care and power of divine Providence?

3. The design of *the whole*, and each portion of it, hath an impress of divine wisdom and authority upon it. And consists of two parts: First, To reveal God unto men:—secondly, To direct men into the enjoyment of God.—That these are the two great concerns of our life, must be acknowledged by all.

1. It speaks in the *name* and *authority* of God; and neither delivers, nor commands any thing, but
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what is becoming His infinite holiness, wisdom and goodness. It makes that declaration of Him in His being, properties and will, wherein we are, or should be highly concerned, so that we may know Him aright, according to the utmost capacity of our finite understandings. Neither do we urge His *authority* in this case only, but here and else where resort to the evidence of His reasonings compared with matter of fact. What horrible darkness, ignorance and blindness was upon the whole world with respect to the knowledge of God?—What confusion and debasement of our nature ensued, whilst *God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, and winked at the times of their ignorance?* The truth is, that the only true God became unknown unto the wisest of them *, and Satan himself became *the god of this world* †, and had procured all religious devotion and reverence to be paid to himself; so that *the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed unto devils, and not unto God* ‡. It is acknowledged, that some few *speculative men*, amongst the *Heathen*, did seek after God in that *horrid darkness*, and laboured to reduce their conceptions of His being unto what reason could apprehend of infinite perfections, and what the works of *creation* and *providence* could suggest; but none could ever free themselves from the grossest practical *idolatry*, nor in the

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least

* Acts xvii. 21. † 2 Cor. iv. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 20.

least influence the minds of the generality of mankind with any due apprehensions of the Divine Nature *. With respect unto this state of the world, the scripture is well called, *a light shining in a dark place* †. It gives at once unto all men a perfect and clear declaration of God in His being and authority, and it evidences itself unto the minds and consciences of all, whom *the god of this world* hath not absolutely blinded with the power of prejudice and lust, and thereby further confirmed in their enmity to God Himself. There is indeed no more required to free mankind from this horrible darkness, about the nature of God, and the worship of idols, but a sedate and unprejudiced consideration of the *revelation of these things in the scripture*. We may say therefore unto all the world with the prophet, *When they say unto you, Seek unto them who have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep and mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* ‡. And this also proves the scriptures plainly to be of a *divine origin*. This revelation of God and his will is most excellent, and more important unto mankind, than the sun in the firmament is, as to the proper end of their existence; for none of the wise men of the world could attain, or make known,

* Rom. i. † 2 Pet. i. 9. ‡ Isa. viii. 19, 20.

known this knowledge of God : *the world by wisdom knew not God* *. And whatever notions of truth, concerning God and His essence, may be found in those *Philosophers*, who lived after the preaching of the gospel, more than in antient *Pagans*, they are derived from the fountain of the *scripture*, and were by various means taken from them.

2. This doctrine is to *direct mankind* how to live unto God, and obtain that rest and blessedness they are capable of, and without the enjoyment of *these*, it were better *not to be*. Now these things never were proposed to the generality of mankind, but they lived in perpetual confusion : the enquiries of the *Philosophers* about the chief end of man, and the nature of felicity, with the ways how to obtain it, are nothing but so many uncertain and fierce contests, wherein not one truth is asserted, nor one duty prescribed, that is not spoiled or vitiated by its circumstances ; besides, they never rose up so much as to a *surmise* about the most *important matters of religion*, without which it is impossible we should obtain the end for which we were made, or the happiness whereof we are capable. No account could they give of our *apostasy* from God, of the depravity of our nature, of the cause, or necessary cure thereof. In this lost and wandering condition, the scripture presents itself as a light and guide unto all, di-

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recting.

* 1 Cor. i. 21.

recting them in their whole course, with a view to bring them unto the enjoyment of God, unless they wilfully shut their eyes, *loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* It declares what was the condition of our nature in its *first creation*, and how we fell from it ; what is the nature, consequences, and effects of our present depravity and *apostasy from God* ; how *help* and *relief* is provided for us by infinite wisdom, grace and mercy ; what that help is, and how we may be interested in, and made partakers of it. It states what is that system of duty, or course of obedience which God requires ; and wherein our eternal felicity consists : all these are so clearly revealed in the scriptures, as in general to leave mankind in no doubt, or conjecture, provided they lay aside inveterate *prejudices* received from tradition, education, the love of sin, and the government of various lusts, which are known to have an inconceivable power over the minds, souls and affections of men. These, therefore, whose desire and interest it is, that the *bounds* and *differences* of good and evil should be unfixed and confounded, who are afraid to know what they were, are, or shall be ; who care not to know either God or themselves, their duty or reward, may despise this book, and deny its divine origin ; others will retain a sacred veneration for it, as the offspring of God.

4. The *testimony of the church* may also be pleaded unto the same purpose. The church is said to be the *pillar and ground of the truth* *. This is the only text pleaded with any sobriety, to give countenance to the authority of the church. But it cannot be so the *pillar and ground of truth*, that the truth should, as it were, rest upon it as its foundation; for this is contrary to the same apostle, who teaches that the church itself is built upon *the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone* †. The church cannot be the ground of truth, and truth the ground of the church in the same sense. Wherefore the church is the *ground and pillar of truth*, in that it holds up and declares the scriptures to be the word of God.

In receiving any thing from a church, we may consider the *authority* of it, or its *ministry*. By the authority of the church in this matter, we intend no more than the weight and importance of its testimony. For to suppose an *authority*, properly so called, in any church, or in all the *churches* that are in the world, whereon our reception of the scripture should depend is wrong: for the authority and truth of God stand not in need, nor are capable of any such attestation from men. The testimony therefore which I intend, is that of multitudes; persons of *unspotted reputation*, free from any possibility of im-

* 1 Tim. iii. 15. † Eph. ii. 20.

impeachment, as unto any *conspiracy* amongst themselves, with respect to any corrupt end, and having not the least secular advantage to answer by what they testified unto, consequently, must stand clear of all exceptions.

To evidence the force of this consideration, I shall briefly represent, *Who* they were that gave, and do now give this testimony : Unto *what* they gave it : and *How* or by what means they did so.

First, The testimony of those by whom the several books of the scripture were written, is to be considered. All of them, separately and jointly declare, that *what* they wrote was received by *divine inspiration*. This the apostle *Peter* pleads in the name of them all :—*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His Majesty. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts : knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came*
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not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost *. This is the universal testimony of the writers both of the Old and New Testament. So, in particular, *John* bears witness unto his revelations; *These are the true and faithful sayings of God* †. The things pleaded to give force unto this testimony in particular, I shall reduce unto these two ideas: (1.) Of their *persons*: (2.) Of the manner of their writing.

1. As to their *persons*, they were absolutely removed from all possible suspicion of deceiving or being deceived. The wit of all the *atheistical spirits* in the world is not able to fix on any one thing, as a tolerable plea for any such *suspicion*. And *surmises* in things of this nature, which have no just ground, are to be looked upon as *diabolical suggestions*, or *atheistical dreams*, or at best, the false imaginations of weak minds. We might here notice, the nature and design of their work, their unconcernment with all secular affairs, and their non-acquaintance with each other: we might further consider the times and places wherein the things reported by them were done; the facility of convicting them of falshood, if what they wrote, as matter of fact, were not true; and the certainty that this would have been the case, had it been possible, arising from the known desire, ability, will and interest of their ene-

mies,

* 2 Pet. i. 16—21. † Rev. xix. 9.

mies, and which, consequently would have put an issue unto all that difference that was in the world about their doctrine : moreover, that *harmony*, which prevailed amongst themselves, without any antecedent agreement ; the *miseries* which they suffered, upon the sole account of their doctrine, and with other circumstances innumerable that are pleadable to evince the sincerity and integrity of any witnesses whatever, do all concur to prove, that they did not follow *cunningly devised fables*, in what they declared concerning the mind and will of God. For to confront this evidence with bare surmises, incapable of any rational countenance, is only to manifest what brutish impudence, infidelity is forced to retreat unto for shelter.

2. Their style and manner of writing deserves peculiar attention. For all those *characters* of a divine original, that can be communicated unto an outward divine revelation, are impressed on it. Notwithstanding the distance of ages, the difference of languages, and the variety of natural abilities, education, and other circumstances, yet there is upon the whole and each part of their writings, that *gravity, majesty, and authority*, mixed with plainness and freedom from all appearance of affectation, as must excite the admiration of all that seriously consider them. All human compositions, pretending to a divine origin, as the apocryphal books, and
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some other spurious pieces, said to be written in the apostles' days, discover such artifice and weakness as convict themselves. So every thing necessarily must do, which being merely *human*, pretends unto an immediate derivation from God. When men have done all they can, there will be as evident a difference in these things, as there is between *wheat* and *chaff*, or between real and painted fire*.

Unto the testimony of the divine writers themselves, we must add that of those who in all ages have *believed in Christ through their word*, which is the description the Lord Jesus Christ gives of His church †. This is the church which bears witness to the scripture in its divine origin, and it may be added, we know this witness is true. With these, I had rather venture my faith and eternal condition, than with any society, any real or pretended church whatever. And amongst these, an especial regard ought to be had to those *innumerable multitudes*, who in the primitive times witnessed this confession throughout the world, as they had many advantages above us, to know the certainty of sundry matters of fact, upon which the verity of our religion much depends. We are called in particular to notice their testimony, for it is signalized by Christ himself. In the great judgment that is to be passed upon the world, the first appearance is of the souls
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* Jer. xxiii. 29. † John xvii. 10.

of them that were beheaded for the *witness of Jesus, and for the word of God* *. And who that considers this rationally, can suspect all such persons of folly, credulity, wickedness or conspiracy amongst themselves, which such a diffused multitude was incapable of? Neither can any man undervalue their testimony, but he must comply with their adversaries against them, who, it is well known, were the worst and basest of mankind. And who is there, that believes there is a God, and an eternal future world, that had not rather have his soul with *Paul*, than with *Nero*; with the holy martyrs, than with their diabolical persecutors? Wherefore this testimony, which began from the first writing of the scripture, and was carried on by the *best of men* in all ages, and made conspicuously glorious in the primitive times of christianity, must needs be with all wise men unavoidably cogent, or at least unto a due consideration of what they bear witness unto, and sufficient to scatter all such prejudices as *atheism* or *prophaneness* may raise or suggest.

Secondly, What it was they gave testimony unto, is duly to be considered. And this was not only that the book of the scripture was good, holy and true, in all the contents of it, but that the whole and every part of it was given by *divine inspiration*, as their faith in this matter is expressed †. On this
account,

*. Rev. xx. 4. † 2 Pet. i. 20, 21.

account, and no other, did they themselves receive the *scripture*, believe and yield obedience unto the things contained in it. Neither would they admit that their testimony was received, if the whole world would allow of, or obey the scripture upon any other terms. Nor will God Himself allow of any assent unto the scripture under any other conception, but as that word which is immediately spoken by Himself. Hence they, who refuse to give credit thereunto, are said *to belie the Lord, and to say, it is not He* *; yea, to *make God a liar* †. That the whole scripture was given by inspiration of God; that it was His word, His *true and faithful sayings*, was that which in the first place they gave testimony unto, and we also are obliged so to do. And they were always esteemed no less traitors to christianity, who gave up their bibles to persecutors, than those who denied Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, The manner wherein this testimony was given, adds to the importance of it: for,

1. Many of the first preachers give evidence unto the truth of the *Gospel* by *sunary miracles*, especially in some seasons ‡. But it must be granted, that these *miracles* were not wrought immediately to confirm this single truth, that the scripture was given by divine inspiration. For the end of miracles was to attest God's approbation of the persons and mi-

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* Jer. v. 2. † 1 John v. 10. ‡ Heb. ii. 4. Acts v. 32.

nistry of those by whom they were wrought. As to the miracles of Christ Himself, and most of those of His apostles, they were wrought amongst them by whom the books of the *Old Testament* were acknowledged, and before the writing of the *New*; so that their design could not be the immediate confirmation of the one or the other. Neither have we any *infallible testimony* concerning *them* but the scripture itself; whence it is necessary, that we should believe the scripture to be infallibly true, before we can believe on grounds infallible the miracles recorded therein. Nevertheless, those who give this testimony had an attestation thereby unto their own ministry.

2. Many of them confirmed their testimony with their *sufferings*, and were not only witnesses but martyrs*. So far were they from any worldly advantage, by the professions they made, that in confirmation of them, they willingly and cheerfully underwent whatever was dreadful, and even destructive to human nature in its temporal concerns. It is therefore unquestionable, that they had the highest assurance of the truth in these things, of which the mind of man is capable. This is the principal design of the apostle in the eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews*, where he states the nature of faith in general; namely, *the substance of things hoped*

* Acts xxii. 20. Rev. ii. 13. xvii. 7.

hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen : that is, such an assent unto, and confidence in invifible objects, as no demonstration of fenfe or reason could afford, but was purely refolved into divine revelation. He then produces a long lift of thofe who fuffered and died in the exercife of their faith, and thereby obtained a good report; enlarges upon the hardships, miferies, cruelties and tortures they endured, and confiders and calls them a *cloud of witneffes* *, bearing testimony to divine revelation. And certainly what was thus testified unto, by fo many great, wife and holy perfons, and that in fuch a way and manner, has as great an outward evidence of its truth, as any thing of that nature is capable of in this world.

3. They gave not their testimony on fome *extraordinary occasions*, or by fome *one folemn act*, or in fome one certain way, as other teftimonies are given, but in their whole courfe, in all that they faid and did in the world, and in the entire difpofal of their ways, lives and actions to the providence of God. When men are called out to give a verbal testimony unto the divine origin of the Scripture, it is comparatively of no value; but when men manifef and evince, that the declaration of the mind of God in the fcripture hath a fovereign authority over their fouls and confciences, then is their witnefs power-

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* Heb. xii. 1.

ful and efficacious. There is to me a thousand times more force and weight in the testimony of some holy persons to this purpose, who experience in themselves, and express to others, the power and authority of the word of God in their souls and consciences, living, suffering and dying in peace, assurance of mind, and consolation thereon, than in the verbal declaration of the most *splendid, numerous church* in the world, who evidence not such an inward sense of its power and efficacy.

4. I shall add the consideration of that *success*, which the doctrine of the gospel has had in the world; especially upon the first preaching of it. Two things are to be noticed, viz. The *persons* by whom it was carried on; and the *way* and *manner* of its propagation.

1. The persons by whom this work was carried on, were the *apostles* and *evangelists*, who were, as to their outward condition, poor, low and despised; and as to the endowments of their minds, destitute of all those abilities and advantages which might give them either reputation or a probability of success. This the Jews marked in them with contempt. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled**. And the Gentiles also despised them on the same account, and gave the apostle no better

* Acts iv. 13.

better a title than that of *babbler* *. So for a long season they kept up the idea in the world, that *Christianity* was the religion of idiots, or at most of very illiterate men. But God had another design in this order of things, which the apostle declares: *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us* †. Had there been employed in this work, persons whose endowments and qualifications might have been judged sufficient to have produced such effects, the *divine power* and glory would have been obscured. And he who is not able to discern the power of God, in bringing about so great a work, by means so disproportionate, must certainly be under the power of the strongest prejudices.

2. The way and manner of its propagation must be considered. Mighty works have been wrought by the force of arms, and also by the powers of eloquence. By the former have empires been set up; and by the same means have the superstitions of *Mahomet* been imposed on several nations. And the latter likewise has produced great effects on the minds of men. It might therefore have been expected that those, who were engaged in so great a work, would have attempted to have employed one of these means; but they entirely abandoned both. As to outward force, power and authority, they had none:

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* Acts xvii. 18. † 2 Cor. iv. 7.

may, the use of all carnal weapons was utterly inconsistent with their work and design. With respect to persuasive *eloquence*, and human wisdom, it was studiously avoided in this work, as extremely prejudicial to the success of it *. But this alone they did ; they went up and down preaching to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that *Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again according to the scriptures* †. This preaching of the *cross*, both for the subject and manner of it, was considered as foolishness : and besides this, they also taught the observance of religious worship in meetings, assemblies or conventicles, which all the laws in the world prohibited ‡. No sooner therefore did the rulers and governors of the earth begin to take notice of them, than they judged, that it all tended to sedition and commotion. Thus the generality of mankind were enraged both against them and their converts. And yet, notwithstanding all opposition, their doctrine prevailed to subdue the world to the obedience thereof.

We may add two ideas, taken from the state of the *world* at that time, which will shew the quality of this work, and manifest it to have been of God.

1. The writers of the New Testament constantly distribute the world into *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The *Jews* were at this time in full possession of all the true religion that was professed, and this they boasted

* 1 Cor. ii. 4. † 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. ‡ Acts xviii. 13. xvi. 23.

ed of as their privilege. The *Greeks*, on the other hand, were in full possession of the arts and sciences, and all that which the world calls *wisdom*. they had also a religion, which they had received by long tradition from their fathers, and this they had adorned with various mysteries to their complete satisfaction. The *Romans* also, who were now in full power, ascribed all their prosperity and empire to their gods, and the worship they gave them. It was a fundamental maxim in their government, that they should prosper or decay, according as they observed or neglected their religion. This had such an influence upon their minds, that after many hundred years, when some books of *Numa*, their second king and principal establisher of their common-wealth, were found, instead of paying them any respect, they ordered them *to be burnt*, because one, who had read them, took his oath, that they were contrary to their present worship and devotion. Upon the decline of their empire, after the prevalency of *christianity*, those who were obstinate in their *paganism*, severely reflected upon the christians, and avowed the relinquishment of their old religion to be the cause of their present calamities.

In this state of things, the preachers of the gospel came amongst them, and not only brought a new doctrine, under all the afore-mentioned disadvantages, but moreover, that He who was the head of it,
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was newly crucified by the then present powers of the earth, for a malefactor ; and that His doctrine was expressly designed to take away the religion from the *Jews*, the wisdom from the *Greeks*, and the principal maxim of polity from the *Romans*. It were easy to see how all these sects would be engaged from principles of worldly interest and honour, to oppose, decry, and condemn this new doctrine. If a few craftsmen could fill a whole city with a tumult against the gospel, fearing a decay of their trade, which was the case at *Ephesus* * ; what must we think was done throughout the world, by all those who were enraged by higher provocations ?—It was as death to the *Jews*, to part with their religion ; both on account of the conviction they had of its truth, and the honour they supposed to accrue to themselves thereby. And for the *Greeks*, to have all their *wisdom* discarded as impertinent foolery, by the preaching of a few illiterate men, raised in them the greatest indignation. The *Romans* also were wise enough to secure the *fundamental maxim* of their state. The world therefore seemed perfectly fortified against the admission of this *new doctrine*, at least on the terms it was proposed :—there could be no danger surely. that ever it should obtain any considerable progress in the world. But strange ! Religion, wisdom, might, honour, profit, interest, reputation were all impelled to give way to its power and efficacy.

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* Acts xix.

2. The world was at that time in the highest enjoyment of *peace, prosperity and plenty*; and it is known, that men, usually by these things, *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Whatever the pride, ambition, or sensuality of mankind could induce them to seek after, the world at that time was particularly well qualified to gratify. And most lived in the hot pursuit of their lusts. In this condition, the gospel was preached unto them, requiring at once, and that indispensibly, a renunciation of all those worldly lusts, which before had been the salt of their lives. If men designed any compliance with it, or desired an interest in it, all their pride, ambition, luxury, covetousness, sensuality, malice and revenge must be mortified and rooted up. Had it only been a new doctrine and religion, declaring that knowledge and worship of God, which before they never had heard of, they would have been very cautious in receiving it; but when it required, at the very first instance, that for its sake, they should *pull out their right eyes, and cut off their right hands*; yea, that they must renounce all their beloved lusts, those which had such a powerful interest in their minds and affections; this could not but invincibly fortify them against its admittance. And yet this was also forced to give way, and all the fortifications of *Satan* therein, by the power of the word casting them down to the ground: *the weapons of this warfare were mighty through God, to the*

the pulling down of strong holds : and by it the world was subdued to Christ. Who can doubt, but that the divine power was exerted in all this ?

But the force of the whole argument is liable to one exception, which must be removed. Whereas we plead the power and efficacy of the gospel in former days, as a demonstration of its divine origin, it will be enquired ; *Whence is it, that it is not now accompanied with the same power, nor produces the same effects ; for we see the profession of it is now confined to narrow limits, nor do we perceive that it gets ground any where. Therefore, either the first prevalency, that is asserted and argued, as an evidence of its divinity, proceeded from some accidental causes operating in an effectual though unseen way, and was not by an emanation of power from itself ; or the gospel is not at present what it was formerly.*

1. We answer ; whatever *different events* may fall out in *different seasons*, yet the gospel is the same. And whatever various apprehensions men may have, through their weakness and prejudice, concerning the things taught therein, yet, in themselves, they are *absolutely the same*, without the loss or change of a *material word or syllable*. Wherefore, whatever entertainment the gospel meets with at the present, its former *prevalency* may be pleaded in satisfaction of its divine origin.

2. The cause of this event lies principally in the
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sovereign will and pleasure of God. For although the scripture be His word, the divine power is not included or shut up in the *letter* of it, so that it must *physically*, or naturally, have the same effect, wherever it comes. It is an instrument in the hand of God unto that work, which is peculiarly His own, and He puts forth His power *by it*, as it seems good unto Him. Therefore the times and seasons of the *prevalency of the gospel* are in the hand and at the *sovereign* disposal of God. Thus at the first preaching of the word, to fulfil the *promises made unto the fathers* from the foundation of the world, to glorify His son Jesus Christ, and to honour the gospel itself, He put forth that effectual power in its administration, whereby the world was subdued unto the obedience of it. And the time will come, when He will revive the same work of power and grace to bring the world into a subjection to Jesus Christ. And though He does not in these latter days cause it to *run and prosper* amongst the nations as formerly, yet, considering the present state of things among the generality of mankind, the preservation of it with that small remnant by whom it is sincerely obeyed, is an evidence no less glorious of His presence with it, and care of it, than was its eminent propagation in days of old.

3. The *righteousness of God* is in like manner to be considered in these things. For whereas He had
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granted His word unto many nations, yet they, through their horrid ingratitude and wickedness, *beld the faith in unrighteousness* ; so that the continuance of the gospel amongst them was no way to the glory of God, nor yet to their own advantage. For neither nations nor persons will ever be advantaged by an *outward profession* of the gospel, whilst they live in contradiction to its precepts ; yea, nothing can be more pernicious to the souls of men. This impiety, God is, at this day, resenting on the nations of the earth, having utterly cast off some from the knowledge of the truth, and given up others *unto strong delusions to believe a lie*. How far He may proceed in a way of righteous displeasure with other nations also, we know not, but ought to tremble in the consideration of it. Though the generality of mankind had greatly sinned against the *light of nature*, and had rejected all those *supernatural revelations* which had been communicated unto them, yet had they not despised the gospel. It pleased God therefore *to wink at the times of ignorance*, so that His justice should not be so provoked as to withhold His gospel from them, thereby *calling them to repentance*. But now, the gospel having been sufficiently tendered unto all nations, and also rejected by most ; things stand quite otherwise. It is from the *righteous judgment of God*, avenging the sins of the world against the gospel itself, that so many nations are deprived
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of it, and so many left obstinate in the refusal of it. Wherefore the present state of things does by no means weaken the *evidence given unto the scripture* by that mighty power of God, which attended the first administration of it in the world. For what has since fallen out, there are secret reasons of *sovereign wisdom*, and open causes in *divine justice*, whereunto it is to be assigned.

Now these arguments are such as are able of themselves to produce in the minds of humble, sober, intelligent and unprejudiced men, a firm opinion and persuasion, that the scripture proceeds from God. But some think fit here to stay, that is, in these or the like external motives of faith. That certainty which may be attained on these arguments, is (as they say) the highest which our minds are capable of, with respect to this object ; and, as such, includes all the assent which is required of us unto this position ; namely, that the scriptures are the word of God. But yet I must needs say, that although those *external arguments*, whereby learned men have proved, or may yet further prove, the scripture to be a divine revelation, and the doctrine contained in it, to be *heavenly truth*, are of singular use to strengthen the faith of them who do believe ; to relieve the mind against temptations and objections to the contrary, and also for the conviction of gainsayers ; yet, to say that they contain the reason of

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that *assent*, which is required of us unto the scripture, as the word of God, and that our faith is the effect of them, is contrary to the scripture, destructive of the nature of divine faith, and entirely exclusive of the whole work of the Spirit.

CHAP. IV.

Moral certainty, the result of external arguments, ineffectual.—The necessity of divine faith, and the work of the Spirit in believers declared.

DIVINE revelation is the proper object of *divine faith*. If we believe it not with a *divine faith*, we believe it not at all. God no where requires, nor ever did, that we should believe divine revelation upon the principle of external arguments. They are left as *consequential* unto our believing, to plead with others in behalf of what we profess, and for the justification of it to the *world*. But God requires our faith and obedience upon His own authority and veracity. *I am the Lord, the High and Lofty One. Thus saith the Lord. This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him.* When He gave the eternal and unchangeable rule of our obedience, He gave no other reason to oblige us thereunto but this: *I am the Lord thy God.* The sole formal reason of all obedience is taken from His

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His own nature and our relation unto Him. Neither did our Lord Jesus Christ or His apostles ever make use of external arguments to produce faith in the minds of men. But when they were accused of following *cunningly devised fables*, they appealed to *Moses* and the *prophets*, to the revelations already received. It is true, they wrought miracles in confirmation of their own divine mission, and in effect of the doctrine which they taught. But the miracles of our Saviour were all wrought amongst those who believed the scriptures to be the word of God ; and those of the apostles were before the writing of the books of the New Testament. However, their doctrine, and their warrant to teach it, was abundantly confirmed thereby. But *divine revelation*, and as written, was left upon the old foundation of the authority of God who gave it. And the ground, on which we are to receive it, is *the authority and veracity of God* speaking in it. Now this faith whereby we so believe is *divine* and *supernatural*, because the formal reason is so, namely, God's truth and authority.

The *moral certainty* treated of, is a mere effect of reason. There is no more required unto it, than that the reasons proposed for the assent, be such as the mind judges to be convincing and powerful. There is therefore, on this supposition, no need of *any work of the Holy Ghost*, to enable us to believe, or to work faith in us ; for no more is necessary here-

in, than what arises from the exercise of reason. If it be said, that the enquiry is not about the *work of the Spirit of God in us*, but concerning the reasons of believing; I answer, it is granted: but what we urge herein is, that the *affect*, which is exerted on such motives, or the persuasion which is begotten by them, is purely *natural*, and such as requires no especial work of the Holy Spirit. Now this is not faith, nor can we be said in the scripture sense to believe thereby, and consequently not the scriptures to be the word of God. *For faith is the gift of God* *. It is given unto some on the behalf of Christ †, and not unto others ‡. But this assent on external arguments is of ourselves, and equally common unto all. The apostle affirms, *no man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost* ¶. And Christ himself declares, *only those who have heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto Him* §.

Our assent can be of no other nature than the motives on which it is built, or the arguments by which it is wrought; as in degree it cannot exceed its evidence. Now these arguments are all human and fallible; exalt them to the highest possible esteem—yet, because they are not demonstrations, nor do necessarily beget a certain knowledge in us, they can produce an opinion only, though in the highest

* Eph. ii. 8. † Phil. i. 29. ‡ Matt. xi. 29. ¶ 1. Cor. xii. 3.

§ John vi. 45.

highest degree probable, and firm against objections. This assent therefore unto the scriptures, as the word of God, is *human* and *fallible*, and such as wherein we may be deceived. Our assent unto the *things revealed*, can be of no other kind than that we give unto the revelation itself; for into this it is resolved; the waters will rise no higher than their fountain. And upon this principle, we come at length to believe *Jesus Christ to be the Son of God* with a faith human and fallible, and which therefore may deceive us; which is, *to receive the word of God as the word of men, and not, as it is in truth, the word of God* *.

If I believe the scripture to be the word of God with an human faith only, I do no otherwise believe, than in a way which overthrows all faith properly so called. And if I believe what is contained in the scripture with *faith divine* and *supernatural*, I cannot but by the same *act* remove the moral certainty treated of out of the way.

But it may be further said, that these *external arguments* and *motives* are not of themselves, and considered separately from the doctrine which they testify unto, the *sole ground* and reason of our believing. For if it were possible a *thousand arguments* could be offered to confirm any truth or doctrine, if it had not a *divine worth* and *excellency in itself*, they could

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* 1 Thes. ii. 13.

give the mind no assurance thereof. Wherefore it is the *truth itself*, or the doctrine contained in the scripture which *animates* and gives them their efficacy. For there is such a *majesty*, *holiness*, and *excellency* in the doctrines of the Gospel, such a *suitableness* in them unto unprejudiced reason, and such an *answerableness* unto all the rational desires and expectations of the soul, as evidence their procedure from the fountain of infinite wisdom and goodness. Let but a man know himself, when the scripture is proposed unto him in the *ministry of the Gospel*, attested by the arguments insisted on, and there will appear unto him in the truths and doctrines of it, such an evidence of the majesty and authority of God, as must prevail with him to believe it to be a divine revelation. And this persuasion is such, that the mind is established in its assent unto the truth, so as to yield *obedience* thereunto.

This being the substance of what is by some learned men proposed and contended for, I shall briefly examine it. And I say here, as on other occasions, that I should rejoice to see more of such a faith in the world, as would effectually oblige men unto obedience out of a conviction of the *excellency* of the doctrine and the truth of the promises and threatenings of the *word* of God, though learned men should never agree about the formal reason of faith. Such notions of truth are but as sacrifice,
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when compared to obedience. Yet the truth should be diligently sought after.

This opinion, therefore, either supposes what we shall immediately declare; namely, the *necessity* of an internal work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds so enabling us to believe with faith *divine* and *supernatural*, or it does not. If it should, it will be found, as I suppose, for substance to be coincident with what we shall afterwards assert and prove to be the formal reason of believing. However, as it is usually proposed, I cannot absolutely comply with it, for these two reasons:

1. It belongs unto the nature of faith, of what sort soever it be, that it be built upon and resolved into testimony. This is that which distinguishes it from any other conception, knowledge, or assent of the mind. And if this testimony be divine, so is the faith whereby we give assent unto it. But the doctrines contained in the scripture, or the truths to be believed, have not in them the nature of a *testimony*; but are the *material* and not *formal* object of faith, which must always differ. If it be said, that these truths or doctrines do so *evidence themselves* to be from God, as that in, and by them, we have the witness and authority of God Himself proposed unto us to resolve our faith into, I will not further contend about it; but only say, that the authority of God, and also His veracity, do manifest themselves primarily

primarily in the revelation itself, before they do so in the things revealed, which is that we plead for.

2. The *excellency of the doctrine*, or things revealed in the scripture respect not so much the truth of them in speculation, as their goodness and suitableness unto the souls of men. Now things under that consideration do not so much refer to *faith*, as to *spiritual sense* and *experience*. Nor can any man have a due apprehension of such a *goodness*, so suitable unto our constitution and condition, without that antecedent assent of the mind unto them, which is believing, which, therefore, cannot be the reason why we do believe.

But if this opinion proceed not upon the aforesaid supposition, if it require no more to our satisfaction in the truth of scripture, than the due *exercise of reason*, then I do suppose it to be most remote from the truth: for,

1. On this supposition the whole *work of believing* would be a work of *reason*. Be it so, say some, nor is it fit that it should be otherwise conceived of. But if so, then the object of it must be things so evident in themselves and their own nature, that the mind is as it were compelled by that evidence into an *assent*, and cannot do otherwise. If there be such a *light* and *evidence* in the things themselves unto our reason, in the right use of it, then is the mind necessitated.

necessitated into its assent; which overthrows the nature of faith, substitutes an assent upon natural evidence, and is absolutely exclusive of the work of the Holy Spirit in our believing.

2. There are some doctrines revealed in the scripture, and those of the most importance, which contain things so *above our reason*, that without some previous supernatural dispositions of mind, they carry in them no evidence of truth unto mere reason, nor of suitableness to our fallen state. There is required unto such an apprehension both the spiritual elevation of the mind or supernatural illumination, and a divine assent unto the authority of revelation, before reason can be so much as satisfied in the truth and excellency of such doctrines. Such are those concerning the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, and sundry others that are the most proper subjects of divine revelation. There is an heavenly glory in some of these things, which, as reason can never thoroughly apprehend, because it is finite and limited, so as it is in us by nature, it can neither receive them, nor delight in them, as doctrinally proposed; *flesh and blood reveal not these things unto our minds, but our Father who is in heaven*. Nor doth any man know these mysteries of the kingdom of God, *but he unto whom it is given*; yea, none learn them aright, but those who *are taught of God*.

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3. Take our reason without the consideration of divine *grace* and *illumination*, and it is not only weak and limited, but depraved and corrupt. And the *carnal mind* cannot subject itself unto the authority of God in any supernatural revelation whatever. Wherefore the truth is, that the doctrines of the gospel, which are pure and spiritual, are so far from having a convincing evidence in themselves of their divine truth, excellency and goodness unto the reason of men as unrenewed by the Holy Ghost, as that by them they are considered as absolute *foolishness*.

For whereas the mind of man is by nature *depraved*, *corrupt* and *carnal*, and in a state of enmity *against God*, it cannot of itself understand, or assent unto, spiritual things in a spiritual way. Wherefore that *assent*, which is the effect of external arguments, is not that faith whereby we ought to believe the word of God. That we may believe the scriptures in an useful, profitable and saving manner, above that *natural* and *human faith*, which is the result of the motives of credibility, before insisted on, with all others of the same kind, it is necessary, that faith be wrought in us by the power of the Holy Ghost, whereby we are enabled to believe. This work of the Spirit, as it is distinct from, so in order of nature it is antecedent unto all *divine objective evidence*, that the scriptures are the word of God, or the formal reason moving us to believe ; without it, whatever

whatever arguments are proposed unto us, we cannot believe the scriptures to be the word of God as required of us, in a way of duty.

That the *faith* whereby we believe the scriptures to be the word of God, is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, can be denied only on two suppositions.

1. That it is not faith divine and supernatural, but only a moral assurance :—or, 2. That this faith divine and supernatural is of ourselves. The first of these has been already disproved, and shall be further refuted afterwards. And as to the second, what is divine and supernatural, is of the operation of the Spirit of God. For to say it is so, is to say that it is not of ourselves, but that it is the grace and gift of the Spirit of God, wrought in us by his divine and supernatural power.

The work of the Holy Spirit for this purpose consists in the saving *illumination* of the mind, and the effect is a *supernatural light*, whereby the mind is renewed *. It is called *an heart to understand*; *eyes to see*; *ears to hear* †; *the opening the eyes of our understanding* ‡; *the giving of an understanding* §. Hereby we are enabled to discern the evidence of the divine origin and authority of the scriptures, and also to assent to the truths they contain; and without it

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* Rom. xii. 1. Eph. i. 18, 19. iii. 16, 19. † Deut. xxix. 4.

‡ Eph. i. 18. § 1 John v. 20.

we cannot; *for the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* *. And unto this end it is written *in the prophets, that they shall all be taught of God* †. That there is a divine and heavenly excellency in the scripture, cannot be denied by any, who admit its divine origin. All the works of God do set forth His praise, and it is impossible that any should proceed immediately from Him, but that there will be express *characters* of divine excellencies upon it; and as to the communication of these *characters* of Himself, *He has magnified His word above all His name*. But these cannot be discerned, though they be never so illustrious, without divine supernatural illumination.

Herein *He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into our hearts to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* ‡. He irradiates the mind with spiritual light, whereby it is enabled to discern the glory of spiritual things. This cannot be done by them, whom *the God of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, should shine upon them*. Such persons may assent unto the truth of the scripture and its divine origin, upon rational

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † John iv. 45. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

tional motives, but believe it with faith divine and supernatural, they cannot.

There are two things which hinder men from believing with faith divine and supernatural, when any divine revelation is objectively proposed: (1.) The natural blindness of their minds: (2.) The prejudices they are under from *tradition, education and converse in the world*. The latter may be so far removed by external motives of credibility, as that men may attain unto a *moral persuasion* of the divine origin of the scripture; but the former can only be removed by renovation and divine illumination. *David prays that God would open his eyes, that he might behold wonderful things out of his law* *. Agreeably to this, the Lord Jesus Christ opened the understandings of His disciples, that they might understand the scriptures †.

The communication of this light is called *revealing* and *revelation*:—*thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes* ‡; that is, thou hast given them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, when they were preached unto them. So the apostle prays for the *Ephesians*; that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ §. It is true, these *Ephesians* were already believers, or

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* Psalm cxix. 18. † Luke xxiv. 45. ‡ Matt. xi. 25.

§ Matt. i. 17, 19.

considered so by the apostle ; but he judged it necessary to pray for them, that they might have *the spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding*, with respect unto further degrees of faith and knowledge ; or, as he speaks in another place, *that they might come unto the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God* *. This being the case, divine illumination was much more necessary to make those believers, who before were not so, but strangers to the faith.

But some are ready to apprehend, that this declaration of *a spirit of revelation*, is but a pretence to discard all rational arguments, and so to introduce *enthusiasm* into their room. Nevertheless, we must not forego what the scripture plainly affirms. Scripture testimonies may be expounded according to the *analogy of faith*, but denied they must not be. That *a spirit of wisdom and revelation* is necessary to open the eyes of our understanding, to enable us to believe the scripture to be the word of God in a due manner, the gospel fully testifies ; and it is our duty to pray continually for that Spirit, if we intend to be established in the faith thereof.

But yet we plead not for *external immediate revelations*, such as were granted unto the prophets, apostles, and other penmen of the scripture. The revelation we intend differs from them, both in its
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* Col. ii. 2.

especial subject and *formal reason*; that is, in its whole kind. For, (1.) The subject matter of divine prophetic revelation, by a *θεοπνευσία*, or *immediate divine inspiration*, were things not made known before, things hid in God, or in the counsel of His will, and revealed unto the apostles and prophets by the Spirit *. But the matter and subject of the revelation we treat of, is nothing but what is already revealed. It is an internal *revelation* of that which is outwardly and antecedently made known in the word of God. And if any pretend unto *immediate revelations* of things not before revealed, we have no concern therewith. (2.) They differ likewise in their nature and kind; for *immediate, divine, prophetic revelations* consisted in an immediate inspiration or *afflatus*, or in visions and voices from heaven, with a power of the Holy Ghost *transiently* affecting the minds of those who received them; and thus enabled them to represent divine impressions, as an instrument of music doth the skill of the hand that playeth it. But this *revelation of the Spirit* consists in His effectual operation freeing the mind from darkness, ignorance and prejudice, and enabling it to discern spiritual things in a spiritual way. And such a *spirit of revelation* is necessary unto all who would believe the scripture, or any thing else that is divine and supernatural contained therein. Not

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* Eph. ii. 5—10.

that I would deny men the use of their reason in this matter; for what is their reason given them for, unless it be to use it in those things which are of the highest importance? Only I beg leave to say, that it is not sufficient of itself to enable us to perform this duty, without the immediate aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God.

If any, upon these principles, should now ask us; *Wherefore we believe the scripture to be the word of God? We do not answer, it is, because the Holy Ghost hath enlightened our minds, wrought faith in us, and thus enables us to believe.* Though without it, we affirm, we neither should or could believe. If God *had not opened the heart of Lydia*, she would not have attended unto the things preached by *Paul*, so as to have received them; and without this, the light oftentimes shines into darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. But this neither is or can be the *formal object of faith*, or the reason why we believe. The reason must be something external and evidently proposed. That therefore, which proposes the truth, with evidence of that truth, is the formal object of our faith, or the reason why we believe. According to the nature of evidence, such is that of faith; human, if it be human; and divine, if it be divine.

But whereas some, who seem to think that the only general ground of believing the scripture to be
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the *word of God*, consists in *rational arguments* and *motives of credibility*, do grant that private persons ; may have their assurance thereof from the illumination of the Spirit of God, though it be not pleadable to others ; they grant what is not, that I know of, desired by any, and which in itself is not true.

It remains only that we enquire whether our faith in this matter be resolved into an *immediate internal testimony of the Spirit*, assuring us of the divine origin and authority of the scripture distinct from the work of *spiritual illumination* before described.

By an *internal testimony of the Spirit*, may be intended an extraordinary *afflatus*, or new revelation ; and this may be supposed to be of the same nature with the revelation made unto the prophets and penmen of scripture. This is that which is commonly imputed unto those who deny either the *authority of the church*, or any other *external argument*, to be the *formal reason* of faith. However, there is no one of them that I know of, who ever asserted any such thing. And I do therefore deny that our faith is resolved into any such *private testimony*. And for the following reasons.

1. Since the finishing of the canon of scripture, the church stands not in need of such new extraordinary revelations. To suppose the necessity of them, would overthrow the perfection of scripture,

leave us in an uncertainty whether it contains all things necessary to duty and salvation, and consequently destroy our peace, assurance and consolation.

2. Those who are to *believe*, will not be able on this supposition to secure themselves from *delusion*. And this new revelation is to be tried by the scripture, or it is not. If not, it must produce the grant of this exception, or it must declare what are the grounds and evidences of its own *αὐτοπιστία*, or self credibility, and how it may be infallibly distinguished from all delusions.

3. It hath so fallen out in the *providence of God*, that, generally, such pretenders to *immediate revelations*, though they have also pleaded a regard unto the scriptures, have been seduced into opinions and practices directly repugnant thereunto. And this, with all persons of sobriety, is sufficient to discard such pretences.

But this *internal testimony of the Spirit* is by some explained quite in another way. For, say they, besides the work of the Spirit before insisted on, whereby He illuminates our minds to discern the excellencies of scripture truths, there is another internal act of His, whereby we are moved, persuaded, and enabled to believe: and that this work of the Spirit carries its own evidence and produces an assurance above all human judgment, and such as stands in need of no further arguments or testimonies; and
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that faith rests upon, and is resolved into this alone. This idea some learned men seem to embrace, because they suppose that the *objective evidence* which is given in the scripture itself, is only of a moral, or such as can give only a moral assurance, whereas faith ought to be divine and supernatural ; and they can apprehend nothing in this work that is immediately divine, but only this *internal testimony of the Spirit*, wherein God Himself speaks unto our hearts.

But yet neither, as it is so explained, can we allow it to be the formal object of faith : For,

1. It hath not the proper nature of a divine testimony : a *divine work*, it may be ; but a divine testimony it cannot be ; and it is of the nature of faith to be built upon an external testimony. Although our minds may be enabled to believe firmly by an internal work of the Holy Spirit, yet neither that work, nor the effect of it, can be the reason why we believe.

2. That which is the formal *object of faith*, is the same and *common to all who believe*. For our enquiry is not, how or by what means this or that man came to *believe*, but why any one, or every one *ought* to believe, unto whom the scripture is proposed. The object exhibited is the same ; the faith required of all in a way of duty is the same, and therefore the reason why we believe must be the same also. But upon the principle we are combating, there must be

be as many distinct reasons of believing as there are believers.

3. On this supposition it cannot be the duty of any one to believe, who hath not received this *internal testimony of the Spirit*. For where the true formal reason of believing is not proposed, there it is not our duty to believe. Wherefore, although the scripture be proposed as the word of God, yet it is not our duty to believe it, unless we have this work of the Spirit in our hearts, in case that were the formal reason of believing.

However, that work of the Spirit, which may be called an *internal real testimony*, is to be granted, as that which belongs unto the stability and assurance of faith. For if He did no otherwise work in us, but by the communication of spiritual light, we should often be shaken in our minds, and moved from our steadfastness. For whereas our spiritual darkness is removed but in part, and at best, while we are here, we see but darkly as through a glass, all things having some obscurity attending them; and for as much as temptation will frequently shake the due respect of the faculty unto the object, or interpose mists and clouds between them, we can have no assurance in believing, unless our minds are further established by the Holy Ghost. He doth therefore three ways assist us in believing; and informs our minds of the things believed, so that we
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may hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.

1. He gives unto believers a *spiritual sense* of the *power and reality of the things believed*, whereby their faith is greatly established. And although the *divine witness*, into which our faith is ultimately resolved, does not consist herein, yet it is the greatest corroborating testimony of which we are capable. This is that which brings us unto *the riches of the full assurance of understanding* *. On account of this *spiritual experience*, our perception of spiritual things is so often expressed by acts of sense, as *tasting, seeing, feeling*, and the like means of assurance in things natural. And when believers have attained thereunto, they find the divine wisdom, goodness and authority of God so present, that they need neither argument nor motive to confirm them in believing. This *spiritual experience* which believers enjoy through the Holy Spirit, is such, that it cannot be contended about; for those who have received it, cannot fully express it; and those who have not, cannot understand it; it remains, therefore, to be determined on by them alone who have *their senses exercised to discern good and evil*. And this belongs to the internal testimony of the Spirit.

2. He assists, helps, and relieves us against *temptations to the contrary*, so that they shall not be prevalent

* Col. ii. 2. 1 Thes. i. 5.

lent. Our first prime *assent* unto the divine authority of the scripture upon its proper foundation, will not secure us against future objections and temptations. *David's* faith was so assaulted by them, that he said in his haste, *that all men were liars*. And *Abraham*, after he had received the promise, that in his seed all nations should be blessed, was reduced to that anxious enquiry, *Lord God what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless* * ? And *Peter* was so winnowed by Satan, that although his *faith failed not*, yet he *greatly failed* and fainted in its exercise. And we all know what fears from within, and what fightings from without, we are exposed unto. And of this sort are all those *atheistical objections* against the scriptures, which these days abound with ; and which the Devil useth as *fiery darts* to enflame the souls of men, and to destroy their faith ; and indeed this is that work which the *powers of hell* are principally engaged in at this day. Having lopped off *many branches*, they now lay their axe to the *root of faith* ; and in the midst of the profession of christianity, there is now no greater controversy, than whether or not the scriptures are the word of God. Against all these temptations, the Holy Spirit gives such a supply of *spiritual strength* to believers, as that they shall not be overcome, nor their faith totally fail. The Lord Christ *intercedes* for them, and God's
grace.

* Gen. xv. 2.

grace is sufficient against the *buffetings* of these temptations. And thus the truth of Christ's intercession, with the grace of God, and its efficacy, are communicated by the Holy Ghost. And these also have the nature of *an internal testimony*, whereby faith is established.

And because it is somewhat strange, that after a long profession of the gospel, and the general assent of men thereto, there should now arise such an open opposition unto the *divine authority of the scriptures*, as we find by experience there is, it may not be amiss in our way to name the principal causes and occasions thereof.

1. A long continued *outward profession* of the truth, without an *inward experience of its power*, betraying men at length to question the truth itself, or at least not to regard it as divine. The acknowledging of the scripture to be the word of God, bespeaks a divine majesty, authority and power to be in it. Wherefore, after men, who have for a long time so professed, do find that they never had any *experience* of such a *divine power* in it, by any effects upon their own minds, they insensibly grow regardless of it, or allow it only a *very common place* in their thoughts. When they have worn off the impressions that were upon their minds from *tradition, education* and *custom*, they do for the future rather not oppose it, than in any way believe it. And when once a
reverence

reverence unto the word of God on account of its *authority* is lost, an assent unto it on account of its *truth* will not long abide. All such persons, under a concurrence of temptations, and outward occasions, will either reject it, or prefer other guides before it.

2. The *power of lust* rising up into a resolution to live in those sins, whereunto the scripture annexes eternal ruin, hath prevailed with many to reject its authority. For whilst men are resolved to live in sin, to allow a divine truth and power in the scripture is to throw themselves under a *present torment*, as well as to procure future misery; for no other can be his condition, who is sensible that God always condemns him for his transgressions, and will assuredly take vengeance on him, which the scripture constantly affirms. Wherefore, although such may not immediately fall into an open *atheistical opposition* unto it, as that which may not be consistent with their interest and reputation in the world, yet looking upon it as the devils did on Jesus Christ, as that which is *come to torment them before their time*, they keep it at the greatest distance from their minds, until they have habituated themselves into a contempt of it. There being an utter impossibility of giving any pretence of reconciliation between owning the scripture to be the word of God, and a determination to live in known sin.

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It is, from a concurrence of those and like causes, that there is at present amongst us such a decay in, relinquishment of, and opposition unto the belief of the scriptures.—But against these, and all other objections and temptations, the minds of true believers are secured by supplies of spiritual light, wisdom and grace from the Holy Spirit.

3. There are several other especial gracious acts of the Holy Ghost on the minds of believers, which belong also unto this *internal real testimony*; such as His *anointing* and *sealing* them; His *witnessing* with them; and His being an *earnest* in them; by all which their faith is increased and established.

And although no *internal work* of the Spirit can be the *formal reason* of our faith, yet it is such, as without it we can never sincerely believe as we ought, nor be established in believing against temptations and objections.

CHAP. V.

*Divine revelation itself the only foundation and
reason of faith.*

WE believe the scripture to be the word of God with faith divine for its own sake. And if it be asked, how we know the scripture to be a divine revelation, or the word of God, we answer: (1.) We do not know it *demonstratively*, upon rational scientific principles, because such a revelation is not capable of such a demonstration *. (2.) We do not assent unto it upon motives and arguments *highly probable* only, but we believe it so to be with *faith divine* and *supernatural*, resting on the authority and veracity of God. I shall therefore prove and establish this assertion, after I have made way to it by one or two previous observations.

1. We suppose herein all the motives of credibility before mentioned, and which strongly proclaim, that the scriptures are the word of God. They all have their use, and especially ought they to be insisted on, when the scripture is attacked by *atheism*, arising from the love and practice of sin. With others, they may be considered as *previous inducements* unto believing, or *concomitant* means of strengthening faith in them that believe. In the
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* 2 Cor. ii. 9.

first way, to the best of my observation, their use is not great, nor ever has been in the church of God. For assuredly the most that believe, do it without any great consideration of them. And there are many, who, as *Austin* speaks, are saved *simplicitate credendi*, and not *subtilitate disputandi*; that are not able to enquire much into them, nor yet to perceive much of their force when proposed. And God forbid that we should think that none believe the scripture aright, but those who are able to apprehend and manage the subtle arguments of learned men produced in their confirmation. Yea, we affirm on the contrary, that those who believe them on no other grounds have no true faith at all. Hence they were not insisted upon of old for the generating of faith in them to whom the word was preached, nor *ordinarily* are so to this day, by any who understand what is their work and duty. But in the second way, whenever there is occasion from objections, oppositions or temptations, they may be pleaded to good purpose. And therefore, they may do well to be furnished with them, who are unavoidably exposed unto trials of that nature.

2. The *ministry of the church*, as it is the *pillar and ground of the truth*, is in general previously necessary unto believing; *for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. The ministry of the word is the means which God has appointed for the declaration

ration and making known the testimony which the Holy Ghost gives in the scripture unto its divine origin. And this is the usual way whereby men are brought to believe the scripture to be the word of God.

3. We here suppose also the *internal effectual work of the Spirit* begetting faith in us, as was before declared; without which, we can neither believe the scriptures, nor any thing else with faith divine; not for want of evidence in them, but of faith in ourselves.

These things being supposed, we affirm, that it is the authority and truth of God, as manifested in the scripture, that our faith rests upon and is resolved into. And herein consists that testimony which the Spirit gives unto the word of God that it is so; *for it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* The Holy Ghost, being the immediate author of the whole scripture, gives *testimony* unto the divine truth and origin of it, by the characters of divine authority and veracity impressed upon it, and these evidence themselves in its power and efficacy.

We then proceed fully to prove that our faith is so resolved into the authority and truth of God as revealed in the scripture.

That is the *formal reason* whereon we believe, which the scripture proposes as the only *reason* why
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we should do so. Now this is the word of God itself, and *because* it is so. Or it proposes the authority of God in itself, as that alone, which we are to acquiesce in; and the truth of God, as that alone, which our faith is to rest upon.

But some may ask, *whether this proves the scripture to be the word of God, because it makes these declarations of itself, whereas any other writing may do the same?* But let it be observed, we are not now giving arguments to prove unto others that the scriptures are the word of God, but only shewing and proving *what* our own faith does, or at least ought to rest upon. How the scripture evidences itself unto our faith to be the word of God, we shall afterwards declare. It is sufficient unto our present purpose, that God *requires us to believe the scripture for no other reason but because it is His word.* To this purpose do testimonies abound in particular, besides that general attestation, *Thus saith the Lord.* Some of them are to be mentioned.

Deut. xxxi. 11, 12, 13. *When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall chuse; thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, women, and children, and the stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not*

known any thing, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God. It is plain that God here requires the faith and obedience of the whole people, men, women and children, to His law; and to evidence that law to be His, he proposes nothing but itself. But it will be said, that generation was sufficiently convinced that the law was from God, by the miracles which they beheld in the giving of it. But it is ordered to be proposed unto children of future generations; who knew nothing, that they might hear and learn to fear the Lord. Isa. viii. 19, 20. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living, to the dead? To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. The enquiry is, by what means men may come to satisfaction in their minds and consciences. Two things are proposed unto this end: (1.) Immediate diabolical revelations, real or pretended. (2.) The written word of God, the law and the testimony. And thereunto we are sent, and that upon the account of its own authority, in opposition unto every pretence of assurance from any other quarter. And the sole reason why every one does not acquiesce by faith in the written word, is because he has no mornings, or light of truth shining on him. How we may know the law and testimony to be of God, is declared in our next passage. Jer. xxiii. 28, 29,

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The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not My word like as a fire, saith the Lord? and like an hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? It is here supposed that there are two persons in repute for divine revelations, both esteemed prophets; but one in fact only *pretends* to be so, and declares the *dreams of his own fancy*, as the word of God. The other *has really the word of God*, and declares it faithfully from Him. But how shall we know the one from the other? Even as men know wheat from chaff, by their different natures and effects. For as false pretended revelations are but as *chaff*, which every wind will scatter; so the true word of God is like fire, *and like an hammer*; is accompanied with that light, efficacy, and power, that it manifests itself unto the consciences of men so to be. Hereon God calls us to rest our faith. But it may be asked, has it this authority and efficacy of itself? See Luke xvi: 27—31. *Then said he, I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou would send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also should come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went from the dead they would repent; and he said unto him, if they hear*
not.

not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one should arise from the dead. The question here in this parable between *Abraham* and the rich man ; indeed between the wisdom of God and the carnality of men, is about the way of bringing unbelievers and impenitents unto faith and repentance. He *who was in hell* apprehended that nothing would make them believe but a *miracle*, one rising from the dead, and speaking unto them. This, I say, was the opinion and judgment of him who was represented in hell, and it may be also of many who are posting thither apace : but he who was in heaven thought otherwise. From the whole, we have the immediate judgment of Jesus Christ given us in this matter. The question is about sufficient evidence and efficacy to cause men to believe that which is divine and supernatural ; and this Jesus Christ determines to be in the written word, in *Moses and the Prophets*. He that will not believe on the single evidence of the written word, will never believe upon that of miracles. And if so, the written word contains all that evidence of the authority and truth of God, which faith divine and supernatural rests upon ; hence the scripture contains the entire *formal reason* of believing. This is also directly affirmed, John xx. 30, 31. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are writ-*
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zen, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name. The signs which Christ wrought, did evidence Him to be the Son of God. But how come we to know and believe these signs? Saith the blessed apostle, *these things are written that you may believe*: this writing of them by divine inspiration is so far sufficient to beget faith in you, as that thereby you may have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Now if the *writing of divine revelations* be the means appointed of God to cause men to believe unto eternal life, then it must as such carry along with it sufficient reason why we should believe.

The apostle *Peter* likewise determines this matter; 2 Peter i. 16—21. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private*
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interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The question is about the gospel, or the declaration of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ, whether it were to be believed or not? and if it were, upon what grounds? The reasons proposed are twofold. (1.) The testimony of the apostles, who not only conversed with Jesus Christ, but were *eye-witnesses* of his majesty, which they gave in evidence of the truth of the gospel. (2.) They also heard a *miraculous attestation* given unto Him immediately from heaven. This gave *them* sufficient assurance; but into what shall the faith of those be resolved, who heard not this testimony? Why, they have a *more sure*, that is, a *most sure word of prophecy*; namely, the written word of God, which is sufficient of itself to secure their faith in this matter. Should it be asked, May not that also be a cunningly *devised fable*, and the whole scripture be but the suggestion of men's private spirits? The whole is finally resolved into this, that the writers of it were *immediately moved by the Holy Ghost*. That which the apostle plainly teaches us is, that we believe all divine truths for *the sake of the scripture*, or because they are declared therein.

The whole object of faith is also proposed by the same apostle; 2 Peter iii. 2. *The words that were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the command-*
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ments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. And thus, because our faith rests solely on the authority and truth of God in their writings, we are said to be built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles *.

We may add further the testimony of *Paul*, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. *According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* The matter to be believed is the mystery of the gospel, which was kept secret since the world began, or from the giving of the first promise; not absolutely, but with respect unto that full *manifestation* which it hath now received. This God commands to be believed; yea, the *everlasting God*, He who hath a sovereign authority over all. But upon what ground or reason are we to believe? This alone is proposed, namely, the divine revelation made in the preaching of the apostles, and in the writings of the prophets; *for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* †. This way, and no other, did our Saviour take even after his resurrection, to beget faith, and also to confirm it, in the minds of his disciples ‡?

From these, and many other testimonies, which might be adduced to the same purpose, it is evident,

1. That

* Eph. ii. 20. † Rom. x. 17. ‡ Luke xxiv. 25—27.

1. That it is the scripture itself, the *word* or will of God, as *revealed* or *written*, which is proposed unto us as the object of our faith and obedience, and which we are to receive and believe with faith divine and supernatural.

2. That no *other reason* is proposed unto us, either as a *motive* to encourage us, or as an argument to assure us that we shall not be mistaken, but only its own divine *origin* and *authority*, making our duty necessary, and securing our faith infallibly.

3. Our assertion is confirmed by the *uniform practice* of the *prophets* and *apostles*, in proposing those divine revelations which they received, by immediate inspiration from God. On the ground men were obliged to receive and believe *divine revelations*, when made unto them by the prophets and apostles, on the same are we obliged to receive them, now they are made unto us in the scripture; the writing being by divine inspiration, and appointed as the means or cause of our faith. It is true, God was pleased sometimes to bear witness unto their personal ministry by *miracles*, or *signs* and *wonders* *.

But this was only at some seasons, and with some of them. That which they universally insisted on, whether they wrought *miracles* or not, was, that the word which they preached, declared, or wrote, was not the *word of man*, came not by any *private suggestion*,

* Heb. ii. 4.

suggestion, but was indeed the *word of God**, and only declared by them as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost.

Under the Old Testament, the prophets sometimes referred persons unto the *word already written*, as that which their faith was to acquiesce in †. And as to their own revelations; they laid the foundation of all the faith and obedience which they required, in this alone, *Thus saith the Lord, the God of truth*. And under the New Testament the infallible preachers and writers thereof do in the first place propose the writings of the *Old Testament* to be received on account of their divine origin ‡. Hence are they called the *oracles of God* ||. Now oracles always required an assent for their own sake, and pleaded no evidence but their own authority. And for the revelations which they superadded, they declared that they had them *immediately from God by Jesus Christ* §. And this was accompanied with such infallible assurance in them, that if an *angel from heaven should have preached any other doctrine*, than that which they had revealed and proposed in the name of God, they would have esteemed him accursed. Hence they continually insisted on their *apostolical authority*

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* 1 Thes. ii. 13. † Isa. viii. 20. Mal. iv. 4. ‡ Rom. iii. 2.

|| John xlv. 46. 47. Luke xvi. 29—31. Matt. xxi. 42.

Acts xviii. 24—28. Acts xxiv. 14. xxvi. 22. 2 Peter i. 21.

§ Gal. i. 1.

and *mission*, which included infallible inspiration. And as for those, who were not *divinely inspired*, they proved the truth of what they delivered by its agreement with the scriptures already written, and referred the minds and consciences of men unto them for ultimate satisfaction *.

It was before granted, that there is required, as subservient unto believing, the *ministerial proposal* of the scripture, with the command of God for obedience thereunto †. The ministry of the church, either extraordinary or ordinary, God hath appointed unto this end, and generally it is necessary for that purpose. *For how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach unless they are sent ‡ ?* I grant that in extraordinary cases, outward providences may supply the room of this ministerial proposal ; for it is all one, with respect to our duty, by what means the scripture is brought unto us. But upon a supposition of this *ministerial proposal of the word*, which includes the duty of the church in its testimony and declaration of the truth, I desire to know whether those, to whom it is proposed, are obliged, without further external evidence, to receive it as the word of God ; to rest their faith in it, and submit their consciences unto it ?

* Acts xviii. 28. xxviii. 33. † Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

‡ Rom. x. 14.

it? The rule seems plain, that they are obliged so to do*. We may consider this under the distinct ways of its proposal, whether extraordinary or ordinary.

Upon the preaching of any of the prophets by immediate inspiration, or upon their declaration of any new revelation, suppose *Isaiab* or *Jeremiah*, I desire to know whether or not, those, to whom they were to deliver their messages, were bound to receive their doctrine, and to submit to the authority of God in those revelations, without any external motive or argument? If they were not, then they were all guiltless, who refused and despised the *warnings* and *instructions* given them in the name of God. For external arguments they used none. Now it is impious to imagine that those to whom they spoke in the name and by the command of God were not obliged to believe them, for it tends to the overthrow of all religion. If we shall say that they were obliged to believe them, and that under the penalty of divine displeasure, and so to receive the revelations made by them, as *the word of God*; then it must contain in it the formal reason of believing, or the full cause and entire reason, why they ought to believe with faith divine and supernatural.

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* Mark xvi. 16.

ed that His people sinned against their natural light, whilst brutes pursued the conduct of their instinct *. In general, the mind cannot but assent unto the prime dictates of the light of nature, though it may not practically comply with them †.

2. By the *rational consideration* of things externally proposed. Herein the mind exercises its reason, gathering one thing out of another, and concluding one thing from another. Thus it is able to assent unto what is proposed unto it, in *various degrees of certainty*, according unto the nature and degree of evidence it has to proceed upon.

3. By *faith*. This is our assent upon *testimony*, whereon we believe many things, which neither sense, natural principles, nor reasonings of our own, can give the least knowledge of. And this also has not only *various degrees*, but is likewise of *divers kinds*, according to the nature of the testimony which it arises from ; *human*, if it be *human* ; and *divine*, if *divine*.

According to these distinct faculties of our souls, God reveals His mind *three ways*. For He has implanted no power in our minds, but with respect unto Himself, and our living unto Him, which is the end of them all ; and a neglect of the improvement of them unto this purpose, is the great *ag-*
grava-

* Isa. i. 3.

† Jude 10.

gravation of sin. It is an aggravation of sin, when men abuse the creatures of God, in not using them to His glory ; when they take His *corn* and *wine* and *oil*, and spend it on their lusts *. It is an higher aggravation when men by sin abuse and dishonour their own bodies ; for these are the principal external workmanship of God, made for eternity, and committed to us, in an especial manner, to be preserved unto His glory. This the apostle states to be the peculiar aggravation of the sin of fornication and uncleanness †. But the height of impiety consists in the abuse of the faculties and powers of the soul, which are immediately given unto us for the glorifying of God. Hence unbelief, prophaneness, blasphemy, atheism, and the like pollutions of the mind, are sins of the highest provocation, and of the most crimson dye.

1. He makes Himself known unto us, by the *principles of natural light*. There are two things in this natural light, namely, a *power of discerning*, and a *power of judging* ; by the one, He reveals His Being, and essential Properties ; by the other, His sovereign authority over all.

As to the first, the apostle affirms, that τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, φανερὸν ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς ‡ : That which *may be known of God* (His essence, being, and essential properties) *is manifest in them* ; that is, it has a self-evidencing

* Hos. ii. 8. † 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. ‡ Rom. i. 19.

evidencing power in the minds of all endued with natural light. And as unto His *sovereign authority*, he evidences it in, and by *the consciences of men* *. And thus, the mind assents unto the principles of God's being and authority, independent of any actual exercise of reason, or other testimony whatever.

2. He reveals Himself unto our *reason*, by proposing such things unto its consideration, as that we cannot but conclude in an assent unto *that* truth, which He intends to teach in that way. This He does *by the works of creation and providence*. Thus the *heavens declare His glory, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work* †. But yet, they do it not unto the first principles of natural light, without the actual exercise of reason. It is only, *when we consider His heavens the work of His fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained* ‡. To the same purpose, the apostle discourses of the works of *creation and providence* §, and the rational use we are to make of them. So God, also, calls upon men for the exercise of their reason about these things, and reproaches them with stupidity when they are wanting therein ||.

3. He reveals Himself unto our faith, or that power of our souls whereby we assent unto the truth
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* Rom. ii. 14, 15. † Psal. xix. 1, 2, 3. ‡ Psal. viii. 3.
§ Rom. i. 20—22. Acts xiv. 15, 17. xvii. 24, 28, 29.
|| Isa. xlvi. 7—9. xlv. 18—20.

upon testimony. He does not make Himself known by His word in the first place unto the principles of natural light, nor yet unto reason in its exercise; but in the gospel *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith* *. Unto this kind of revelations, *Thus saith the Lord*, is the only ground and reason of our assent.

Concerning these several ways of the communication of divine knowledge, it must be always remembered, that there is a perfect consistency in the *things revealed*. And though these means of divine revelation harmonize and perfectly agree one with another, yet are they not objectively equal, but subordinate one unto another: Wherefore there are many things discernible by reason in its exercise, which do not appear unto the first principles of natural light. So the sober *philosophers* of old attained unto many true and great conceptions of God, above what they arrived at, who either did not or could not cultivate the principles of natural light. It is therefore folly to pretend that things so made known of God are not infallibly true and certain, because they are not obvious unto the first conceptions of natural light, without the due exercise of reason. And there are many things revealed unto faith, which are above the comprehension of reason in its utmost exercise. Such are all the
principal

* Rom. i. 17.

principal *mysteries* of the *christian religion*. It is therefore the very height of folly to reject them, as some do, because they are not discernible by reason, though they are not contradictory thereunto.

1. The revelation which God makes of Himself, by the principles of natural light, infallibly evidences itself to be from Him. We dispute not now what a few *atheistical spirits* may pretend unto, whose folly has been sufficiently detected by others. All the sobriety in the world consents to this, that the *light of the knowledge of God*, by the principles of natural conscience, does infallibly manifest itself to be from Him, and that the mind neither is, nor can be imposed on in apprehensions of that nature. And indeed if the first dictates of reason concerning God did not *evidence themselves* to be from Him, they would neither be of any use nor force.

2. The revelation which God makes of Himself, by the *works of creation and providence unto our reason*, does also demonstrate itself to be from Him. For the *invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead* *. They are *clearly seen*, and therefore may be *perfectly understood*, as to what they teach of God, without any possibility of mistake. And whenever men do not receive this revelation, and understand what
 God

* Rom. i. 20.

God teaches by His works of creation and providence ; namely, His *eternal power* and *godhead*, it is not from any defect in the revelation or its *self-evidencing* efficacy ; but from the depraved and vicious habits of their minds. Hence the apostle declares, that they who rejected this revelation, did it, *because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge* * ; and in consequence God severely punished them †. What I principally intend from the whole is, that as the revelation which God makes of Himself by the works of creation and providence does not evidence itself unto the first principles of natural light, so the scripture may have, and really hath, a *self-evidencing efficacy*, though it appear neither to the first principles of nature, nor yet to reason in its exercise.

3. God reveals Himself unto our *faith* by the scripture as His word, which *He hath magnified above all His name* ‡ ; that is, He hath implanted in it more characters of Himself, and His properties, than on any other way whereby He hath made Himself known. Yet this revelation of God, we confess, is not suited to *evidence itself* unto the *light of nature*, or the first principles of our understanding, so that by the bare proposal of it to be from God, we should, by virtue thereof, immediately assent unto it,

* Rom. i. 28. † Isa. xlv. 8. xlv. 15, 19, 20.

‡ Psal. cxxxviii. 2.

it, as men assent unto self-evident natural principles. Nor does it evidence itself unto our reason in its mere natural exercise, as that we can demonstratively conclude that it is from God. It hath indeed such external evidences accompanying it, as make a great impression on reason itself. But the power of our souls, unto which it is proposed, is that, whereby we assent unto the truth, merely upon the testimony of the revealer, and whereof we have no other evidence. And this is the most noble faculty of our nature. There is an instinct in brutes, that has some resemblance unto our inbred natural principles; and they will exert this instinct, improved by experience, into a great likeness of reason, although it be not so. But as unto the *power*, or *faculty* of giving an assent upon testimony, there is nothing in the nature of irrational creatures that has the least shadow of it. And if our souls wanted but this one faculty, all that remains would not be sufficient to conduct us through the affairs of this life. This therefore being the most noble faculty of our souls, is that, unto which divine revelation is proposed in the highest way.

4. That our minds are to be *prepared* and *assisted* by the Holy Ghost, to make an assent according to the mind of God, and as it is required of us in a way of duty, we have declared and proved before. On this supposition, the revelation of God by His
word

word does no less evidence itself unto our *faith*, than the revelation of Himself by the works of creation and providence does unto our *reason*; nor with less assurance than that we receive by the dictates of *natural light*. When God reveals *His eternal power and godhead* by the things that are made, *the heavens* declaring *His glory*, and *the firmament shewing His handy-work*, the reason of man infallibly concludes upon the evidence that is in that revelation, that there is a God, and He eternally powerful and wise, without any further arguments to prove the *revelation* to be true. So when God, by His word, reveals Himself unto the minds of men, and thereby brings faith into exercise, or the power of our soul to assent unto truth upon testimony, that *revelation* does no less *infallibly evidence* itself to be divine, or from God, without any external arguments to prove it to be so. If I should say to a man, that the sun is risen, and shines upon the earth; if he question or deny it, and should ask how I will prove it, it is sufficient to answer, that it manifests *itself* by its own light; and if he add, that this is no proof to him, for he does not discern it; supposing that to be so, it is a satisfactory answer to tell him that he is blind; and if he be not so, that it is to no purpose to argue with him who *contradicts his own sense*, for he leaves no *rule* whereby what is spoken may be judged of. And if I tell a man, *that the heavens declare the glory of God, that the*

*firmament sheweth His handy-work ; or, that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made ; and he shall demand how I prove it, it is sufficient to answer, that these things do manifest themselves unto the reason of every man in its proper exercise. If he shall say, that it does not so appear unto him that the being of God is so revealed by them ; it is sufficient to reply, he has not the use of his reason, or that he argues in express contradiction unto it, as may be fully demonstrated. This the heathen philosopher granted. “ Quid potest
 “ (saith Cicero) esse tam apertum tamq; perspicuum, cum Cœlum suspeximus, cœlestiaq; contemplati sumus, quam esse aliquod Numen præstantissimæ mentis, quo hæc reguntur ; quod qui
 “ dubitat haud sane intelligo cur non idem Sol
 “ fit, an nullus sit dubitare possit *.”* *De Natura Deor. lib. 2.* And if I declare to any one, that the *scripture is the word of God*, or a divine revelation, and that it evidences itself so to be : if he shall say, that although he has the use of his reason as well as others, and yet it does not appear so
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* What can be so clear and perspicuous, when we have viewed the heavens, and contemplated the celestial bodies, that there is some Deity of infinite wisdom, by whom these orbs are governed, of which, he who doubts, I do not clearly understand why the same person should not doubt, whether or not there be a natural Sun.

to him; it is, as unto present enquiry, sufficient to reply, for the securing of the authority of the scripture (though other means may be used for his conviction), that *all men have not faith*; for it is only in the light thereof, that we can read those characters of its divine *extract*, which are impressed on it, and communicated unto it. If it be not so, seeing it is a divine revelation, and it is our duty to believe it so to be, it must be either because our faith is not suited, nor able to receive such an evidence, admitting God has given it unto the revelation of His word, as he has done unto those of the light of nature, and works of providence; or because God neither has or could give such an evidence unto His word as might manifest it to be His. But neither of these can be affirmed without a very high reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God.

That our faith is capable of such an assent is evident, because God works it in us, and bestows it upon us for this very end. And God requires that we should infallibly believe what he proposes, at least, when we have infallible evidence that it is from Him. And as he has appointed faith, and approves of its exercise, so he both judges and condemns those who fail therein *. Yea, faith is capable of an assent, more firm, and accompanied with

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* 2 Chron. xx. 20. Isa. vii. 9. Mark xvi. 16.

more assurance, than any that is given by reason, in its best conclusions. And the reason is, because the power of the mind to give an assent upon testimony, is elevated and strengthened by the divine and supernatural work of the Spirit before described.

To say, that God neither could nor would give such a power unto the revelation of Himself by His word, so as to evidence itself to be His, is exceedingly prejudicial to his honour and glory, seeing the everlasting welfare of the souls of men is incomparably more concerned therein than in the other ways mentioned. And what reason can be assigned why He should implant a less evidence of His divine authority on it, than on them, seeing He designed far greater and more glorious ends by it, than by them? If any shall say, it is, because *this kind* of divine revelation is not capable of receiving such evidences; if so, it must be either because there cannot be *evident characters* of divine authority, goodness, wisdom and power implanted on it; or because an *efficacy* to manifest them cannot be communicated unto such a revelation. That both these are otherwise, shall be immediately demonstrated. And as we have already declared, that it is the *authority and veracity of God, as revealed in the scripture, that is the formal reason of our faith, or supernatural assent unto it as the word of God*: it only remains that we enquire into
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the way and means whereby they evidence themselves unto us, and the scripture thereby to be the word of God. And as we have already shewn, that faith is an *assent* upon *testimony*, and consequently that divine faith is an assent upon divine testimony, there must be some testimony or witness in this case whereon faith must rest. And this we say is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the Author of the scripture, which He gives in and by it unto the minds of men, so that their faith may be immediately resolved into the authority and veracity of God alone. And this work or testimony of the Spirit may be reduced into two heads, which shall be distinctly insisted on.

1. The *impressions* or *characters* which are *subjectively* left upon the scripture, by the Holy Ghost, of all the divine excellencies and perfections, are the first means which evidence that testimony of the Spirit whereon our faith rests. The way by which we learn the eternal power and godhead of Jehovah by the works of creation, is no otherwise than by those marks, tokens and impressions of the divine power, wisdom and goodness that are upon them. See to this purpose the blessed meditation of the Psalmist *. Now there are greater and more evident impressions of all the divine excellencies left upon the written word, by the infinite wisdom of its

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Author,

Psal. civ.

Author, than what are communicated unto any or all the works of God. Hence *David* compares the *works* and *word* of God, as to their instructive efficacy in declaring the Almighty and His glory; and although, he ascribes much unto *the works of creation*, yet he prefers the *word* incomparably before them*. And these manifest the word unto our faith to be His equally, if not more clearly, than the other do the works to be His unto our reason.

As yet, I do not know, that it is denied by any, but that God, as the immediate Author of the scripture, has left in the very word itself evident tokens of His wisdom, prescience, power, omniscience, goodness and truth; though some speak suspiciously herein, but I leave it to be considered, whether (morally speaking) it be possible that God should from the eternal counsels of His will reveal Himself; that is, the thoughts and purposes of his heart, which had been hidden in Himself from eternity, on purpose that we should believe, and yield obedience thereto, and yet not give with it, or leave upon it any *τεκμήριον*, any infallible token, evidencing Him to be the Author of that revelation.

This is that whereon we believe the scripture to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural, if we believe it at all. There is in itself that
evidence

* Psa. xix. 1—9. Psa. cxlvi. 8, 9. and xix. 20.

evidence of its *di-vine origin* from the characters of divine excellencies which are left upon it by its Author, as faith rests upon, and is resolved into. And this evidence is manifest unto the meanest and most unlearned, no less than unto the wisest philosophers. And the truth is, if *rational arguments* and *external motives* were the sole ground of receiving the scripture to be the word of God, it could not be, but that learned men and philosophers would have always been the most forward and the most ready to have admitted it. Some of late have affirmed, that such were the characters who at the first most readily received the gospel; an assertion which nothing but gross ignorance of the scripture itself, and all the writings concerning the *origin of christianity*, whether from the testimony of christians or heathens, could suggest *. On the principle mentioned, the scripture is often compared unto light; it is called a *light shining in a dark place*, which will evidence itself unto all who are not blind, or who do not wilfully shut their eyes, or have not them blinded by the God of this world, *lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, should shine unto them.*

2. The Spirit of God evidences the *di-vine origin and authority of the scripture*, by the power which He puts forth in it, and by it, upon the minds and
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* 1 Cor. i. 23—26.

consciences of men. This the apostle expressly affirms to be the reason and cause of faith. *If all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth* *. The acknowledgment and confession of God to be in them, or amongst them, is a profession of faith in the word as administered by them. Such persons assent unto its divine authority, or believe it to be the word of God, not upon any external evidence or ground of credibility, not upon a conviction of any miracles, which they saw wrought in its confirmation, nor yet upon the testimony of this or that church; but purely on account of that divine power and efficacy they experienced in themselves. *He is convinced of all, judged of all, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest*; whereon he falls down, with an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the word, which comes upon his conscience with an irresistible power of conviction and judgment (*he is convinced of all, judged of all*) he cannot but grant that there is θεῖον πῶς, a divine efficacy in it, and attending it. Especially his mind is influenced by this, namely, *that the secrets of his heart are made manifest by it*. And all men must acknowledge this
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* 1. Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

to be an effect of divine power ; seeing God alone is *καρδιωγνῶσκης*, *He who searcheth, knoweth, and judgeth the heart.* And if the woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Christ, because He *told her all things that ever she did**, there is great reason to believe that word to be from God which makes manifest even the secrets of our hearts. And although I conceive that by the *word of God* †, the *living and eternal Word* is principally intended, yet the power and efficacy there ascribed to Him, is that which he puts forth by the word of the gospel. And so that word also, in its place and use, *pierceth to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner, or passeth a critical judgment on the thoughts and intents of the heart, or makes manifest the secrets of men's hearts.* Herein then, the Holy Ghost so evidences the divine authority of the *word*, by that divine power which it hath upon our souls and consciences, that we assuredly acquiesce in it to be from God. So the *Thessalonians* are commended that *they received the word not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe* ‡. It distinguished itself from the *word of men*, and evidenced itself to be the *word of God* by its effectual operation in them *that believed.* And he who has this testimony in himself has a higher and
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* John iv. 29.

† Heb. iv. 12.

‡ 1 Thes. ii. 13.

more firm assurance of the truth than can be attained by the force of external arguments, or the credit of human testimony.

And I must say, that although a man be furnished with *external arguments* of all sorts concerning the divine origin and authority of the scriptures; although he esteems his *motives of credibility* to be effectual persuasives, and have the authority of all the churches in the world to confirm His persuasion, yet, if he have no experience in himself of its divine power, authority, and efficacy, he neither does nor can believe it to be the word of God in a due manner, with faith divine and supernatural. But he that hath this experience, has that testimony in himself which will never fail.

This will appear more evident, if we consider some of those many instances, whereby the word discovers its power, by the effects which it produces.

The principal divine effect of the word of God is in the *conversion of the souls of sinners*. And all those who are acquainted with it, as it is declared in the scripture, and have an experience of it in their own hearts, do constantly view it as an instance of the *exceeding greatness of the power of God*. Now of this great and glorious effect the word is the only instrumental cause. For we are *born again, born of God*, not of corruptible seed, but of *incorruptible seed* by
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the word of God, which *abideth for ever* *. For of His *own will* does God *beget us again with the word of truth* †. The word is the seed of the new creature in us, that whereby our whole natures, our souls, and all their faculties, are changed and renewed into the image and likeness of God. And by the same word is this new nature kept and preserved ‡, and the whole soul carried on unto the enjoyment of God : *the word of God's grace is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance amongst all them who are sanctified ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe* §. The work which is effected by it in the *regeneration, conversion, and sanctification* of the souls of believers, does evidence itself infallibly unto their consciences, that it is not the *word of man*, but of God. It will be said, that this testimony is private in the minds of them only in whom this work is wrought : and therefore I shall press it no further ; *but he that believeth hath the witness in himself* ||. But yet although this testimony be privately received (for in itself it is not so, but common to all believers) yet it is *ministerially* pleadable in the church as a principal motive unto believing. A declaration of the divine power which some have experienced in the word, is an ordinance of God to convince others, and to bring them unto the

* 1 Pet. i. 21. † Jam. i. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 2. § Acts xx.
32. Rom. i. 16. || 1 John v. 10.

the faith. Yea, of all the external arguments that are or may be pleaded to justify the divine authority of the scripture, there is none more powerful, than this of its mighty efficacy in all ages on the souls of men, to change, convert and renew them into the image of God.

Moreover, there are yet other particular effects of the divine power of the word on the minds and consciences of men, belonging unto this general work, either preceding or following it, which are clearly sensible, and enlarge the evidence. As,

1. The work of *conviction of sin* on those who neither expected nor desired it ; and who, if possible, would avoid it by all means. The world is filled with instances of this nature ; whilst men have been full of love to their sins, and at peace in them, the word coming upon them in its power has awed, disquieted, and terrified them ; taken away their peace, destroyed their hopes, and made them, contrary to their desires, inclinations and carnal affections, to conclude, that if they did not comply with what it proposed, they must be miserable both now and for ever.

Conscience is the territory or dominion of God, which He has so reserved unto Himself, that no human power can possibly enter into it. But in this work of *conviction*, the word of God takes possession and produces in it either peace or trouble. Where
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it gives uneasiness, all the world cannot give rest ; and where it speaks peace, there nothing can give disquietude. Were not the scripture the *word of God*, how could it act so authoritatively in the minds of men ? When once it begins this work, conscience immediately acknowledges a *new rule*, a *new law*, a *new government*. It is contrary to the nature of conscience to take this upon itself, nor would it do so, but that it feels sensibly, that God speaks unto it*. An invasion may be made on the *outward duties* that conscience disposes unto ; but none can be made on its *internal actings*. No power under heaven can cause conscience to think, act, or judge otherwise than it does by its immediate relation to God. For it is the mind's *self-judging* with respect unto God ; and what is not so, is no act of conscience. Wherefore to force an act of conscience implies a contradiction. However it may be defiled, bribed and terrified, it can admit of no power but that of God.

I know conscience may be prepossessed with *prejudices* ; and by education, with the insinuation of traditions, take to itself the power of false, corrupt and superstitious principles, which may delude the *notional* part of the soul ; whereby conscience is insensibly influenced and deceived, as to its judging of the voice of God ; but in opposition thereunto,

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* 1 Co. xiv. 25, 26.

those divine convictions immediately possess the practical understanding and self-judging power of the soul. It may be remarked, how confirmed some have been in their carnal peace and security ; what loss many have suffered in their outward concerns by admitting their convictions, and what force, diligence and artifice has been used to defeat them ; yet the divine power of the word has absolutely prevailed, and accomplished its whole design *.

2. He does it by the light that is in it, and that spiritual illuminating efficacy with which it is accompanied. Hence it is called a *light shining in a dark place* †. That light whereby God *shines into the hearts and minds of men* ‡. Without the scripture, all the world is in darkness: *darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people* §. It is the kingdom of Satan, filled with darkness, superstition, idolatry, and lying vanities. The minds of men are also naturally in darkness ; there is a blindness upon them that they cannot see nor discern spiritual things, not even when they are externally proposed. With respect unto both these kinds of darkness, the scripture is a *light*, and accompanied with a spiritual illuminating efficacy, and thereby it evidences itself to be a divine revelation. For what but *divine truth* could recal the minds of men from all their wander-

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Jer. xxxiii. 29. Zech. i. 6. † 2 Pet. i. 19. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. § Isa. lx. 2.

wanderings in error, superstition, and other effects of darkness, which of themselves they love more than the truth? The scripture, wherever it is sent in the providence of God, comes *as a light into a dark place*; it discovers, at once, all things clearly, that concern either God or ourselves, our present or future condition. But principally it evidences this its divine efficacy, by that *spiritual saving light*, which it conveys to the minds of believers. Hence there is none of them, who have gained any experience by observation of God's dealings with themselves; but, although they know not the ways of the Spirit's operation by the word, yet can say, with the man unto whom the Lord *Jesus* restored sight, *One thing I know, that whereas I was born blind, now I see.* This power of the word, as the instrument of the Spirit, for the communication of spiritual knowledge unto the minds of men, the apostle declares*. By the efficacy of this power, the Holy Spirit evidences the scripture to be the word of God. Those who believe, find a glorious supernatural light introduced into their minds. They who before saw nothing in a distinct affecting manner, do now clearly discern the truth, the glory, the beauty, and excellency of heavenly mysteries, and have their minds transformed into the image of God. And there is no one who has the

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witness

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

witness in himself of the kindlings of this heavenly light, but has also the evidence in himself of the divine authority of the scriptures.

3. It does in like manner evidence its own divine authority by the *ære*, which it puts on the minds of the *generality of mankind* unto whom it is proposed. Multitudes there are, who *hate* all its precepts, *despise* all its promises, *abhor* all its threatenings, and who in a word approve of nothing that it declares, and yet dare not absolutely refuse and reject it. They deal with it as they do with God himself, whom they also hate, according to that revelation which he has made of Himself. They wish he were not; sometimes they hope He is not, and would be glad to be free from his rule; but yet dare not, cannot absolutely deny or disown Him, because of that testimony for Himself, which he keeps alive within them, whether they will or not. The same is the frame of their minds toward the scripture, and for no other reason, but because it is the word of God, and manifests itself so to be. They hate it, wish it were not, hope it is not true, but cannot shake off the disquietude of their minds in the apprehension and sense of its divine authority. This testimony it has fixed in the hearts of a host of its enemies. *

4. It

* Psal. xlv. 5.

4. It evidences its divine power in *administering strong consolations* in the deepest and most remediless distresses. Such has been the condition of innumerable souls, on various accounts ; in particular under the power of *persecutions*, when persons have been shut up in *filthy dungeons*, not to be brought out, but unto death, and that by the most *exquisite torture*, that the malice of hell could invent, or the cruelty of man inflict. Yet, in these and the like distresses, the word of God, by its divine power and efficacy, has broke through all interposing difficulties, all dark and discouraging circumstances, and has refreshed, supported, and comforted such distressed sufferers ; yea, commonly filling them *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. Though they were in bonds, yet the word of God was not bound ; neither could all the powers of hell, nor all the fury of men, keep the word from entering into prisons, dungeons and flames, or prohibit it administering strong consolations against all fears, pains, wants, dangers, deaths, or whatever in this mortal life we might be exposed unto. Sundry other instances of the like nature might be pleaded, wherein the word gives *evident demonstration* unto the minds and consciences of men of its own divine power and authority ; which is the second way whereby the Holy Ghost gives testimony unto its divine origin.

But it was not merely the *grounds* and *reasons* whereon we believe the scripture to be the word of God, which we designed to declare. The whole work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to believe, was proposed unto consideration. And beyond what we have insisted on, there is yet a further peculiar work of His, whereby He effectually informs our minds of the scriptures being the word of God, and whereby we are ultimately established in the faith thereof. And I cannot but be surprised, and bewail, that this should be denied by any that would be esteemed christians. Wherefore I shall take occasion, in the second part of this discourse, further to confirm the truth thus far debated ; namely, *that God by His Holy Spirit secretly, yet effectually persuades and satisfies the minds of believers in the divine truth and authority of the scriptures*, so that He infallibly secures their faith against all objections and temptations whatever ; and enables them safely and comfortably to rest their souls thereon, both for time and eternity.

CH A P. VII.

Inferences from the whole. — Some objections answered.

FROM what has been enlarged upon, a few things offer themselves unto our consideration.

1. What is the reason why the meanest and most unlearned sort of believers do assent unto this truth, viz. *That the scriptures are the word of God*, with no less firmness, certainty, and assurance of mind, than the wisest and most learned of them do? Yea, oftentimes, the faith of the former is of the best growth, and firmest consistency. Now no *assent of the mind* can be accompanied with any further assurance, than the *evidence* upon which it proceeds will afford. It cannot therefore consist in such subtile and learned arguments, the sense of which cannot be understood without difficulty. But the things which we have pleaded for, are quite of another nature. For those characters of divine wisdom, holiness, goodness, authority and grace which are implanted on the scripture by the Holy Ghost, are as legible unto the faith of the meanest, as of the most learned believer. It must, therefore, be granted, that the formal reason of faith consists in those things, the evidence.

evidence of which is equally obvious unto all believers.

2. We may learn whence it is, that the assent of faith is usually affirmed to be accompanied with more *assurance* than any assent which is the effect of *science* upon the most demonstrative principles. They who affirm this, do not consider faith as it is in this, or that individual, or in all that sincerely believe ; but in its own nature and essence, and what it is meet and able to produce. That which seems to constitute the difference, is, that the evidence which we have in things *scientific* is speculative, and affects the mind only ; but that which we have by faith effectually works on the will also, because of the goodness and excellency of the things which are believed. And I think it cannot modestly be denied, that there is a greater assurance in faith, than there is in any *scientific* conclusions ; unless it can appear, that there are as many good and wise men, who will part with all their worldly concerns, and their lives too, and that, by the most violent tortures, in the confirmation of any truth of human science, as it appears have done, on the certainty which they had by faith, that the *scripture is a divine revelation*.

For in bearing testimony thereunto, innumerable multitudes of the best, the holiest and the wisest of men that ever lived, have cheerfully and joyfully
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sacrificed all their *temporal*, and adventured all their eternal concerns. Wherefore unto this firmness and constancy which we have in the assurance of faith, three things concur.

1. That this *ability of assent upon testimony* is the most noble power or faculty of our souls ; and therefore, where it has the highest evidence, which it most undoubtedly has, in the testimony of God, it gives the highest certainty or assurance of which in this world we are capable.

2. Unto the assent of divine faith, there is required *an especial internal operation* of the Holy Ghost. This renders it of another nature than any mere natural act or operation of the mind ; and therefore, if the assurance of it may not properly be said to exceed the *assurance of science* in degree, it is only because it is of a more excellent kind, and therefore not capable of comparison as to degrees.

3. That the revelation which God has made of Himself, that is, of His mind and will by His word, is more *excellent*, and accompanied with greater evidence of His infinitely glorious properties (and wherein alone the mind can find rest and satisfaction) than any other discovery of truth whatsoever is capable of. Neither is the assurance of the mind absolutely perfect in any thing beneath the enjoyment of God. And whereas the soul, by faith,
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makes the nearest approaches it is capable of unto the *eternal Spring* of *being, truth* and *goodness*, it necessarily has the highest rest, satisfaction, and assurance therein, that in this life it can possibly attain unto.

3. It follows from hence, that those who deny either of these two things, or would so separate between them, as to *exclude the necessity* of either unto the duty of believing, namely, the *internal work* of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, or the *external work* of the same Holy Spirit giving evidence in and by the scripture unto its own divine origin, do endeavour to expect all true divine faith out of the world, and to substitute a probable persuasion in the room thereof.

For a close unto this discourse, I shall consider some objections that are usually pleaded in opposition unto the truth asserted and vindicated.

1. It is objected, that the plea hitherto insisted on cannot be managed without great disadvantage to the christian religion. For if we take away the *rational grounds*, on which we believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine, and place the whole evidence on things not only derided by men of *atheistical spirits*, but in themselves not discernible by any, but such as do believe, on what *grounds* can we proceed to convince an unbeliever?

Answer

Answer 1. By the way, it is one thing to prove and believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine, and another to prove and believe the scripture to be given by inspiration of God, which was what we proposed unto consideration. A doctrine true and divine may be written in, and proposed unto us by writings that are not *divinely* and *infal-libly inspired*; and so might the doctrine of Christ have been, but not without unspeakable disadvantage to the church of God. And there are sundry arguments, which forcibly and effectually prove the doctrine of Christ to have been *true* and *divine*, which are not of any efficacy to prove the divine authority of the scriptures; though on the other hand, whatever proves the divine authority of the scriptures, does equally prove the divine truth of the doctrine of Christ.

Answer 2. There are two ways of *convincing unbelievers*; the one insisted on by the *apostles*, and their *followers*; the other, by some learned men since their days. The way principally used by the apostles was by preaching the word itself, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. And it was likely, that unbelievers, and those of atheistical spirits, would deride both them and it; and so indeed it came to pass. But yet they pursued their work, and God gave success. The other is by proposing rational arguments, and herein some learned persons

persons have laboured to very good effect. And certainly their labours are greatly to be commended, whilst they have attended to two rules : (1.) That they produced no arguments but such as are cogent. (2.) That they have not pretended that rational arguments are the sole foundation of faith. Accept but of these two limitations, and it is acknowledged that they may, and ought to be, pleaded unto the conviction of gainfayers : for no man pleads the *self-evidencing power of the scriptures* in such a manner as to exclude the use of external motives. These things are subordinate, and no way inconsistent.

2. It is objected, that if there be such clear evidences in the divine origin and authority of the scripture, that none who freely use their reason can deny it ; then it lies either in the naked proposal of the things unto the understanding ; and if so, then every one that assents unto this proposition, *that the whole is greater than the part*, must likewise assent unto this, that the scripture is the word of God ; or, the evidence must not lie in the mere proposal, but in the efficacy of the Spirit of God in the minds of men unto whom it is proposed.

Answer 1. I know no divine, ancient or modern, popish or protestant, who does not assert that there is a work of the Holy Ghost on the minds of men necessary unto a due belief of the scriptures as the
word

word of God. And the confideration hereof not by any christian to be excluded. Nevertheless, we do not say, that this is the objective testimony or evidence on which we believe the scripture to be the word of God.

2. We do not dispute how far, or by what means this proposition, namely, *that the scripture is the word of God*, may be evidenced unto our mere reason; but our enquiry is, with reference unto our understanding as capable of giving an assent upon testimony. It is not said, that this is the first principle of reason, though it be of faith, nor that it is capable of *mathematical demonstration*. That the whole is greater than the part is self evident unto our reason upon its first proposal; but such demonstration none pretend to be in the scripture, because it is a subject not capable of it. Nor do those, who deny the self-evidence of the scripture, pretend by their arguments for its divine authority to give such an evidence of it unto reason, as is in first principles, or mathematical demonstrations, but content themselves with that which they call a *moral certainty*. But we are obliged to receive the truth of this proposition, by that power of our minds by which we assent unto truth upon testimony; yea, infallibly so, on that which is infallible. And hereunto it evidences its own truth, not with the same, but with an evidence and certainty of an higher nature

ture and more noble kind than that of the *strictest demonstration* in things natural, or the most forcible arguments in things moral.

3. It is objected, that if this be so, then none can be *obliged to receive the scripture* as the word of God, who have not faith, and none have faith but those in whom it is wrought by the Spirit of God, and into this all must be resolved at last.

Answer 1. Certainly, there is no room for this objection ; for the whole work of the Spirit is only pleaded as He is the *efficient cause of believing*, and not the objective, or reason why we believe.

Answer 2. We must not be ashamed to resolve all that we do well, in obedience to the command of God, unto the efficacious operation of the Holy Spirit, unless we intend to be ashamed of the gospel.

Answer 3. It is another question, whether all obligation unto duty is, and must be, proportionate unto our own strength, without divine assistance ; which we deny : and affirm, that we are obliged unto many things by virtue of God's *command*, which we have no power to answer but by virtue of His *grace*.

Answer 4. Where the proposal of the scripture is made in the way before described, those unto whom it is proposed, are obliged to receive it as the word of God, upon the evidence which it gives of itself
so

so to be. Yea, every real, true, divine revelation made unto men, or every proposal of the scripture by divine providence, hath that evidence attending it, as is sufficient to *oblige them*, unto whom it is made, to believe it, on pain of his displeasure. If this were otherwise, then, either were God obliged to confirm every particular divine revelation with a miracle, which He did not; as in many of the prophets; or else, when He requires faith and obedience in the ministry of the word, men are not obliged thereby; nor is it their sin to refuse a compliance with His will.

Answer 5. If this difficulty cannot be otherwise avoided, but by affirming that the faith which God requires, is nothing but a *natural assent* upon rational arguments, which we have an ability for, without any spiritual aid of the Holy Ghost, or respect unto His testimony, as before described, and which overthrows all faith, especially that which is divine. I shall rather ten thousand times allow of all the just consequences that can follow on the supposition mentioned, than admit of this relief. But of those consequences this is none, that any unto whom the scripture is proposed are excepted from an obligation to believe.

In like manner there is no difficulty in the usual objection with respect unto particular books of the
N. scripture,

scripture, why we receive them as *canonical*, and reject others ; as, namely, *the Book of Proverbs*, and *not of Wisdom* ; of *Ecclesiastes*, and *not Ecclesiasticus*. For,

1. As to the books of the Old Testament, we have the canon of them given us in the New, where it is affirmed, that unto the *church of the Jews were committed the oracles of God* ; which both confirms all that we receive, and excludes all that we exclude. And unto the New, there are no pretenders, nor ever were to the exercise of faith.

2. All books whatever that have either pretended unto a divine origin, or have been pleaded by others to be of that extract ; have been, and may be from themselves, without further help, convicted of falshood.

3. We are bound not to refuse the ministry of the church, or the advantages of providence whereby the scripture is brought unto us. Although the scripture is to be believed *for itself*, yet it is not ordinarily to be believed by *itself*, without the help of other means.

4. On this supposition, I fear not to affirm, that there are, on every *individual book* of the scripture, particularly those named, those divine characters and *criteria*, which are sufficient to distinguish them from all other writings, and to testify their divine authority unto the minds and consciences of believers.

vers. I say of *believers*; for we enquire not on what ground unbelievers do in any sort believe the word of God; nor yet directly, on what outward motives such persons may be induced so to do. But our sole enquiry at present is, what the faith of them *who do believe* is resolved into. Now when our Lord Jesus Christ came and preached unto the *Jews*, we do not suppose, that those mere words; *I am the light of the world*, or the like, had all this evidence in or with them of which we speak; for nothing of that nature must be separated from its circumstances; and the testimonies before given in the scripture to His person, work, time, and manner of coming; likewise the evidence of the presence of God with Him in the declaration that He made of His *doctrine*, and Himself to be the Messiah, are to be considered. Upon such principles the Jews were bound to believe what He taught, and Himself to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; and so many of them did purely upon His preaching. And in like manner, they were bound to believe the doctrine of *John the Baptist*, and to submit to his institutions, although he wrought no miracle; and those who did not, rejected the counsel of God for their good, and perished in their unbelief. But although our Lord Jesus Christ wrought no miracles to prove the scripture then extant to be the word of God, seeing that was firmly believed by the
Jews;

Jesus ; yet, the wisdom of God saw it necessary to confirm His *personal ministry* by them. But without a sense of the power and efficacy of the divine truth of the doctrine proposed, *miracles themselves* will be despised ; so they were by some who were afterwards converted by the preaching of the word * ; or they will produce only a false faith, or a ravished assent upon an amazement, that will not abide †.

* Acts ii. 13. iii. 7, 8. † Acts viii. 13, 21.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 4, line 8, for *then*, read *there*.—P. 19, last line but five, for *unto*, read *upon*.—P. 22, last line but five, for *where*, read *when*.—P. 30, last line but seven, for *these*, read *those*.—P. 39, line 7, read *he* enlarges, &c.—P. 40. line 11, for 4. read 5.—Page 52, last line but two, for *yet*, read *for*.—P. 53. line 7, for *the* waters, read *these*.—P. 57, line 12, for *of*, read *by*.—P. 78. line 11, before Isa. viii. insert, *See also* Isa.

