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AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
EVIDENCE
OF THE
Christian Religion.



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P R E F A C E.

I Have observed that what often perplexes Arguments, and renders them Unsatisfactory, is using Terms without determinate Meanings, and building on Propositions not proved, but taken for granted. I have therefore in the following Sheets taken a contrary Method; given Definitions of all those Terms whose precise Meaning it is necessary the Reader, in order fully to comprehend my Argument, should understand; endeavoured to go to the Bottom of my Subject, built only on a Postulatum allowed by every body, which is, that Pleasure is preferable to Pain; and pursued but one sin-

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gle Thread of Reasoning through the whole.

This Method, as I found most satisfactory to my self, so I hope it will prove so to the Reader; and that the setting the Evidence of the Christian Religion before him in a short, plain, and easy Light, will be a Means to lead him to Truth. One thing I have purposely avoided, and that is, heaping the Reader with Evidence, after I imagine the Points in Question are once proved; I presume him to be well acquainted with the many learned, and ingenious Performances lately published upon the same Subject, and chuse to be as brief as possible, to the end I may be neither tiresome to my Reader, nor let him lose sight of my Argument.

It was my first Resolution of keeping close to this Method, which made me in-
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sist only on one literal Prophecy, as a Proof that Jesus made out his own Claim, and had the Testimony of Prophecy; and I did not confine my self to this alone, because no more were to be found (for I have my self afterwards produced literal Prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jesus) but because it was evident that no more could be wanted.

Some of my Readers will, perhaps, be offended to see me assert that there is no Proof of a God a priori; but I am persuaded, that if they think closely on the Subject, they will find that I am not mistaken, and that they can only come to a Knowledge of the Existence of a Being who exists without Cause, from a Consideration of the Existence of Things.

*We may, indeed, when we have found a posteriori a Being who exists without Cause, find several of his Attributes a
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priori to his Revelation ; and this is one of the Searches which I have been engaged in.

The Reason why, contrary to some others, I do not join the Term Necessarily-existent, to a Being who exists without Cause, is, I could fix no Ideas or Notions to this Word, which were not utterly inconsistent with existing without Cause ; and I am persuaded, that if the Reader will please to consider it, he will find himself involved in the same Difficulty.

*If I have not traced the Divine Attributes so far as others have done, or as there are data, yet I have done it as far as was necessary to the Point which I was pursuing ; and when I had found an Eternal, Independent, Intelligent, Unchangeable, Powerful, Perfect, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Free Being, who
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had made Man capable of obtaining Happiness, I had full enough to my Purpose, and to engage me in a Search after the Means by which this Happiness was to be obtained.

My Notion of Perfection may at first appear out of the Way, and on that account be, perhaps, thought not right; but if the Reader will please to ask himself why Justice, Mercy, Generosity, Sincerity, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. are counted Perfections, and try to frame a Notion of Perfection where there is no relation to Happiness, I have Reason to hope that he will not reject it.

*I have but one thing more to say by way of Preface, and that is, in behalf of that Religion which upon the strictest Examination appears to me the True one. Let us expect, that those who Oppose this Religion, do it by Reasoning
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and Argument; by going to the bottom of the Subject, and keeping close to the Point in Hand: And let not the clashing of Divines concerning the Meaning of certain Texts be received as Evidence that those Texts are Impositions on the Reader; or that they speak the Sense of the Opposers of Christianity. In short, let us not reject the Christian Religion, till it is proved to be unworthy of God; or to want Evidence of being his Revelation.

A. O. 58

Lately publish'd,

THE Necessity of Divine Revelation, and the Truth of the Christian Revelation asserted; in eight Sermons. To which is prefix'd, a Preface with some Remarks on a late Book, intitled, *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy consider'd, &c.* By John Rogers, D. D. Canon Residentiary of Wells, and Chaplain to his Royal Highness. 8^{vo}. 1727.



DEFINITIONS.

SECT. I.

DEF. I. **A** NOTION is an apprehension or opinion in the Mind concerning the Existence, Nature or Relations of things: Thus, that there is a God; He is a wise Being; Man derives his Existence from him.

DEF. II. When the apprehension or opinion in the Mind concerning the Existence, Nature or Relations of things, agrees with the Existence, Nature or Relations of things, and the Mind apprehends things as they are, then the Mind has a true Notion concerning those things.

DEF. III. When the apprehension or opinion in the Mind concerning the Existence, Nature or Relations of things does not agree with the Existence, Nature or Relations of things, but the Mind apprehends things as they

they are not, then the Mind has a false Notion concerning those things.

DEF. IV. When certain Words of a sensible Being express the Notion that is in his mind concerning certain things, then the Words of that Being are agreeable to the Notion that is in his Mind.

DEF. V. When certain Words of a sensible Being do not express the Notion that is in his Mind concerning certain things, but express something different from the Notion that is in his mind concerning those things, then the Words of that Being are disagreeable to the Notion that is in his Mind.

DEF. VI. When the Actions of a sensible Being express the Notion that is in his mind, and he acts as if things were what he really apprehends them to be; or when he does whatever according to his Notions, and their necessary Consequences is most fit, right or best to be done, then the Actions of that Being are agreeable to his Notions.

DEF. VII. When the Actions of a sensible Being do not express the Notions that are in his Mind, but he acts as if things were not what he really apprehends them to be; or when he does that which according to his Notions and their necessary Consequences is not most fit, right or best to be done, then the Actions of that Being are disagreeable to his Notions.

SECT.

S E C T. II.

DEF. I. **P**LEASURE is an agreeable Consciousness.

II. Every sensible Being is in some Degree Happy, the Sum total of whose Pleasures exceeds his Pains.

III. Every sensible Being is in some Degree miserable, the Sum total of whose Pains exceeds his Pleasures.

IV. Any Degree of Pleasure to a sensible Being, which procures to that Being a greater Degree of Pain, is not to be reckon'd as Pleasure but Pain.

V. Any Degree of Pain to a sensible Being, which procures that Being a greater Degree of Pleasure, is not to be reckon'd as Pain but Pleasure.

VI. No Being can be said to be perfectly happy, who suffers any Degree of Pain.

VII. No Being can be said to be compleatly miserable, who enjoys any Degree of Pleasure.

VIII. Perfect Happiness is the highest Degree of Pleasure that sensible Beings are capable of, without any interruption of Pain.

S E C T. III.

PROF. I. **T**O all sensible Beings capable of Pleasure and Pain, Pleasure is preferable to Pain.

II. Whatever is preferable is most fit; and is therefore most fit, because preferable.

III. If Pleasure is preferable to Pain, and whatever is preferable, is most fit, then there is a Fitness and Unfitness of things arising from the Nature of sensible Beings, antecedent to all Law and appointment.

IV. The good and happiness of sensible Beings, is a Fitness of things.

V. The pain and misery of sensible Beings, is an Unfitness of things.

VI. Means to the Good and happiness of sensible Beings, is a Fitness of things.

VII. Means to the pain and misery of sensible Beings, is an Unfitness of things.

VIII. True Notions in the Minds of sensible Beings, are a Means to the good and happiness of sensible Beings.

IX. Then true Notions in the Minds of sensible Beings, is a Fitness of things.

X. Actions of sensible Beings, agreeable to true Notions, is a means to the good and happiness of sensible Beings.

XI. Then

PROPOSITIONS.

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XI. Then Actions of sensible Beings, agreeable to true Notions, is a Fitness of things.

XII. Means, by which the Mind attains true Notions, is a means to the good and happiness of sensible Beings.

XIII. Then Means by which the Mind attains true Notions, is a Fitness of things.

XIV. An Examination into the Being, Nature and Relations of things, the finding out Connections, making clear Deductions from self evident Truths, finding out those Means or Mediums which are capable of conveying Truth to the Mind, and assenting to that Truth which these Means or Mediums are capable of conveying, are Means, by which the Mind attains true Notions.

XV. Then an Examination into the Being, Nature and Relations of things, the finding out Connections, making clear Deductions from self evident Truths, finding out Means or Mediums capable of conveying Truth to the Mind, and assenting to that Truth which these Means or Mediums are capable of conveying, is a Fitness of things.

XVI. Evidence is a Means or Medium by which Truth is convey'd to the Mind.

XVII. Then an assent to Evidence is a Fitness of things.

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S E C T. IV.

THE Word Reason is used in many Senses in the English Language, of all which the two following ones are only to my purpose.

DEF. I. Reason, when apply'd to things may properly stand for a Fitness of the End, and a Fitness of Means to the End.

II. Reason, when apply'd to sensible Beings, stands for a particular Exercise of the Powers and Faculties of such Beings. And that particular Exercise of the Powers and Faculties of sensible Beings, by which they discern what will contribute to the good and happiness of sensible Beings, and by which they direct their Powers and Faculties agreeable to this End, may properly be called Reason. It will follow,

1. That whatever is fit is reasonable.

2. That it's reasonable, sensible Beings shou'd be happy.

3. That all those Means, which conduce to the happiness of sensible Beings, are reasonable.

4. That true Notions in the Minds of sensible Beings are Notions according to Reason.

5. That Actions of sensible Beings agreeable to true Notions are Actions according to Reason.

6. That

6. That Actions of sensible Beings which contribute to the good and happiness of sensible Beings are Actions according to Reason.

7. That Actions of sensible Beings, which contribute to the pain and misery of sensible Beings, are Actions contrary to Reason.

8. That Actions of sensible Beings, which contribute to their own Happiness, are Actions according to Reason.

9. That Actions of sensible Beings, which contribute to their own Pain or Misery, are Actions contrary to Reason.

10. That an Examination into the Being, Nature and Relations of things, the finding out Connections, making clear Deductions from self evident Truths, finding out Means or Mediums capable of conveying Truth to the Mind, and assenting to that Truth which these Means or Mediums are capable of conveying, is a Business of Reason.

11. That an Assent to Evidence is an Assent according to Reason.

12. That whoever does not, as far as he has Ability, search out the Means to Happiness, is irrational.

13. That whoever does not make use of those Means, when found, is irrational.

14. That when a Proposition is proposed, which if true, will affect our Happiness in

the highest degree, it is highly irrational not to examine whether it be true or not.

15. That in order to a rational assent to particular Propositions, it is requisite to consider what kind of evidence Propositions of this nature are capable of.

That is, in order to obtain an End, it is rational to consider by what means it may be obtain'd: and as some Truths are capable of Demonstration, and can have the Testimony of our own Senses, and others can only be supported by Moral Proof or Probability, the Testimony of the Senses of others and appearance of things, it is rational before we assent to particular Propositions to consider what kind of Evidence such Propositions are capable of.

16. That it's irrational to expect that kind of Evidence of Propositions which the nature of such Propositions will not admit.

17. That when Moral Proof or Probability is the only Evidence that certain Propositions are capable of, this ought as much to determine the Assent as Demonstration.

An Assent to Evidence is an Assent according to Reason; and a Dissent from Evidence is a Dissent contrary to Reason: and the irrationality of the Dissent consists in the dissenting from evidence, as such, be that Evidence what it will.

S E C T.

S E C T. V.

THAT the Christian Religion is a Divine Revelation, is a Proposition, which if true will affect our happiness in the highest Degree; it is then highly irrational not to consider whether it be true or not.

That if the Christian Religion be true, the happiness of all those, to whom it is promulged, must consist in believing this Religion and obeying it's Precepts, is evident from the Nature of this Religion and it's repeated Declarations; it must be then highly irrational not to examine whether it be true or not.

In order then to find whether the Christian Religion be a Divine Revelation, we will go to the very bottom of things; and first see what is our Evidence of a God: And before we examine whether a certain supposed Being has reveal'd himself, we will consider whether we have reason to believe, that there is really such a Being.

S E C T.

S E C T. VI.

Enquiry the 1st. What is our Evidence of a God?

IN the first place then we find the Mind empty and void, without any innate Ideas of such a Being, or any Notion of a God, till it ascends to it by that which is the Basis of all Knowledge, Ideas of Sensation.

And as there are no innate Ideas of a God, so likewise we can have no proof of such a Being *a priori*; and if there is really such a Being, we can only come to a Knowledge of his Existence from a Consideration of the existence of things.

We then perceive and feel that certain things do exist, which things we find must exist either with, or without a Cause. If they exist without a Cause, then it follows that they must have existed eternally, it being certain that nothing can have a beginning without a Cause. If they exist with a Cause, then we must consider, what can be the Cause of their existence.

The question then is, whether we have reason to think, that the things which we see and perceive do exist, existed eternally without a Cause, or whether there is a Cause of their
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their Existence. The most likely Method to obtain satisfaction in this Point is to consider the things that do exist, and what we know of the manner of their Existence.

And here we find certain Chains of Causes and Effects, and many parts of this System owing their Existence to a preceeding Cause; consequently we cannot with any possibility of Reason assert, that the whole System exists without a Cause. Thus, if the Body x produces the Body y , and the Body y , the Body z , yet still there must be a Cause of the production of x , otherwise there would be a beginning without a Cause, which is impossible: And if there must be a Cause of the Production of the Body x , that is, if there must be a Cause of every Link in a certain Chain or Series of Causes and Effects, then the whole Chain or Series of Causes and Effects cannot exist without Cause.

Nay, from seeing and considering the manner of the Existence of this System, and that many of the parts of it in every period of Time are caused, we find it no less than a Contradiction to assert that the whole System exists without a Cause: And to assert that certain parts of a System do not exist without Cause, yet that the whole System exists without Cause is the same as to assert that the parts do not belong to the whole; that *A* is not a
Letter

Letter, *B* not a Letter, *C* not a Letter, and yet all three Letters.

Again, Those who assert, that this System exists without Cause, assert that this System always existed in the same manner, that it does now exist; then those who assert that this System exists without Cause, must either assert that every part of this System this moment exists without Cause, which they know to be a direct falsity; (they being able themselves to tell the Cause of the Existence of many things in this System;) or that the parts do not belong to the whole, which is an express Contradiction.

Now then, when we see that many of the parts of this System do not exist without Cause; when the contrary Opinion, (the Opinion that this System exists without Cause,) involves us in direct Falsities or Contradictions, and is supported by no one shew of Reason whatsoever; we must, if we determine according to evidence and the reason of Things, determine, that this System does not exist without Cause, and consequently has not existed eternally.

Again *z^{dly}*, A material System, which is compos'd of Parts that are changeable, cannot exist without a Cause, distinct from, as well as prior to, such a System.

Wherever there is a Change, there must
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be a Cause of that Change; otherwise there would be a Beginning without a Cause. Now the Cause of this Change must be in the Materials of the System, or in something which is not the Materials of the System. But the Cause of this Change cannot be in the Materials of this System; for then there would be a Beginning without a Cause: And as every Change in a material System is made in a certain Period of Time, and owes it's Production to a preceeding Cause; could the Materials of a System of themselves produce this Change, there would be a Beginning without a Cause, which is impossible.

And if the Cause of change in a material System cannot be in itself, then it follows, that if there is a Change in a material System, it must be caused by something distinct from, as well as prior to, all the Changes in this System.

The same will be the Case as to Motion in a material System. There is no Motion but what is the Effect of a former Motion; consequently there is no Motion in such a System which has been from Eternity, or that has not been caused: Now the Cause of Motion in a material System cannot be in the material System it self, it being impossible for Matter to begin Motion; and to suppose Matter to begin Motion is to suppose a Beginning
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without a Cause. Consequently there must be a Cause of Motion in a material System prior to and distinct from such a System.

3dly, From the Imperfection, that is, the Unhappiness, which we see in this System, it is evident that it did not exist without a Cause.

Thus particularly, Man is a Being that cannot exist but in pain or misery without the support and assistance of other Beings or Things: But there can be no pain or misery without Cause, which Cause must be Wants and Defects in the nature of a Being, who cannot exist but in pain or misery without the support and assistance of other Beings or Things; but there can be no Wants or Defects without cause, Wants or Defects being manifestly Effects of certain Compositions of Nature or Causes. It is evident then that a Being, who cannot exist but in pain or misery without the support or assistance of other Beings or Things, cannot exist without cause.

Again *4ly*, Man is not only a Being dependent for happiness, but likewise for his very existence, on which account it is demonstration, that he could not exist without a Cause.

Thus we find Man cannot live at all without the support and assistance of other Beings and Things, and that there is something out of himself, which is necessary to his very
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existence. A Being then, who cannot live at all without the support and assistance of other Beings or Things, might never have existed or might cease to exist; consequently cannot exist without Cause. And to assert that a Being, who cannot exist at all without the support and assistance of other Beings or Things, exists without Cause, is to assert a direct and express Contradiction.

Further, from the Frame and Constitution of this System it is evident, that it did not exist without Cause.

A System that never had a Beginning, never can have an End; and if it has existed from all Eternity it must exist to all Eternity; otherwise there wou'd be a Cause of the destruction of something which exists without Cause, which is impossible. But from the nature and constitution of Things; the Decrease of Fluids in the Planets; and of light and bulk in the Sun and fixt Stars; and from the resistance that is made to the Motions of the heavenly Bodies, it is evident that this System cannot exist eternally, and therefore, it has not existed eternally or without Cause.

The Argument against the Eternity of this System from the Novelty of History, known rise and progress of Arts and Sciences, late cultivation and civilizing of Nations, small increase of Mankind &c. tho' often insisted
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on, yet I take to be a fallacy, and so shall let it pass; only put those who make use of it in Mind, that every Period of Time has equal relation to Eternity; and that supposing this System has existed eternally, there can no one Reason be assigned why History should not begin, Arts and Sciences be invented, Nations civilized, and Mankind be of such a certain Number in this Age, as well as a thousand Ages ago; consequently what may with equal Reason be offered in every Age, can have no particular Force in any single one. Indeed if we can prove, that there can be no new Inventions, no progress in Arts and Sciences &c. in a material System, that exists without Cause and has existed from all Eternity (which perhaps may not be so hard a Task as is imagin'd) then new Inventions &c. will be of some use to us in the present Argument. But tho' this Argument will not hold as it is urged, yet rightly put it will be of service; and if we can shew, as we certainly can, that the appearance of every Thing, which we see in this System, exactly agrees with the History which we have of it's original; then these new Inventions &c. are a proof to us that this is a true History. Thus, we have an account that about 6000 Years ago this System was framed; and the progress of Arts and Sciences, known rise of History, Cultivation
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of Nations, Number of Mankind &c. exactly answers to this account of Things; and supposing this System did really begin to exist at that Time, we may really expect the whole Appearance of Things would be as we now find them. Here then is a strong Argument that the History of the Creation is a true History, and that this System did not exist eternally.

It being then fully evident that this System did not exist without Cause, the next Enquiry is, what is the Cause of its Existence.

But, before I come to this, it may not be improper to reply to what may possibly be urged under this Head, and that is, That tho' the Existence of this System may be the Effect of a Cause, yet nothing which I have said gives reason to conclude that the Matter, of which it is composed, is not Eternal. I answer that this is a Point, which at present does not at all concern my Enquiry. If there is a Being, who fitted up this System, and made Man in particular, a sensible Intelligent Being capable of Pleasure or Pain, I have the full of what I want under the present Argument; and the other Enquiry may more properly be made afterwards, when perhaps we may have more *data*.

To return, We have full satisfaction that the present System of the Universe does not
 B exist

exist without Cause. The Question then is, what is the Cause of its Existence.

Now the Cause of its Existence cannot be in it self: for then a Thing would be before it was; which is a Contradiction. Then it follows that some other Being is the Cause of its Existence. The next Question, is, who is this Being that is the Cause of the Existence of this System? We must find a Cause, and a Cause equal to the Effect.

1. Now then as whatever began to exist, must owe its Existence to some preceeding Cause, that Cause if it has not existed Eternally must likewise owe its Existence to some other preceeding Cause, and that to another, and so on, till we ascend to a Being who exists absolutely without Cause and is *Eternal*. And that there is such a Being is evident; otherwise as nothing could begin to exist without a Cause, so nothing that is not Eternal could ever have existed.

As then we are sure, that the material World does exist, and that it does not exist without Cause, but owes its Existence to some other Being, we are sure likewise, that that other Being, if he does not exist without Cause, yet derives his Existence from one that does, and that the Being to whom this System and other Beings, who exist with a Cause, owe their Existence, is a Being who exists absolutely without Cause and is *Eternal*. And

And having said thus much, and that the Being who is the Fountain of Existence to all Beings and things not Eternal, exists without Cause, we have said all that can properly be said upon this Head, it being impossible that we should have any Ideas, which can lead us to a Knowledge of the manner of his Existence. And as the Knowledge we have of such a Being is wholly founded on our knowledge of the Existence of things, it is impossible we should have any knowledge of this Being, to which the Existence of things does not lead us. But the Existence of things, which exist with a Cause, cannot possibly lead us to the knowledge of the manner of Existence of a Being, who exists without Cause. Here then is our Enquiry to stop.

2. But tho' the Existence of things, which exist with a Cause, will not lead us to a Knowledge of the manner of Existence of a Being, who exists without Cause; yet they will in some measure lead us to a Knowledge of the Nature of this Being; and from Effect we may justly argue to the Cause.

Thus, As from the Existence of things, we are sure that there is a Being who exists without Cause, and is Eternal; so likewise we find that he must be *Independent*.

Independency is included in the Notion of existing without Cause; and to assert that

a Being who exists without Cause, is dependent, is to assert an express Contradiction; it is to assert that a Being, that depends on no Being or Thing for Existence, does depend on some Being or Thing for Existence.

3. This independent Being must be *Unchangeable*, that is, he must be always the same, act by the same Laws, and be incapable of being different at one time from what he is at another.

As all Changes whatsoever are made in a certain period of Time, so must they be owing to a preceeding Cause, which Cause if not directly the first Being, yet must derive it's existence from Him, he being the original Cause of every Change that is made in any period of Time. And if he is the Cause of every Change that is made in any period of Time, then the Cause of Change must be in Himself or no where; but there can be no Cause of Change in Himself, the manner of his Existence being without Cause. Then it follows that a Being, who exists without Cause, is Unchangeable.

4. This Being must be *Intelligent*.

When we see a Machine composed of several Parts, which regularly and constantly do distinct Offices, and all concur to one grand Use or End, we pronounce it to be the Effect of Intelligence; having observed like Effects
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to be owing to like Causes, and knowing no other Cause capable of producing like Effects. When then we see the grand Machine of the Universe composed of a vast variety of Parts, which all do distinct Offices, and concur to one grand Use or End, if we don't pronounce this the Effect of Intelligence, we are in our determination directly inconsistent with our selves and with constant Experience.

We have then reason to believe the Universe the Effect of Intelligence, or have no reason to believe any Machine, which we did not see the framing of, the Effect of Intelligence.

Again, not only the Nature of Things which do exist, and the manner of their Existence lead us to an Intelligent Cause, but likewise Intelligence being in this System, it is from thence evident that the Cause of this System is Intelligent.

It is impossible for a Being to give a Perfection, which he possesses not himself: for then the Effect would be more perfect than the Cause, or rather there would be an Effect without a Cause, which is impossible. And to assert that Unintelligence can give Intelligence is to assert, that there may be an Effect without a Cause.

5. This Being must be *Powerful*.

We are sure that the Power of this Being must be equal to the Effects of it; that is, He must be capable of making and sustaining a World: because in fact he has done it. We are sure likewise, as he exists without Cause, that his Power must be unlimited by any Beings, who derive their Existence from Him; that none of his own Creatures can resist his Power: for then He would give a Perfection which he possess'd not Himself; there would be an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause, which is impossible. And this is full enough for us at present under a *general* consideration of his Power.

6. He must be *Perfect*, that is, He must be *Happy* in himself; and in all his Actings with other Beings always act according to Reason or a Fitness of things; or contribute to their good and happiness.

The measure of Perfection of sensible Beings is the Happiness of sensible Beings; and that is the most perfect Being, who is most happy in himself, and who contributes most to the happiness of sensible Beings.

Now a Being, who exists without Cause, must be happy in himself; because there can be no Unhappiness, no pain or misery without Cause: but there can be no Cause of unhappiness to a Being whose manner of Existence

istence is without Cause; consequently a sensible, Intelligent Being who exists without Cause, must be happy, that is, enjoy Pleasure without any interruption of Pain.

Again, as this Being is an Independent Being, 'tis evident he must be a Happy one; Independency in a sensible Being including Happiness. And, as there can be no Unhappiness without Cause, to assert that an Independent Being is not happy, is to assert that he is a Dependent one.

And further, This Being must not only be happy, that is enjoy Pleasure without any Interruption of Pain; but likewise he must be perfectly happy, that is, enjoy the highest degree of Pleasure that sensible Beings are capable of, without any Interruption of Pain.

A Being who exists without Cause, exists independently, that is, He enjoys a Happiness which no dependent Beings are capable of; and if He enjoys a Happiness which no dependent Beings are capable of, He exists in a better manner of Existence than any dependent Beings exist; and if He exists in a better manner of Existence than any Dependent Beings, and has no interruption of Pain, He exists in the best manner of Existence, and is perfectly happy.

Again, a Being who is the Fountain of Existence to other sensible Beings, must enjoy the highest Degree of Happiness that sensible

Beings are capable of; and to assert that Beings who derive their Existence and Happiness from another Being, are yet more happy than that Being, is to assert that there may be an Effect without a Cause.

And as a Being who exists without Cause must be happy in himself, so must he in all his actions with other sensible Beings act according to Reason or a Fitness of things, that is, contribute to their good and Happiness.

There can be no deviations from Reason without Cause, which Cause must be Wants and Defects in the Nature of a Being who thus deviates from Reason; from either his being Unable to discern the Fitness of things, or from his being Unwilling or Unable to act according to these Fitnesses. But there can be no Wants or Defects without Cause, (Wants and Defects being manifestly the Effects of certain particular Compositions or Causes.) It follows then, that a Being who exists without Cause must be free from Wants and Defects; and if He is free from Wants and Defects, then must He in all his Actions with sensible Beings always act according to Reason or a Fitness of things, that is, contribute to their good and happiness.

Again, The absurdity and impossibility of a Being's deviating from Reason who exists without Cause, further appears by considering his other Attributes. Thus,

Thus, were this Being in any Instance to deviate from Reason, it must, as has been observed, be either from want of Ability to discern a Fitness of things, or from want of Will or Power to act agreeably to these Fitnesses. But this Being cannot possibly want an Ability to discern a Fitness of things, because He's an Intelligent Being and Author of the Existence of other Beings; and as a Being cannot be Intelligent, nor so much as sensible, without knowing that Pleasure is preferable to Pain, it is not possible, an Intelligent Being should form other sensible Beings, give them their Nature, yet be ignorant of that Nature, not know what He himself forms, what will contribute to the Pleasure and Pain of such Beings.

And as an Intelligent Being, who exists without Cause, cannot possibly want an Ability to discern a Fitness of things; so neither can He possibly want a Will to act agreeably to these Fitnesses: for this would be to will Evil, as Evil, which a Being free from Wants and Defects cannot possibly do; to will the Imperfection of his own Works; to will Evil without any Motive to will it, it being impossible for a happy Being to have any Motive to will Evil; to will Evil contrary to a Motive not to will it, the Happiness of this Being being a Motive to Him to will Good.

Again,

Again, A Being who exists without Cause, must by virtue of his Unchangeableness, if He will'd Evil as Evil, or will'd contrary to Reason and a Fitness of things, will Evil perpetually and universally, the Effect of which to this System, (provided he had Power to execute what he wills) would be universal Misery and Confusion in it. But there is not universal Misery and Confusion in this System: on the contrary, many sensible Beings in it are enjoying great Pleasure and Satisfaction, and all of them have something given them for Delight and Pleasure. Then it follows, that either this Being does not will Evil, &c. or that he has not power to execute what he wills: but he has power to execute what he wills, as will appear presently; then it follows that he does not will Evil &c, or will contrary to Reason or a Fitness of things.

That this Being has Power to execute what he wills towards sensible Beings, who owe their Existence to him, is evident from the Relation betwixt Him and such Beings; and to suppose that the thing made can have Power over the Maker is to suppose, as has been already seen, an Effect without a Cause, or a Beginning without a Cause which is an Impossibility.

Yet further, a Power to execute what He wills is essential to the Perfect Happiness of a sensible Being:

Being: as then the Supreme Being is a happy Being, he must have Power to execute what He wills; and to assert otherwise, and that the Supreme Being is perfectly happy, yet has not Power to execute what He wills, is to assert an express Contradiction; to will and not be able to execute being a degree of unhappiness.

It is evident then, that a Being, who exists without Cause, must have Power to execute what He wills.

As then it is impossible for an Intelligent Being who exists without Cause, not to know the Fitnesses of things, or to will contrary to these Fitnesses, or to want a Power to execute what He wills, it is impossible for such a Being to act contrary to reason or a Fitness of things, which is the Point I am proving.

Particularly, as this Being has made sensible Beings, so must he have made them capable of obtaining Happiness, and can by no future act with such Beings ever defeat them of any Happiness, which He has made them capable of obtaining; and to act otherwise would be to act directly contrary to reason or a Fitness of things, by causing Pain to sensible Beings.

If it be said, that a Being acts according to Reason or a Fitness of Things, when he increases his own Happiness; that the making
of

of sensible Beings, tho' incapable of Happiness, might add to the Felicity of this Being, and that this was the Motive to Him to make sensible Beings. I answer, That those who assert this, must assert that perfect Happiness may admit of increase, and arise from Unhappiness; that the same Action may be fit and unfit, agreeable and contrary to Reason; that (as before) an Intelligent Being may delight in the Imperfection of his own Works; that there may be Wants and Defects in a Being who exists without Cause; that there may be an Effect without a Cause; that is, they must assert Absurdities, Impossibilities, and Contradictions.

It is evident then, that the Being who exists without Cause must be Happy in himself, and in all his actings with other sensible Beings act according to Reason or a Fitness of Things, that is, contribute to their Good and Happiness. And having said this, we have pronounced Him perfect (all Perfection being included in the words *happy* and *rational*;) and we only call Him Just, Holy, Wise, Good, &c. from a consideration of the particular Manner in which the divine Reason exerts it self.

Thus when we consider him incapable of making sensible Beings to be unhappy, or of defeating them of any happiness which he has
made

made them capable of obtaining, we call him Just; when laying down the best End and pursuing it by the best Means, Wise; when by no Action of his own ever swerving from Reason, Holy; and by considering the Motive which inclin'd Him to make sensible Beings, which was, that he might communicate Happiness to them, Good: yet all is still included when we say he is perfectly happy in himself, and with regard to other Beings always acts according to Reason or a Fitness of Things.

7. He is *Omnipresent*.

By Omnipresent, I mean that He is at all times so present with his Works, as to have a perfect View and Knowledge of them; and as a Wise Being could not make a System, which he could not at all times supervise, govern and direct, the Supreme Being, being Wise, must be able to do this.

8. He is *Omniscient*.

That is, He must know the Nature and full Powers of all Beings and Things which owe their Existence to Him. This is a Consequence of his Intelligence and Wisdom.

Lastly, He must be a *Free Agent* and not act by Necessity but Choice.

That this Being always acts by steady unvariable Rules, which Rules are according to Reason or a Fitness of Things, has been already shewn; yet still this hinders not, but
the

the Manner of his exerting his Power may be free and under no Limitation besides that of his other Attributes. Thus, Whether he should frame or not frame a particular System, of what parts, and in what manner compose it, this entirely depends upon himself.

Now, that he is a Free Being is evident from the consideration of his Power, which can have no limitation besides that of his other Attributes. And as he has made and sustain'd this System, nothing could have hinder'd his making and sustaining a different System if he had pleas'd, provided he acted according to Reason or a Fitness of Things in such a Performance.

Again, unless this Being is a Free Agent, he is an imperfect defective Being: but he is not an imperfect defective Being, therefore he is a Free Agent.

Thus, every Man naturally thinks himself a Free Agent, and agreeably to this Opinion deliberates, rejoices, repents, is ashamed, &c. but Man cannot be a Free Agent, if God is not so; and if the whole System is necessitated, Man's Actions likewise must be necessitated. And to say otherwise, and that Man may be a Free Agent, and God not, is to say, that the Parts do not belong to the whole, that a Power may be in Man which is not in God, or that there may be an Effect without a Cause. It

It is evident then, that if God is not a Free Agent, Man is not one; and if Man is not a Free Agent, then Man is necessitated into Error; necessitated to think himself a Free Agent at the same time that he is a necessary one: That is, He is necessitated into notions contrary to Reason and a Fitness of Things. And if Man is necessitated into Notions contrary to Reason and a Fitness of Things, then the Being who thus necessitates him is an imperfect defective Being: but there can be no Defects or Imperfection without Cause; consequently a Being, whose Manner of Existence is without Cause, could not necessitate Man into Error, nor yet give him Faculties, upon the due Exercise of which he would naturally be led into it. And if a Being who exists without Cause could neither necessitate Man into Error, nor give him Faculties upon the due Exercise of which he would naturally be led into it, and Man naturally thinks himself a Free Agent; then it follows that Man is a Free Agent: but Man cannot be a Free Agent, if God is not a Free Agent; it follows, that God is a Free Agent.

There are many other Arguments which prove God a Free Agent, but those are fully urg'd by other Hands; and I shall not repeat them, imagining what I have already said fully sufficient to prove my Point.

We

We have then full evidence, that there is an Eternal, Independent, Intelligent, Unchangeable, Powerful, Perfect, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Free Being, who is the Cause of the Existence of this System, of which Mankind makes a part; and whoever asserts that there is no such Being, must assert, that the Parts do not belong to the whole; that the same Bodies may exist with and without a Cause; that is, he must assert express Contradictions or Impossibilities. And whoever does not act agreeably *to the Notion of such a Being*, acts directly contrary to Reason or a Fitness of Things.

S E C T. VII.

Enquiry the Second.

WHAT Actions of Man are agreeable to the Notion of an Eternal, Independent, &c. Being? Or supposing there is really such a Being as we have been above describing, who is the Author of Man's Existence; how must Man act, to act according to Reason or a Fitness of Things? How must he act in order to obtain *Happiness*?

And this Enquiry is highly proper, previous to our Enquiry into the Truth of a pretended Revelation: for if this pretended Revelation should

should deliver any Doctrine or require any Practice inconsistent with the Attributes of our Deity, and with that natural Religion, which is founded upon these, we are sure it is Imposture. To proceed.

In the first Place then as the Supreme Being, if he acted according to Reason and a Fitness of things, must have made Man capable of obtaining Happiness; so we find he must have made him capable of obtaining it separate from, and antecedent to, any Reward, from himself for any Actions that Man should perform. The Reason is, God can only punish or reward according to Reason and a Fitness of things; there must be then a Fitness of things, before God can either punish or reward; that is, Man must be capable of Happiness separate from and antecedent to any Rewards from God, for any Actions that he shall perform.

And as God can only reward according to Reason or a Fitness of things, so can he only punish according to Reason or a Fitness of things, that is, He can only punish Actions, which in their own Nature tend to make sensible Beings miserable; there must be then Actions of Man, which in their own Nature tend to make sensible Beings miserable, before God can punish Man for any Actions which he shall commit.

It is evident then, that in the Computation of a Fitness or Unfitness of things, that is, of Man's Happiness or Misery, Rewards or Punishments from God are not to be reckon'd; and it must not be said such Actions are fit because God will reward them, or such unfit, because God will punish them, but they must be fit or unfit before God will either punish or reward, that is, there must be a Happiness and Unhappiness of Man separate from, and antecedent to, any Rewards or Punishments from God.

Whether God will punish or reward Man for any Actions which he shall perform, is not to be considered here; it being enough to our present purpose, that if there is a Being who always acts according to Reason or a Fitness of things, that is the Author of Man's existence, Man must be made capable of obtaining Happiness.

We now then proceed to the Point to be enquired after. How is this Happiness to be obtained? And amidst the various Pretences to Reason, what are those Actions which are truly to be esteemed rational?

In the first Place then we find, that in order to Man's Happiness, it is necessary that he keep all his Powers and Faculties unimpaired, so that he may be able at any time to do, whatever he is able to do naturally.

It

It is evident that if a Wise and Just Being, is the Author of Man's Existence, Man must be capable of obtaining Happiness by a due Exercise of his own Powers and Faculties, by obtaining true Notions and acting agreeably to these Notions. It necessarily follows then, That so far as Man impairs any of his Powers or Faculties, so far he incapacitates himself to obtain Happiness. But this is not all; and Man does not only by impairing his Powers and Faculties lose that Happiness, which by a due exercise of these Powers and Faculties he was capable of obtaining; but, what is proper to be consider'd here, he loses a Pleasure which naturally arises from a due Exercise of unimpair'd Powers, and Faculties.

The Powers of Man may be distinguish'd into two Sorts, of Body and Mind. Those of the Mind are perceiving, apprehending, recollecting, separating, comparing, judging, determining, willing; and the Powers of the Body are those of Executing. It follows then, that whatever tends to impair any of these Powers, that enervates either Body or Mind, directly tends to the misery of Man.

Under this Head all degrees of eating and drinking, beyond what contributes to Health or refreshment; an indulgence in sensual gratifications, and in short, all those Vices, which which may be rang'd under the general Word

Intemperance, will be found to tend directly to the misery of Man.

2dly. With regard to sensible Beings (particularly those of his own Species,) who are capable of having their Happiness increased or diminish'd by the Actions of Man, it is evident that Man's Happiness must be found.

1. In doing no Injury.

2. In doing Good.

If the Happiness of one sensible Being could be increas'd by the Pains or Misery of another sensible Being, then the Author of the Existence of those Beings, must have made some Beings necessarily miserable, and consequently have acted directly contrary to Reason or a Fitness of things, in the formation of such Beings, and be himself an imperfect, defective Being. But the Author of the Existence of sensible Beings is not an Imperfect defective Being, then it follows that Man's Happiness can never arise out of any Actions, which are injurious to his fellow Creatures.

Under this Head it may be shewn, that all Oppressions, Robberies, Violences, Injuries, withholding Dues, &c. and in short all those Vices which are generally rang'd under the Word *Injustice*, directly tend to the misery of the doer of such Actions.

But

But farther *2dly*. If Man is the Work of a just and wise Being, it will not only follow that his Happiness must be found in doing no Injury, but likewise in doing Good.

It is evident that the Supreme Being has so constituted things, that one part of the Human Species cannot live without the supports and assistance of the other: It follows then, that, That part of the Species who are supporting and assisting the other part, must find their own happiness in such Actions; otherwise the Supports, Assistance and Happiness of some Beings would arise out of the pains and miseries of Others; and the Author of the Existence of such Beings be an imperfect defective Being, who has acted contrary to Reason and a Fitness of things, in the formation of such Beings: But the Author of the Existence of sensible Beings, is not an imperfect defective Being, &c. then it follows, that the Happiness of Man must arise from doing Good.

Again, If Man is capable of doing Good to his Fellow Creatures, it follows, that his own Happiness must arise from doing Good. A Being who has Powers and Faculties by which he is capable of doing Good, is capable of acting according to Reason. When then such a Being forbears to do Good, the Forbearance is contrary to Reason; and if it

is contrary to Reason, it is contrary to his own Happiness, this, being found in employing his Powers and Faculties according to Reason.

If then a just and wise Being is the Author of Man's Existence, it undeniably follows, that no Actions of Man, which naturally tend to the Unhappiness of any of his own Species, can tend to the Happiness of the Doer of such Actions; and that no Actions of Man which naturally tend to their Happiness, but must also tend to the Happiness of those who perform them.

Under this Head it must be remembered, that tho' some Actions of Man naturally tend to the Happiness, others to the Unhappiness of Mankind; yet in order to denominate an Action good, that is, the good action of such a Person, or to make it beneficial to the Doer of it, it is necessary that his Intention be good; and in order to denominate an Action evil, that is, the Evil Action of such a Person, 'tis necessary that his Intention be Evil.

1st. Because it is the Intention of a Person which properly makes his Actions his own; and no Man can justly be charg'd with any Action, which his own Will was not the cause of.

2^{dly}. As the Supreme Being always acts upon the Motive of doing good, and likewise effects what he intends, he must so constitute things,
that

that the Happiness of sensible Beings must arise from acting upon the same Motive on which he himself acts, tho' the effecting what they intend is often out of their Power.

How much soever then the Happiness of one Being may be increased by the Action of another, yet if the Intention of the Doer of that Action, was evil, it must be call'd an Evil Action with regard to the Doer of it; and how much soever the Effect of a Person's Actions may be defeated by the interposition of Evil Agents, yet if his Intention was good, it must be denominated a good One with regard to himself.

It follows then, that all those Actions of Man where the Motive to them, is either Pride, Vanity, love of Praise, Pleasure, Selfishness, &c. however beneficial they may prove to others, yet must not be called good Actions, and consequently cannot be beneficial to the Doer of them; That all acts of Forbearance, Mercy, Assistance, Charity, &c. which are design'd for the Benefit of others, directly tend to the Happiness of him who performs them; That all Dispositions to Envy, Hatred, Malice, Selfishness, Revenge, &c. make the Mind unhappy which is possessed with them; and that on the contrary to rejoyce at, and desire the Happiness of all Men, is to procure Happiness to ourselves.

Lastly, with regard to the Supreme Being, it is very evident, that Man can by no Opinion or Action of his, add to the Happiness of this Being; yet still there is a Fitness and Unfitness of Notions and Actions of Man with regard to this Being.

As God has given Man Powers and Faculties by which he may attain to a Knowledge of the Existence and Attributes of Him who form'd him, He must design that he should employ these Powers and Faculties to this End; not only because the Existence and Attributes of God are the Basis of Morality, but because otherwise He would give Abilities to find Truth, yet be best pleas'd with Error; will, in Opposition to his own Actions; and be an Imperfect, defective Being: but He is not an imperfect, defective Being; then it follows that Man's Happiness must arise from attaining true Notions of the Deity.

And also from Acting agreeably to these Notions: otherwise Man's Happiness would arise from Actions directly contrary to Reason, or a Fitness of things.

The Actions of Man, which are agreeable to true Notions of the Deity, and immediately relate to Him, are to acknowledge his Existence and Attributes; to endeavour to know his Will, and to perform it; to live as if we believ'd, we could only be happy in conform-
ing

ing to his Laws, and resembling him in his Moral Attributes; to keep our Powers and Faculties unimpair'd, not only because the impairing of them will be a loss of a means to Happiness, but because he gave us these Powers and Faculties; and we cannot impair them without injuring that which is his; to employ them for the Ends and Purposes for which he gave them; to act upon the same Motive to others, as that on which he himself acts to Mankind; in short, to practice all those particular Duties, which are commonly ranged under the Word *Godliness*. This will be acting agreeably to the Notions of that Being which we have above described. And if there is really such a Being, it is evident that Man's Happiness must arise from attaining true Notions concerning him, and acting agreeably to such Notions.

Thus I have in short shewn Man's Way to Happiness; and all those particular Means, by which he must obtain it, may be rang'd under the three Particulars last mention'd.

I now proceed to answer a formidable Objection, which at first View threatens no less than the Destruction of my whole Scheme; and it is asserted, that Fact is against me, That,

1. Man does not obtain Happiness.
2. Neither are those most Happy, who the
most

most nearly conform to the above deliver'd Rules.

The restless, continued pursuits and Dissatisfaction of all Men, the Unwillingness that would be found in almost every Body to accept Life, provided they were to live a second Time the first Circle, are urg'd in proof of the First. And as to the Second; It is alledg'd that Poverty, Distress, Persecution are often a Consequence of the Practice which I have been describing; that if any would consent to live twice the same Circle, it would be those who indulge in Sensuality, and that such who the most nearly conform to the Practice which I have been describing, are often, as a certain Writer expresses it, *of all Men most miserable*. Thus stands the Argument,

If God is Just, such Men are most Happy.

But such Men are not most Happy.

Then God is not Just.

He has either not design'd that End, or not given Means to accomplish that End; he either intended Man should never obtain Happiness, or that he should not obtain it by the Practice which we have been describing; or he has not foreseen the Power and Interruptions of Evil Men to destroy the Happiness of the Good; in either of which Cases he is an imperfect, defective Being.

In

In Answer to this, it must be allow'd, that if this Life is the *whole* Extent of Man's Existence; if he entirely ceases to be at Death; then, the Author of Man's Existence is an imperfect defective Being; a Being who has either not propos'd the best End, or not taken the best Means in order to accomplish that End.

The Question then is, whether this Life is the whole Extent of Man's Existence, or whether we have reason to think he will exist in another State after his bodily Dissolution? If this Life is the whole Extent of Man's Existence, and he entirely ceases to be at Death; then the Point is given up, and we have prov'd nothing concerning the Moral Attributes of our Deity, and consequently not found out by what means Man may obtain Happiness. If this Life is not the whole Extent of Man's Existence, then we cannot estimate his Happiness by considering only in his Condition this Life, which is but a Part of it; but must take in the whole Extent of his Existence, before we pronounce him Happy or Miserable.

Without spending time then in Enquiries into the Nature of the Soul of Man, and from thence proving it's Immortality, we proceed a shorter Way, and consider whether 'tis possible for Man to exist in another State after his bodily Dissolution. But no sooner do we
examine

examine this Point, but we find it certainly possible for Man to^l exist in another State after his bodily Dissolution; and the same Power, who gave Life at the first, is undoubtedly able to continue, or restore Life, if he pleases. Has then the Supreme Being given us any Evidence, that Man shall not exist in another State after his bodily Dissolution? Certainly none at all: there is no Pretence of Evidence, that Man shall not do this. If then 'tis possible for Man to exist after his bodily Dissolution; if there is no Evidence that he shall not do it, then all the Arguments which prove the Perfection of the Supreme Being, prove that he shall exist in a future State, and the Immortality of the Soul is a consequence of the Perfection of the Deity. Thus, if Man does not exist in a future State, God is not a perfect Being, nor has always acted according to Reason or a Fitness of Things; but God is a perfect Being, then Man must exist in a future State.

We are then only to prove God a perfect Being, who always acts according to Reason and a Fitness of Things; and we have proved that Man shall exist in a future State, his doing this being a Consequence of such Perfection: But we have prov'd that God is a perfect Being, therefore we have proved, that Man shall exist in a future State.

S E C T.

S E C T. VIII.

Enquiry the Third.

WE being by the Help of our natural Faculties led to believe a God, and future Existence of the Soul of Man, and having found by what means Man must obtain Happiness; The next Question is, Whether this God has revealed himself? In the first place then is it agreeable to his Nature to reveal himself, and does this Notion suit with those which we have already obtain'd of the Deity?

And here we immediately find, that it is suitable to the Nature of the Divine Being to reveal himself; and that if it was not unworthy of him to create, it cannot be unworthy of him to direct, take care of, and govern.

Is there any Objection against a Revelation from the Nature of Man? Surely none: And tho', if God is a just Being, Man must be made capable of obtaining Happiness, and also must obtain it by the above described Means, yet he often takes Ways by which he certainly misses it. How far he came with his present Dispositions out of the Hands of his Maker, is not now our Business to enquire. It

It is plain then, that there is no Objection against a Revelation from the Nature of God; or Man: on the contrary, as Things at present stand, it seems reasonable to expect one.

We proceed then to see what Evidence we have, that the Christian Religion is a Divine Revelation; and in our Enquiry must not forget, that there is no Objection against a Revelation from the Nature of the Thing.

S E C T. IX.

Enquiry the Fourth.

WHAT Evidence have we that the *Christian Religion* is a Divine Revelation?

And the first step in this Enquiry is, whether this Religion is worthy of God and suitable to his Nature; and agreeable to that Scheme of Natural Religion already founded upon the Attributes of our Deity. If it fails here, we are immediately to reject it as Imposture, being sure, that cannot be the Revelation of our God, which 'tis unsuitable to his Nature for him to deliver.

We proceed then in our Enquiry, and to see whether the Christian Religion is worthy of God and suitable to his Nature; and in this Examination must take in the whole Christian
stian

stian Scheme: for as this Religion is founded on another call'd the *Jewish*, whatever the Founder of Christianity acknowledges Divine in this Religion, must be likewise brought to the Test.

And here we find, that Man was form'd Happy and made capable of continuing so; that God, as soon as he was created, kindly let him know by what means he might preserve, and how he would lose, his Happiness; that Man did lose his Happiness; that God had pity on him, and sent a Divine Person to live and die on Earth, to the End Man, on certain Conditions to be perform'd by him, might be happy in a future Existence. This Scheme is exactly suitable to the Divine Nature, and worthy of God. Here Man is made happy and capable of continuing so, and even after he had lost his Happiness, again put in a Condition to obtain it. The First we are sure must have been; the Second, tho' exactly suitable to the Divine Wisdom, is more than we could have thought of.

As to the Conditions, on which Man is to obtain Happiness, we find them agreeable to those which we had before discover'd by the help of our natural Faculties; and under the Heads, *Sobriety*, *Righteousness*, and *Godliness* our whole Duty, that is, our way to Happiness is set before us.

Under

Under the First of these we are put in mind how many different Ways we may impair our Faculties; of how fatal Consequence it is to do this; how insufficient to Happiness are temporal Enjoyments; what Misery attends an indulgence of sensual Gratifications; and we are press'd to *flee all such Gratifications because they war against the Soul*, that is, destroy our Happiness.

Under the head of *Righteousness*, the particulars of our Duty with regard to others are taught us; we are fully instructed in the Dues and Rights of all Men whatsoever; commanded to invade none of these Rights, but to *render to all their Dues^a*; and have a Rule given us by which all our Actions to others are to be measured, and that is, *whatsoever we would that others should do unto us, to do the same to them.*

And not here is our Righteousness to stop; we are not only required to do *no ill*, but likewise commanded to *do good*, told that if we would be *Disciples of our Master* and *inherit the Blessing*, we must be *merciful, kind, tender hearted, c forbearing one another and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us*; that if we would be *set at the right hand of our Saviour at that Day when he*

^a Rom. 13. 7.

^b Mat. 7. 12.

^c Eph. 4. 22, 23.

judges

judges all Men, we must ^a feed the hungry, cloath the naked, take in the stranger, visit the sick and afflicted, support the fatherless; that if we would have treasure in heaven, we must give to the poor; and if we would be Children of the most high, that we must resemble Him who does good to all, maketh his Sun ^b rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth Rain on the just and unjust.

Under the head of *Godliness*, all those natural Notions which we had conceiv'd of the Deity, are confirmed; and the Practice, which it requires, is found exactly suitable to that which we have already establish'd upon the Attributes of our God.

Here God is describ'd the ^c *Eternal*, ^d *Unchangeable*, ^e *Almighty*, ^f *Omnipresent*, ^g *Omniscient*, ^h *Wise*, ⁱ *Holy*, ^k *Just*, ^l *good Being*; We are commanded to *worship him*, and particularly instructed in the Times and Manner in which he will be worship'd. We are required to ^m *obey*, ⁿ *fear* and ^o *love him*: and we are as-

a Mat. 25. 34. to the end. b Mat. 5. 45. c Deut. 33
27. d Mat. 3. 6. James 1. 17. e Gen. 17. 1. 28. 3.
35. 11. &c. f Psalm 139. Prov. 5. 21. 15. 3. Heb. 4. 13. &c.
g Job 42. 2. Psalm 139. &c. h Psalm 147. 5. Rom. 11. 33.
i Is. 57. 15. Pf. 99. 3. & 103. 1. & 145. 21. &c. 111. 9.
& Rev. 49. k Is. 45. 21. Zeph. 3. 5. Deut. 16. 18. Prov.
16. 11. Pf. 89. 14. l 1 Chron. 16. 34. Ezra 3. 11. Pf.
100. 5. Pf. 106. 1. Pf. 107. 1. m Deut. 13. 4. &c.
n Mark 11. 30. o Pf. 33. 8. Prov. 3. 7. Mat. 10.
28. &c.

fur'd, that ^a *endless happiness* or *Misery* will be a consequence of obeying or rejecting his Laws.

In short, profess'd Deists have been used to confess that the Christian Religion delivers nothing contradictory to the Nature of God, and that it's Practice is beneficial to Society; and this is all that is wanted in the present Argument.

The Christian Religion then being worthy of God; and suitable to his Nature; the next Question is, What is the Evidence that it is his Revelation: for that it might be his Revelation is no Evidence that it is so, but it is a reason for us to proceed in our Enquiry.

This is certain, if God has given us a Revelation, he has given us full Evidence that it is his Revelation; an Evidence sufficient to determine the rational Assent of all those to whom it is communicated, and equal to that which determines our assent in the common Affairs of Life, and which we cannot reject without self-inconsistency. And to suppose otherwise, is to suppose God an imperfect defective Being, who designs an end, yet does not give means sufficient to accomplish that End.

We proceed then to an Examination of

^a Hebr. 5. 9. Rom. 2. 8. Mat. 25. 46.

the Evidence; and in order to judge of it, think it first proper to consider what kind of Evidence is to be expected; and supposing God would reveal himself, what proof may we rationally expect him to give us of such a Revelation.

.. This is certain, if the Revelation is for the benefit of all Mankind, and ought to be received as truth by all those to whom it is communicated, then the Evidence of it should be sufficient to determine the rational Assent of all those to whom it is communicated, as well those who live after, as at the time when such a Revelation is given. The Christian Religion then being of this sort, (for the benefit of all Mankind, and requiring belief from all those to whom it is communicated,) it ought to have such an Evidence, as is sufficient to determine the rational Assent of all Men.

Now then we can think of no Evidence so certain to all Mankind, as that which is given in the Works of Nature; and it is reasonable to expect that the Supreme Being should give Mankind Evidence of his Will, after the same manner as he gave them Evidence of his Existence and Attributes, that is, in his Works. And as he led us to a knowledge of his Being, or gave us Evidence of his Being, by the Works of Nature; so we may justly expect

He would give us Evidence of his Will in the same Works, and by shewing his Power in Nature. And how is it that the Supreme Being can give us Evidence of his Will in the Works of Nature? Why, as the Existence of Things and the constant, regular, uniform Laws by which Bodies move or rest, are a proof of an *Eternal, Intelligent, &c.* Being; so a Change in these Laws would be an Evidence of his Will. We define then a *Miracle* to be, an Interposition of the Divine Being to change the Laws of Nature in order to give Evidence to his Will. We say, of the Divine Being; for as He is Lord of Nature 'tis strict Demonstration, no Being can change his Laws without his Consent.

Now then, as it is rational to expect this Evidence of a Revelation, so we find this is the Evidence pretended by those who would press on us the Christian Religion: We are then to examine, whether the Christian Religion has this Evidence or not. And in this Search we ought to be very careful, it being certain that if this is the Evidence to be expected, this is the Evidence that Counterfeits will pretend to be in possession of.

In order then to find whether the Laws of Nature were chang'd at the Promulgation of the Christian Religion, we are to examine.

1. Whether the pretended Facts are Changes in the Laws of Nature.

2. Whether there really ever were such Facts.

Now to know whether the pretended Facts are really Changes in the Laws of Nature, we must explain, what we mean by the *Laws of Nature*.

That constant, regular, uniform Way by which Bodies are determin'd to Motion or Rest, and the constant, regular Connexions betwixt certain known Causes and Effects, we call Laws of Nature. And when certain Bodies at Rest move without any External Force; when certain Bodies in Motion move in a different Manner from what they were ever known to move; when certain known Causes produce different Effects, from what they have been ever known to produce; different from what themselves can produce the next Moment, and different from what all others of a like Nature with themselves ever can produce; then we may justly and properly say that the Laws of Nature are chang'd; that something is effected which could not be effected naturally.

A Miracle then being an Interposition of the Divine Being to change the Laws of Nature; in order to know that there is really a Miracle, 'tis necessary first to know the Laws

of Nature; and it is impossible to prove, the Laws of Nature are chang'd, unless we first know what are these Laws. Particularly, should we see a new Appearance in the Heavens, we could not say that the Laws of Nature were chang'd; we know not all Nature nor all the Laws or Powers of Bodies; and this might be a constant, regular Effect of a certain Cause, for any thing we can say to the contrary. And time may bring us to a knowledge of the Cause of this Effect, as it has to a knowledge of the Cause of Eclipses, which have been, and perhaps yet may in some places be ignorantly reputed Miracles.

It is evident then, that we must be fully acquainted with the constant, regular, uniform Determination of certain Bodies; the constant, regular Connexions betwixt certain known Causes and Effects; the Powers of certain Causes to produce certain Effects, and their natural inability to produce certain other Effects, before we can say that the Laws of Nature are chang'd; that there is not a natural Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect, that is, that there is a Miracle.

Those who carry this Matter farther and say we know not all the Laws of Nature, the Laws and Powers of Bodies, and consequently cannot say that ever the Laws of Nature are chang'd, argue not justly. It is not necessary,
that

that I know all the Laws of Nature, nor even all the Laws and Powers of any one Body, nor all the Effects of certain Causes, to say that the Laws of Nature are chang'd: There may be many Powers in Bodies, and even in those which we are most acquainted with, yet undiscovered; and there may be many Effects not known by us, which may proceed from certain Causes: but then all Bodies of the same Nature will be moved by the same Laws, and the same Causes will regularly and constantly produce the same Effects. But when Bodies move contrary to those Laws, by which all Bodies of the same Nature move, and contrary to those by which themselves have hitherto moved; and when certain known Causes produce new Effects in single Instances, and such Effects in which naturally there is no Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect; then we may justly say that the Laws of Nature are changed. And now having seen what is a Change in the Laws of Nature, and that such a Change is the Evidence to be expected of a Revelation, we proceed to examine the pretended Facts, and to see whether these were Changes in the Laws of Nature.

And no sooner do we examine, but we find the pretended Facts given in Evidence of the Christian Religion, are of this sort;

and allowing the Facts, they are really Changes in the Laws of Nature.

To instance, The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when the *Sick, Lame, Withered, Blind, Deaf, Dumb* were cured of all those Maladies by the speaking of a Word, by the touching of Cloaths, or by an Ointment made of Spittle and Clay; here was no natural Connexion betwixt Cause and Effect, a Word, a Touch, Spittle and Clay will not naturally by any Power of their own restore Health, Limbs, Eyes.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd, when *Peter* walk'd upon the Sea; the Sea will by no Power of it's own support walking Persons, and in that instance acquired a new Power.

The Laws of Nature were chang'd when *Jesus* raised *Lazarus* from the Dead by the speaking of a Word; a Word will not naturally restore life, nor do we know any Cause except the divine Power equal to that Effect.

The Laws of Nature were changed, when *Jesus* shew'd himself alive after his Crucifixion.

The Laws of Nature were changed, when Persons spoke Languages they never learnt.

But I need not instance farther; it is very evident that if there really ever were such Facts as these above mention'd, they were Changes
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in the Laws of Nature. It only then remains, to make these Changes true Miracles, that they be given in Evidence of something worthy of God and suitable to his Nature: But happily this Point is already cleared and we have seen that the Christian Religion is worthy of the Deity. We proceed then to the next thing to be enquired after, which is, What is our Evidence of the Facts.

In the first place then we are to consider. What is the Evidence to be expected? Now a Miracle being a Change in the Laws of Nature, it must be of the Essence of a Miracle not to be frequent. The Reason is, We know nothing of the Laws of Nature *a priori*; and our whole Knowledge of these Laws must arise from long Observation and Experience, from seeing the constant, regular, uniform Determinations of Bodies, the Powers of certain Causes to produce certain Effects, and the inability of such Causes to produce certain other Effects. Had we not then a long Experience of the constant regular Determinations of Bodies, Powers of Causes, &c. we could say nothing of a Miracle. And were Interruptions to the Laws of Nature frequent, we could not tell what were the Laws of Nature; and consequently could not say that these Interruptions were Miracles. (By the way we may remark, that if God would reveal

veal himself to Man soon after he had created him, Miracles would not then be an Evidence to him of a Revelation; and if the Supreme Being would early communicate his Mind to Man, he must do it by Vision and immediate Speaking to him. And as this was the way according to the Christian Scheme, that God did at first communicate his Will to Man, it reflects Credit upon that Scheme.)

It is plain then that 'tis of the very Essence of a Miracle not to be frequent; and if so, then historical Evidence is all the Evidence that some Persons can ever have, that there really were any Miracles. The Question then is, whether we have this Evidence? Whether we have reason to believe, that the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles is a true History? that the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to this History had full Knowledge of what they relate and bear Testimony to? and

I. Were not deceived themselves.

II. Were Men of Integrity and would not deceive others.

In the first place if Persons relate and bear Testimony to a History of Facts, and pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in, those Facts, and if the pretended Facts are of such a Nature as to have lasting, visible Effects; then it is Demonstration
that

that such Persons must have full Knowledge, whether there ever were, or were not, such Facts, and consequently could not possibly be deceiv'd themselves. In short, no Persons can have knowledge of any Facts if not such Persons.

In the second place if Persons have never been known to falsify or deceive in any Instance, and if it is entirely against all possibility of Interest for them to deceive; then, we have reason to think them Persons of Integrity. And no greater Evidence can be given, that any Persons are Persons of Integrity than this.

I. We are then in the first place to examine, whether the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in, the Facts which they relate and bear Testimony to; and whether the pretended Facts had such lasting, visible Effects that they could not be mistaken concerning them, nor deceiv'd themselves.

Illy. Whether they were ever found to be Deceivers in any Instances, or if it was contrary to all possibility of Interest for them to deceive.

In the first place then it is evident, that the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, pretend

tend to be themselves present at, concern'd in, and Eye-witnesses of the Facts which they relate and bear Testimony to; and the pretended Facts had lasting, visible Effects; so that they could not possibly be deceiv'd themselves, and not know whether there ever were, or were not such Facts.

Thus, *Matthew* and *John* give us a History of Facts, and pretend themselves present at, concern'd in, and Eye-witnesses of those Facts; and the pretended Facts had lasting, visible Effects; it is evident then that these Persons must have full Knowledge whether there ever were, or were not, such Facts.

Again, two other Historians, called *Mark* and *Luke*, give us the same History; and *Luke* besides publishes another History of Facts, in which, *Peter*, *James*, *John*, *Paul* and other Disciples of Jesus were the Chief Actors. This Account he publishes, whilst these Persons were yet alive, and must have deny'd the Facts if there had been no such, or themselves not Parties in the Imposture.

Further, Tho' *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, only were the direct Historians of the Life and Actions of *Jesus* and his Apostles; yet *Peter*, *James*, *John* and *Jude*, according to the relation of the above named Historians, were constant attenders of Jesus, and these Persons themselves refer to the re-
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lated Facts in their several Epistles to different Churches, and the whole that they write is grounded upon a Supposition of the Facts.

We must reckon then as Attesters of the History of *Jesus, Matthew, John, Peter, James, Jude, Mark, Luke*, the five first of which pretend to be themselves present at, Eye-witnesses of, and concern'd in the Facts which they relate, and bear Testimony to; and Attesters of the History of the Apostles, *Luke, Peter, James, John* and *Paul*.

And as one part of the Christian History depends on the other part of it, and Jesus's Disciples, according to their own account of Things, acted by his Authority and Commission, it is evident, that if they did not the Actions which they pretend they did, neither did He the actions which they ascribe unto him; and if He did not the Actions which they ascribe to him, neither did they the Actions which they pretend they did; but it is impossible for Persons to be deceiv'd in their own Case, and not know whether they really do, or do not make the Lame walk, the Blind see, the Dead come to life, &c. consequently all these Persons must be grand Cheats if there were no such Facts.

As to the common Objection of Enthusiasm, it can have no weight here, the Things testify'd by these Persons being of that Nature,
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that they could not possibly be deceived concerning them: and tho' a warm Imagination may be so far impos'd on, as to apprehend Visions and Revelations when there are really no such things; yet no Persons in their Senses, no Persons who can deliver to the World a consistent Scheme of Morality, can be so far deceived as to imagine, that they make the Blind see, the Lame walk, the Dead come to life, or that they speak in Languages which they never learnt, if there were no such Facts.

It is then beyond Contradiction evident, that the Persons who relate, and bear Testimony to, the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, had full Knowledge whether there ever were, or were not such Facts as they relate and bear Testimony to, and consequently were not deceiv'd themselves. The next thing then to be enquired after is,

1dly. If they were ever known to falsify or deceive in any one Instance; and if it was contrary to all Possibility of Interest for them to deceive.

1. In the first place then, they were never known to falsify or deceive in any one Instance; they had no blot in their Characters; and their very worst Enemies could not reproach them with Immorality.

2dly.

2dly. It was against all possibility of Interest for them to deceive.

That to deceive, was contrary to all possibility of Interest in this World is evident, because Persecution and Death were the Consequence of the Imposture, if it was one. And that it was contrary to all future Prospects is evident, because it is not possible for Human Nature to have so absurd Notions of the Deity, as that his Favour is to be purchas'd by inventing a lye, and persevering in it. Possibly, indeed Persons may have ly'd for God—that is, they may have supported a Cause which they apprehended to be his, with Falshood; but then, they thought it was really his Cause; and no Body has been so absurd as to imagine that the favour of the Deity, is to be purchas'd by inventing a lye concerning Him; by asserting, That to be his Cause which they certainly know to be not so; which is lying not for, but against, in opposition to Him.

If it be said, that tho' it is true these Persons acted contrary to worldly Interest; yet they might have another Notion of Things at first, and that particularly *Jesus* the Ring-leader of this Sect, design'd making himself a King; and that after his decease his Disciples acted upon the same worldly Motives. I answer, it no where appears that *Jesus* design'd
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making himself a King; on the contrary He constantly disclaim'd whatever tended that way, and declared that his Kingdom *was not of this World*. And as to his Disciples, what ever Notion they at first might have of worldly Advancement, yet the repeated Declarations of their Master, his ignominious Death and Sufferings, their own cruel Treatment in the World, fully appriz'd them of what they were to expect on Earth, and that *Bonds, Persecution, Hatred of all Men and Death* were to be the only Portions they were in this World to expect.

Again, what view to worldly Advancement had *Paul* a learned and ingenious Man, in good repute in his own Nation, and who well knew what Fate the Spreaders of Christianity were to expect, from the part he had acted towards them?

But to put this Matter out of question, whatever Prospect of worldly Interest Persons may have living, they can have none dying: these Persons sealed their Testimony with their Blood, and laid down their Lives to confirm the Truth of what they delivered.

Now the Question is, what could make them behave after this manner? Our Reasoners tell us, That every Effect must have a necessary Cause, and a Cause suited to the Effect. Let them then tell us what is the necessary Cause of this Effect, and what could be the
Motive

Motive to so many Persons to suffer not only Persecution, but Death for the sake of a known falshood. Here they renounce Earth; and if they have a Thought of Heaven, they renounce this too. In this Case they must chuse Pain, as Pain, and renounce Pleasure as such; which yet it will not be allow'd that any Man is capable of doing.

If it be said, that they were Atheistical Persons, disbeliev'd a God, and consequently had no future Prospects; then I ask, What made them renounce this World? If it be said they believ'd a God and their own future Existence; then I demand how they came to renounce his Favour for nothing; how they came knowingly and purposely to purchase Misery in the next World, with Misery in this?

If it be yet objected that after they had once published their Story (whatever was their Motive of doing it) Pride made them resolutely adhere to it. I answer, When we argue that a certain Behaviour is the Effect of Pride, we should either shew from the Nature of Pride that it may have such an Effect, or give Examples where there really has been such Pride in the World. But if we can do neither of these (as most certainly we cannot,) then we cannot argue that the Behaviour of these Persons was the Effect of Pride.

It is true that many Persons have laid down their Lives for Erroneous Opinions, but then it must be remembered that these suffered for Error as Truth; but we find no Instances where several Persons have agreed to lay down their Lives to maintain a known Cheat and Falshood without any Prospect of Interest or Gratification to Themselves. Criminals will dye with a Lye in their Mouth; but it is in hopes of saving their Lives, their Reputations, or Estates, and they don't persevere in a Cheat without a Motive to it.

And what yet strengthens the Argument for the Integrity of these Persons, is the great Number of them; and if it is irrational to think that one Person would lay down his Life to maintain a known Falshood, it is yet more irrational to think that many Persons should agree to do it; that they should be true to Falshood and to each other. And indeed considering the Nature of Mankind, their desire of Life, aversion to Pain and love of Pleasure, 'tis no less than Demonstration that these Persons did not die to maintain a known Cheat.

To conclude this Head; no greater Evidence can be given of any Proposition than the Nature of that Proposition will admit; and when a Proposition has the highest Evidence that can be given to it, it ought
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to be receiv'd as Truth, or all Propositions of the same Nature that have only the same, or a less Evidence, to be rejected as Falshood. No higher Evidence can be given that any Persons are Persons of Integrity than we have, that those who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus*, and his Apostles, were Persons of Integrity; then it is not rational to believe that any Persons are Persons of Integrity, if it is not rational to believe that these are Persons of Integrity; and if it is not rational to believe that any Persons are Persons of Integrity, then it is not rational to receive any History upon the Testimony of any Persons whatsoever. We must then, if we are consistent with ourselves, believe that no Persons are Persons of Integrity, and consequently must receive no History upon the Testimony of any Persons whatsoever; or believe that these Persons are Persons of Integrity, and consequently must receive their Testimony.

As to the Point, whether those who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus*, and his Apostles, did give this Evidence of their Integrity and lay down their Lives for the sake of what they delivered; this Point is out of question with all, and the Sufferings and Death of the Founders of Christianity was so open, and publick, so circumstantiated, has

suffered so many Reproaches, and stands in so many Records, that the greatest Opposers of this Religion have not been hardy enough to deny it : And it can no more be doubted, that the Founders of Christianity suffer'd and dy'd for it, than it can be doubted whether there were such Emperors as *Tiberius, Nero, Trajan, &c.* in whose times they suffered, &c.

We have then the highest Evidence the Nature of the Proposition will admit, that the Persons who relate and bear Testimony to the History of *Jesus* and his Apostles, had full Knowledge of what they relate and bear Testimony to, and were not deceiv'd themselves; and also that they were Men of Integrity, and would not deceive others. Then it follows, that the History, which they delivered, ought to be receiv'd as a true one.

But farther, we have not only the Testimony of these Persons for the Truth of the Facts, but we have likewise other collateral Evidence and Circumstances.

Thus, Those who dispute about the Facts, and pretend that they were not true Miracles, acknowledge the Facts.

Those who ascribe them to diabolical Power, acknowledge the Facts; Here then is the Testimony of Enemies.

Again,

Again, the pretended Facts were of such a Nature, and had such lasting visible Effects, that every Body who lived at the Time when they were pretended to be done, had Opportunity to inform themselves concerning the Truth of them. Thus, the meanest Person, if he had not himself been present, might easily have inform'd himself, whether *Jesus* open'd the Eyes of the Blind; rais'd *Lazarus* from the Dead; and whether *Peter* and *John* had made a Cripple, who had lain a long Time at the Gate of the Temple, walk. They might have had the Testimony of a Thousand People, if they had not had that of their own Eyes, that one had been Blind, another Lame; and could themselves examine how far these Cures were wrought, and if *Lazarus* had been Dead and was then alive.

And since it is of the Essence of a Miracle, that is to be an *Evidence* to us, that the Laws of Nature be chang'd in such Instances, where we have a full Knowledge of the Laws of Nature, it is evident that Cheats are liable to be discovered; and the most illiterate Person knows the Laws and Powers of some Bodies, and Causes; particularly he knows that Spittle and Clay will not open the Eyes of the Blind; nor the speaking of a Word raise the Dead to Life, consequently has

it in his Power to examine whether there be a Miracle or not.

Again, the great Number of Converts to Christianity in the time of the Apostles is an Evidence of the Facts.

That there were a vast Number of these early Converts is by none disputed, and it is incredible that so many Persons should embark in a Religion contrary to all worldly Interest, if they had not thoroughly examin'd the Facts on which this Religion was founded. True, vast Numbers of Converts have been made to false Religions, but with this Difference from the present Case; these had the support of Worldly Power, and it was agreeable to Worldly Interest. But there are no Instances, where a vast Number of Persons embark'd in a Religion contrary to both these; a Religion which propos'd no other Worldly Preferment to it's Followers, than Bonds, Stripes and Death; which gave no Relief from *Persecution in one City, but Flight into another*; and which stood charg'd with this frightful Motto, *Take up your Cross and follow me*. It could be only the Evidence of this Religion, which made so many Persons engage in it under such disadvantageous Circumstances.

Again, No Instances of Cheat or Imposture being found with regard to the pretended Facts, it is an Evidence on the Side of the Facts.

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We do not say, that the not discovering of a Cheat, is an Evidence that there is no such: for then it would follow, that there could be no such thing as a Cheat undiscovered; but we say and justly, when many Persons are engag'd to search out a Cheat, their not finding any is a probable Argument that there is none to find.

Here was the Jew, to the last Degree tenacious of his Law and Modes of Worship, which every Day were losing ground by the increase of Christianity; the new Converts, whose discovery of a Fraud would have restored them again to the World, and whatever was dear in it; and the Pagan, utter Enemy to the setting up of what he call'd New Gods; all endeavouring to detect the Imposture. One Argument for the Facts then is, they stood the Examination of a vast Number of Persons, whose Interest it was to detect them.

Yet lastly, Tho' it has been already seen, that the Doctrine to which the Facts give Evidence, was worthy of God and suitable to his Nature, yet we have hitherto only argu'd, that on this account it was possible that it might come from him; but we may now fairly carry the Matter farther and say, that it's being worthy of God and suitable to his Nature is one Evidence that it really did come from Him. The Case is, Human Nature has

been found very deficient in giving Schemes of Morality to Mankind, and we know of no Religion, unless it be the Jewish, or Christian, but what delivers false Notions of God, or false Rules of Happiness to Man; either Contradictions to it self, or Contradictions to the Nature of a God. But the Christian Religion is all of a Piece; the Discoveries in it suitable to the Nature of God; and the Practice, which it enjoins, beneficial to Mankind. And when we consider, that the Founders of this Religion were illiterate, plain Men, this Argument will have great Weight.

We have then the highest historical Evidence, which is all the Evidence we possibly can have in the present Case, of the Truth of the pretended Facts; and we must, if we are consistent with ourselves, either receive this Evidence, and acknowledge the Facts, or receive no historical Evidence, and acknowledge no Facts but what ourselves are witnesses of.

I now but put the Christian History, as to Evidence, equal with other Histories, which we every Day receive as true ones, and act upon the supposition of their being such; but we may fairly carry the Matter farther and say that we have no History which has such Testimony; which was delivered and witness'd by so many Persons, present at, and concern'd
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in, the Facts which they deliver and bear Testimony to; and where the Historians and Witnesses gave such Evidences of their Integrity; and which besides is confirm'd by so many collateral Evidences.

S E C T. X.

SO far then the Christian Religion is right as to the Matter which it contains, and as to the Manner in which it is deliver'd; it at present stands worthy of God, and has all the Evidence which can be expected, that it really did come from him: but happily we have another Key given us to detect the Imposture, if it be one; a Key put into our hands even by the Founder of this Religion Himself; and that is, a Pretence in him to fulfill Prophecies. Now then as God cannot set his Seal to a Lye, *Jesus* must be prophecy'd of, or He is an Impostor.

He Himself tells us, That *the Scriptures testify of him*; That *Moses* wrote of him; That *had they believed Moses, they would have believed him: for he wrote of him.*

As *Jesus* then plainly declares, that the *Scriptures testify of him*, the *Scriptures* must testify of him, or he is an Impostor. As he

§ John. 5. 39.

b John 5. 46.

directly

directly says, *Had ye believ'd Moses, ye would have believed me*; it is evident that according to *Jesus*, *Moses* must so plainly and directly foretell him, that the *Jews* could not consistently with a belief of *Moses* reject *Jesus* as not being that Person whom he pretended to be. From hence then, as well as from his other repeated Declarations, his making ^a *Eternal Life*, or *Death* a Consequence of believing in, or rejecting him; his asserting that those ^b whom he had spoken to, *had no cloke for their Sins*; and that *this was the* ^c *condemnation of the World, that light was come into it, and yet Men love darkness rather than Light*; it appears, that were there never so many express and plain Prophecies of the *Messiah's* Death, Resurrection, Ascension, &c. yet the proof of *Jesus's* being the *Messiah*, could not, according to his own Account of Things, rest upon these, and he must have had the Testimony of Prophecy, (such a Testimony as was sufficient to determine the rational assent of the *Jews*) before ever he came to suffer.

By the way, this may shew how little necessary it was, in order to *Jesus's* proving himself the *Messiah*, for him to rise from the dead before all the People. If He was the *Messiah*,

^a John 17. 3.
8. 2.

^b Joh. 15. 22.

^c Joh. 3. 19.

He must have prov'd himself to be so, before He rose from the Dead.

If then *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, the following Proposition is undeniable. That *Jesus* must have fulfill'd such clear and express Prophecy of *Moses* before he came to suffer, that no Person consistently with a Belief of *Moses* could reject *Jesus*, as not being that Person whom he pretended to be.

Now then, in order to see whether *Jesus* had the Testimony of Prophecy, it is necessary to consider the Nature of Prophecy, and what that Prophecy is which can give *Evidence* to a Person or Doctrine.

When the Divine Being by the Mouth of any Person foretells a future Event, we call it a Prophecy.

Now then, as we are to examine into the Determination of Bodies, Laws of Nature, Power of Causes, &c. to know when there is really a Miracle; so we are to consider the Nature of Mankind, and the particular Events foretold, before we can pronounce that there is a Prophecy.

A Man by insight into Nature, by considering the Dispositions of Persons and State of Things, may foretell many future Events; he does not foretell them as knowing they will, but he foretells them because considering the State of Things, it is most likely they should
come

come to pass. The fulfilling of any Event then, which may be thus foretold, is no Evidence that it was a Prophecy.

Again, If a future Event is so remote, that it cannot be foreknown by a Consideration of the Nature of Persons and Things, yet if Humane Power can effect it, it cannot entirely be look'd on as a Prophecy. Thus, were it delivered, that an Army at a certain time should vanquish, Persons do great and heroick Actions; yet this would by no means be an Evidence that the foretelling these Events was Prophecying. We know how greatly the Actions of Mankind are affected by their Imaginations, and how much a Belief that a thing will arrive, is often a means to make it do so. Many Nations have found their account in Artifices of this Sort; and that wise People the *Romans* knew what they did by their Divinations, and Oracles. Neither can general Characters, which several Persons have a right to, or particular ones which may be assum'd, give Evidence that any particular Person is prophecy'd of. Thus, were it said that a Prophet should arise, *born at Bethlehem, of the seed of David, &c.* the answering of these Characters could give no particular Evidence to any Person that he was this Prophet; and what might be apply'd to several, could not possibly give Evidence to one. In order then

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to determine that a foretold Event when fulfilled, is a Prophecy, it is necessary, either that it be such as human Power cannot accomplish; or that those who fulfill it, should be entirely ignorant of it; or that when a Person is foretold, so many Characters and Circumstances should meet in him, as cannot be assum'd by an Impostor.

The First of these Cases has the highest Evidence of being Prophecy; and as no Being can change the Laws of Nature but the Lord of it, it is strict Demonstration that no Being can foretell these Changes, but the Lord of Nature. When a Prophecy of this kind is fulfilled, Miracle and Prophecy are united.

2dly. When several Persons unknowingly bring to pass several foretold Events, this is an Evidence that the foretelling these Events, was prophecy; and as in this Case no Imagination or Art of Man could be a means to accomplish this End, it is Evident it must be foretold by the Lord of Nature.

It follows then, that in order to our concluding that certain foretold Events which are accomplish'd by Human Means, is Prophecy, it is necessary that the Persons who fulfill these Events, must either never have heard of the Prophecy, or not understand the Manner in which it is to be fulfill'd.

3dly.

3dly. When a great Number of before described Characters and Circumstances meet in one Person, and are not applicable to any other whatsoever, then these Characters and Circumstances are truly Prophetical, and the Person in whom they meet is to be looked on as foretold by God.

And when these three kinds of Prophecy meet in the same Person; when a foretold Event is fulfilled which Human Power could not accomplish; when several foretold Characters of a Person who should fulfill this Event, meet in that Person who really does fulfill it; and when several Persons unknowingly accomplish several Events, which were foretold should come to pass at this Time: here is a Concurrence of Prophecy, which added to Miracle, is the highest Evidence we can imagine can be given to a Person or Doctrine.

Now then having taken a view of the Nature of Prophecy, we proceed to see whether *Jesus* has really the Evidence which he claims, which is the Testimony of Prophecy, and whether he asserted Truth when he said, *If ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*

Moses, the great Law-giver of the *Jews*, declared that a Prophet should arise with these Characters.

A Man raised up amidst his Brethren^a.

And like unto^b Moses.

That he should have this Office, to be in the place of God, and speak the Words of his Mouth. *I will^c put my Words into his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*

And also that a Punishment should attend the not hearkening to him, *And it shall^d come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.*

And that the Evidence which should be given him whereby the People should know that what he spake was really the Words of God, shou'd be this, speaking in the Name of the Lord, and having the Thing which he speaks follow and come to pass. *When a Prophet^e speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the Word which the Lord hath not spoken.*

We are then to observe concerning this Prophet.

1. That he was to deliver something of great Importance, what he was to deliver being called the *Words of God's Mouth*, and a Penalty being annex'd to the not hearkening to it.

a Deut. 18. 15.

b — 18. 15.

c — 18. 18.

d — 18. 19.

e — 18. 22.

2. That

2. That a particular Evidence was to be given to him.

3. That the particular Evidence to be given him was to be given for a particular End and Intent, namely, as a Mark by which the People should know that what had been delivered to them by this Prophet was really the Words of God. *And if thou say^a in thy heart, how shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, &c.*

4. That something *new*, something which had not been delivered before, was to be delivered by this Prophet, there being no need of any particular Evidence, or any Evidence at all to be given to what had been before delivered by *Moses*; this having already had the Evidence of Miracle. Neither would the People ask, or God promise to give any more Evidence to this.

It follows then, that the Business of this Prophet could not possibly be, as some imagine, only to tell what was become of lost Goods, &c. because,

1. There manifestly was no Need of any Evidence to be given, whereby the People should know, that certain Persons were able to tell them what was become of their lost

^a Deut, 18. 21.

Goods, but their really telling what was become of them, the Thing proving it self. And to suppose that any other Evidence was promised to such Persons, is to suppose that an Evidence was promised which could not possibly be of any Service to those to whom it was promised: for if upon their applying to a certain Person to restore them their lost Goods, this Person did restore them, there wanted no Evidence of his Ability to do it; and if he did not restore them, no Evidence would persuade them that he did, or that he was a proper Person to be apply'd to on such Occasions. And to suppose that the only Evidence promised whereby the People should know, that certain Persons were able to restore them their lost Goods, was really restoring of them, appears from God's answer to it an impossible Supposition: for in that Case, the Enquiry put by God into the Mouth of the People would be this, *How shall I know who shall be able to tell me what is become of my lost Goods?* God's Answer, *He that does tell you what is become of them is able to do it.*

2dly. It was to be required of them if they did not hearken to this Prophet, which could not possibly have been the Case, if his Business had only been to tell what was become of lost Goods; it being manifestly no Crime not

to seek to, and hearken to, this Sort of Persons, who at best were only tolerated by the true God to keep his People from seeking to false ones.

And 3dly, The timing of this Promise, as well as the Penalty annexed to the not receiving the Words of this Prophet, *as the Words of God's Mouth*, shews, that what he was to deliver was of much more Importance to Mankind, than only telling them what was become of their lost Goods.

Thus, When the People were frightened at the manner in which God had delivered the Law, and said, *a Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not.* God answered, *They have^b well spoken that which they have spoken.* (Their Request is what I approve of.) *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* (When I again deliver new Commands unto the People, I will speak unto them in the Person of a Man like unto Thee.) *And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken to my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* (Whoever does not hearken to the Words of

^a Deut. 18. 16. Exod. 20. 9.

^b Deut. 18. 17, &c.

this Prophet as to the Words of God, I will punish his Disobediencce.) *But the Prophet who shall presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other Gods, even that Prophet shall dye.* (An Impostor, one who shall presume to give Laws in my Name without my Commission; or one who shall draw my People into Idolatry, shall be put to Death.) *And if thou say in thy heart how shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? (If God will require it of me if I don't hearken to this Prophet, or if I hearken to a Deceiver, you must tell me how I may infallibly know the one from the other) Why, thus shall ye know an Impostor, When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass (if God does not bear him witness by some extraordinary Sign) that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.*

Now then we must consider the Nature of those Things, which by coming to pass can give the promised Evidence.

The Evidence must be present and attend the delivery of the Words, because if the People did not hearken to them, it was to be required of them.

The foretelling then of any thing future, how punctual soever might be its Completion, could be no present Evidence; and Prophecy

(as such) has all it's Evidence at Completion.

Neither could the coming to pass of Words, which Human Power could fulfill, be the promised Evidence: for if Human Power could fulfill them, then their coming to pass could be no Evidence that they were the Words of God.

It is Evident then, that this Prophet was to have the Evidence of saying something, which was immediately to come to pass, which yet was beyond Human Power to effect; that is, he was to have the Evidence of Miracles, the Evidence which *Moses* had, whom it was promised he should resemble.

Now then we are to see, whether *Moses's* Characters of a Prophet, and the promised Evidence meet in *Jesus*, and whether we have Reason to think him that Prophet whom *Moses* describes.

He is *raised up amidst his Brethren.*

He resembles *Moses* in the working of Miracles.

He delivered a Doctrine worthy of God and suitable to his Nature.

And he *spake in the Name of the Lord, and the thing which he spake, followed and came to pass*; He work'd Miracles. What hinders then that
that

that *Jesus* is not acknowledg'd as the Prophet foretold by *Moses*?

See his own claim and Argument. *The Works that I do,*^a *bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. The Father*^b *that sent me, beareth witness of me. The Works that I do in*^c *my Father's Name, they bear witness of me. If I do not the Works of my Father,*^d *believe me not. But if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, I in him. Believe me for the very*^e *Works sake. If I had*^f *not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin. (If my Miracles, my Evidence from God, had not been more clear, more convincing than any other Man's, who has ever yet appeared in the World, their Infidelity had not been so unpardonable.) Again,*^g *Do not think that I will accuse you, there is one that accuseth you even* *Moses* *in whom ye trust, for had ye believed* *Moses*, *ye would have believed me, &c.*

Here then, in *Jesus*, is the very Prophet *Moses* describes, and in his Miracles the very Evidence *Moses* promised; both Character and Attestation answer in every Point and Circumstance, and he has a right to be acknow-

a John 5. 36.

b John. 8. 18.

c John 10. 25.

d John. 10. 37, 38.
22. & 24.

e John 14. 11.

f John 15.

g John. 5. 45: & 46.

ledged as that Prophet which *Moses* foretold.

If it be objected, that false Prophets may do Signs and Wonders; otherwise the Jews could not have been caution'd against such Deceivers, and that consequently whatever can be a possible Character of a false Prophet, can never be the Evidence of a true one. I answer, That whatever Signs and Wonders God may sometimes permit a false Prophet to do, or appear to do, yet he cannot let such a one do Signs or Wonders without at the same time giving Evidence that he is an Impostor. This is Demonstration from the Nature of God.

Thus was it in the Case of *Moses* and the Magicians; the Magicians did, or appeared to do some mighty Works; but what then? These Works gave them no Evidence at all, the Power of God being manifestly against them; and God might purposely give these Magicians at that time some extraordinary Power, that it might ever after be a warning to his own People and to future Ages, not to be drawn from Him by any Pretence whatsoever.

So in the present Case, The Jews had an infallible *Criterion*, whereby to know the promised Prophet, to which if they attended it was impossible they should be mistaken.

If

If a Person spake to them in the Name of other Gods; if he attempted to draw them into Idolatry, from the Worship of Him who had wrought *Wonders in Egypt, the red Sea, and the Wilderness*; whatever were his Works or his pretended Works, they were sure that he was an Impostor, it being impossible for God to give Evidence against himself.

If he *spake to them in the Name of their own God*, yet what he spake was not to be received or harken'd to, as the Words of God, till he gave the promised Evidence; till the Prophet *spake in the Name of the Lord, and the thing which he spake followed and came to pass*; till he gave them some extraordinary Sign of the Divine Power, or work'd Miracles.

The Jew then, if he sticks close to the literal Words of *Moses*, the Sense conformable to the common use of Words and Expressions, must own that whilst *Jesus* teaches a Doctrine worthy of God, and work'd Miracles, these Words of *Moses* are applicable to him in all their Parts; and that he has a Right to be received as that Prophet, whom *Moses* foretold.

It is needless then to consult other Texts, this being fully sufficient to give *Jesus* the Evidence of Prophecy. And we may observe that not only *Jesus* applies this Text to himself, but

also *Peter*^a and *Stephen*^b apply it to him, and argue with the Jews that it is fulfilled.

Now if *Jesus* has a right to be receiv'd as the Prophet foretold by *Moses*, then he has a right to be hearken'd to in all that he delivers, then he has a right to be believed when he declares himself the *Messiah*, a Person prophesied of in the Jewish Scriptures.

The Jew must then receive *Jesus* as the *Messiah*, the Person whom he pretends to be, upon his own Testimony, or

1st. Shew that he makes an impossible Claim; and that his being the *Messiah* is inconsistent with Jewish Scriptures, or

2^{dly}. That there are Marks of Imposture upon him; that he advances Absurdities or Contradictions.

As to the first, the Jew cannot possibly shew that *Jesus's* being the *Messiah* is inconsistent with Jewish Scriptures, without at the same time weakening the Authority of these Scriptures. And as, if *Jesus* should advance Contradictions, it would be an Evidence that he was an Impostor; so if the Jewish Books advance Contradictions, it would be an Evidence that they never came from God. Now these Books command, that when a Person ap-

^a Acts 7. 37.

^b Acts 3. 22.

pears,

pears, who does not draw them from the Worship of their God, and *speaks in his Name*, and *the thing which he speaks, follows and comes to pass*, they should *hearken to him*. When then *Jesus* appears, preaches to them the true God, and *speaks in his Name*, and *the thing which he spake followed and came to pass*, if these Books command he should not be hearken'd to, they command Contradictions.

But be this as it will, and let the Jew find Arguments to maintain the Divinity of his Books if *Jesus* is not the Messiah; it is enough for us in the present Argument that *Jesus* acknowledges the Divinity of these Books: so that a Contradiction in them to his being the Person he pretends to be, is a Contradiction in his own Evidence, and effectually concludes him an Impostor.

But it must be remembered, that nothing but an express Contradiction in these Books to his being the Messiah, is sufficient to destroy his Evidence of being such; and as *Jesus* has the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy, no doubtful or uncertain Meanings can vacate this Evidence.

The Jews must then to prove *Jesus* from their own Books an Impostor, either,

First, shew from these Books, that it is impossible for God to send into the World such a Person as *Jesus* pretended to be, or on such
an

an Errand as that on which *Jesus* pretended he came, and that the very Character he assumed is an impossible one, being inconsistent with their Scriptures; (for, were the Jews only to argue that such a Person was not expected, and therefore is not come, it would be nothing at all to the purpose.) or,

2dly. They must give clear and express Characters of the Messiah out of their own Books, and then shew that these Characters could not possibly belong to *Jesus*; They must make it appear that they neither mistake the Characters, nor the Application of them: for if it is possible for them to mistake in either of these particulars, then these Characters or Applications cannot possibly prove that *Jesus* is not the Messiah, nor vacate the clear and express Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy. And a possible Sense supported by Miracle and Prophecy ought to be received before any other whatsoever.

As to the first, The Jews cannot possibly shew from their own Books that God could not, if he had pleased, send such a Person into the World as *Jesus* pretended to be, nor on such an Errand as that on which *Jesus* pretended he came: on the contrary, as the sending such a Person for such an End, is suitable to our natural Notions of the goodness of God; so
is

is it suitable with the Jewish History of Man's Depravity, and with those Expressions and Instances of God's Kindness, Mercy and Love, with which their Scriptures do every where abound.

We proceed then

2dly. To see whether the Jews have such clear and express Characters of a Messiah, that *Jesus* cannot possibly be that Person.

First then, it is objected that the Messiah was to be a temporal Prince; but *Jesus* is not a temporal Prince; therefore *Jesus* is not the Messiah.

The Jew must then prove by clear and express Testimony out of his own Books, that the Messiah was to be a temporal Prince, and at his first appearance on Earth, to reign visibly over the Jews; he must do it by Words which admit no other possible Meaning: but the Jew has no clear and express Testimony that the Messiah was to be a Temporal Prince, nor any Expressions concerning his Being such which admit no other Meaning; consequently *Jesus's* not being a Temporal Prince can be no Objection to his being the Messiah.

Nay, if we consider the very Expressions in the *Jewish* Books, on which the *Jews* found their Expectation of a Temporal *Messiah* or Deliverer, we shall find that these Expressions
can

can only be apply'd to a Spiritual one, such a one as *Jesus* pretended to be. And if the *Jews* say, that the following Texts, and others of the same Nature, are not the grounds on which they expect a temporal *Messiah*, they must produce those that are, and shew that what they produce really do relate to the *Messiah*, and cannot possibly belong to any other Person.

Itz that ^a *day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious.* ^b *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his Shoulder; and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with Judgment and with Justice from henceforth even for ever; the Zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this. But* ^c *thou Bethlehem Ephratah, tho' thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* ^d *There shall come forth a rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his Roots. And the Spirit of*

^a *Isaiah* 4. 2.

^b *Isa.* 9. 6, 7.

^c *Mic.* 5. 2.

^d *If.* 11. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord. And shall make him of quick Understanding in the Fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the Sight of his Eyes, neither reprove after the Hearing of his Ears, but with righteousness shall he judge the Poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the Earth: and he shall smite the Earth with the rod of his Mouth, and with the breath of his Lips shall he slay the wicked. And Righteousness shall be the Girdle of his Loins, and Faithfulness the Girdle of his Reins. And in ^a mercy shall the Throne be establish'd, and he shall sit upon it in Truth, in the Tabernacle of David, judging and seeking, Judgment and hastening Righteousness. Behold ^b a King shall reign in righteousness, &c. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the Earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. Behold my ^d Servant whom I uphold, my Elect in whom my Soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gen-

^a Is. 16. 5.

^b Is. 32. 1.

Jer. 23. 5, 6.

^d Is. 42. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

tiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the Streets. A bruised Reed shall he not break: and the smoking Flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged till he has set Judgment in the Earth: and the Isles shall wait for his Law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the Heavens, and stretched them out, he that spread forth the Earth, and that which cometh out of it, he that giveth breath unto the People upon it, and Spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have call'd thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a Covenant to the People, for a Light to the Gentiles: To open the blind Eyes, to bring out the Prisoners from the Prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the Prison house. I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven Images. Behold, my ^a Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee, (his Visage was so marr'd more than any Man, and his form more than the Sons of Men.) So shall he sprinkle many Nations, the Kings shall shut their Mouths at him: for that which had not been to'd them shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider.

216. 52. 13. 14. 15.

I saw

I saw ^a in the night Visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all People, Nations and Languages should serve him: his Dominion is an everlasting Dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom that which shall not be destroy'd. ^b Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion; shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Ass, and upon a Colt the foal of an Ass. Sing ^c and rejoice, O Daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many Nations shall be join'd to the Lord in that day, and shall be my People: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the Holy Land, and shall chuse Jerusalem again. ^d And the Lord shall be King over all the Earth, in that day there shall be one Lord, and his Name one. In that ^e day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the People; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious. And he will ^f destroy in this

^a Dan. 7. 13, 14.
10, 11, 12.
7, 8.

^b Zech. 9. 9.

^c Zech. 2.

^d Zech. 14. 9.

^e II. 11. 10.

^f II. 25.

Mountain,

Mountain, the face of the covering cast over all People, and the Vail that is spread over all Nations. He will swallow up Death in Victory, &c. Say to them^a that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. Then the Eyes of the blind shall be open'd, and the Ears of the deaf shall be unstop'd; then shall the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the dumb sing: for in the Wilderness shall Waters break out, and Streams out of the Desert. And the^b Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And the^c Gentiles shall come to thy Light, and Kings to the brightness of thy rising. I will^d also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation unto the end of the Earth. The^e Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the Prison to them that are bound. Seventy^f Weeks are determin'd upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an end of Sins, and to make reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision

^a If. 35. 4, 5, 6.

^b If. 40. 5.

^c If. 60. 3.

^d If. 49. 6.

^e If. 61. 1, 2.

^f Dan. 9. 24.

and

and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. ^a And in the Days of these Kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall never be destroy'd: and the Kingdom shall not be left to other People, but it shall break in piece, and consume all these Kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. ^b And the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever. ^c And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the Peace of thy Children.

Now we say, that either these Characters and Circumstances of a King and Kingdom, with others of a like Nature are the grounds, on which the Jews found their Expectation of a Temporal Messiah, or they are not; if they are, then we can prove (and it is evident to every impartial Enquirer who considers these Texts) that they only can relate to a Spiritual King and Kingdom, such a King as *Jesus* pretended to be, and such a Kingdom as he pretended his was; and that it is impossible to apply them to a Temporal one. If these are not the Texts on which the Jews found their Expectation of a Temporal Messiah, they must produce those that are; and before we acknowledge that the Messiah was to be a Temporal Prince, contrary to the Evidence of Miracle and Prophe-

^a Dan. 2. 44.

^b Mic. 4. 7.

^c Is. 54. 13.

cy, we must see clear and express Testimony that he was to be such, it must be proved from Words that admit no other possible Meaning; but, as has been observed, the Jew has no such clear and express Testimony that the Messiah was to be a Temporal Prince, nor any Expressions concerning his being such which admit no other possible Meaning: then *Jesus* is the Messiah for any thing yet found in the Jewish Books to the contrary.

We pass on *2dly*. To another grand Jewish Objection which is this, The Jews were commanded to observe their Law *for ever*: but *Jesus* and his Apostles abolished this Law; therefore *Jesus* and his Apostles are Impostors.

The Question then is, whether God required of the Jews a perpetual Observation of their whole Law, and whether the Expressions concerning the Duration of this Law, can have but one possible Meaning; which is, that it was God's Will that it should be observed *for ever*, and never give way to another Dispensation.

In order to resolve this Point, we must remember that in a Divine Revelation no one Part can contradict another, and particular Texts must first be reconciled betwixt themselves, before any thing can be advanced from any of them.

Now

Now *Moses* and other Prophets commanded the Jews *to observe for ever* the Law given to them by God.

Moses likewise assures them, that a Prophet should arise *like unto himself*, who should *speak to them the Words of God*, and to whom if they *did not hearken*, it would *be required of them*.

And the Calling of the Gentiles is foretold by many of the Prophets.

Those Texts then which require a perpetual Observation of the Jewish Law, and that particular one which commands, that *a Person who speaks in the Name of the Lord, and the thing which he speaks, follows and comes to pass, should be hearkened to*; and those which foretel the Calling of the Gentiles, must have all such Meanings as are consistent with each other.

When then a Person appears with the promised Evidence, the Jews were to hearken to him, and to receive him as the promised Prophet. But when this Person, or those who act by his Authority and Commission, abolish the Law of *Moses*, then were the Jews to examine the Expressions concerning the Duration of their Law, and to see whether these Expressions can possibly be understood according to the Sense put on them by those who

abolish this Law; whether this Law may give way to another Dispensation.

This is the true Point to be considered here: for if the Expressions concerning the Duration of this Law can be understood in a limited Sense, and do not strictly mean a perpetual Duration, then we ought to understand them in that Sense, which is put on them by those who have the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy.

And upon examination of these Texts we immediately find that they are not only capable of being understood in a limited Sense, but that really they can have no other; the Calling of the Gentiles being inconsistent with a perpetual Observation of the Law of *Moses*, some part of this Law consisting in a Separation of the Jews from other Nations.

Upon the whole then, the true State of the Matter seems to be this, The Law was to be observed as long as it was a Law, till the Power who made should abolish it; till the Prophet should arise who should be as a God to the People and give them a new Dispensation; till the happy time when the Gentiles should be called, and all Nations serve the Lord.

The *for ever* does not relate to the Law but to the Peoples Duty; they were to observe it *for ever*, that is, as long as it was a Law.

And

And in this Sense is the Expression *for ever* understood when it relates to Laws promulg'd by a human Legislator. The People are required to observe them *for ever*, that is, as long as they are Laws; but the Legislator does not by this Expression preclude himself from annulling these Laws, if he thinks fit so to do, nor do the People understand the Expression in this Sense.

Suppose that God when he gave these Laws, design'd they should be abolished, and give way to another Dispensation; would he not, think we, have commanded the Jews to observe them for ever? Doubtless he would have done this, it being their indispensable Duty to do so; to observe them as long as they were Laws, and until he pleased to abrogate them. We cannot suppose he would acquaint them with the designed Change, which would have been a probable means to have lessened their Esteem for That which it was their Duty to observe.

Yet again, We may and ought to conclude that several of the Expressions concerning the Duration of the Jewish Law related only to the Moral part of it; and as to this, it is very evident that *Jesus* according to his own Words, might properly be said to *come not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil.*

And we may yet farther observe that the Expression *for ever* is often used in a limited Sense in the Jewish Scriptures; thus an everlasting Priesthood is promised to ^a *Aaron and his Sons*.

Again, from God's own Expressions concerning this Law we have Reason to think it was only occasional, and given for a time; thus he says, *he gave them* ^b *Statutes which were not good, &c.*

Again, from the Nature and Office of the Person foretold by *Moses*, and the particular Evidence which was to be given him, it is evident that he was to be Author of a new Dispensation.

In a word, The Jew must, to make the Expressions in his own Books concerning the Duration of the Jewish Law any Objection to *Jesus's* being the Messiah, shew that these Expressions can have but one possible Sense, which is, that this Law was to be observed as long as the World shou'd last, and never give way to another Dispensation: but, as has been seen, the Jew cannot possibly do this, therefore the Expressions in the Jewish Books concerning the Eternity of the Jewish Law, can be no Objection against *Jesus's* being the Messiah.

a Ex. 40. 15. Numb. 25. 13.

b Ez. 20. 25.

The first Objection then is cleared, and *Jesus's* being the Messiah the Person whom he pretends to be, is not yet found inconsistent with Jewish Scriptures, which is all that is wanted in the present Argument. We pass on then,

2dly. To see if there are any Marks of Imposture upon him, if he advances any Falsities or Contradictions.

And first, it is objected that *Jesus* and his Apostles apply'd many Places of Scriptures to themselves, which did not belong to them; consequently are Impostors.

Before we examine into the Truth of this Charge, we may remark that it is very strange, that Persons who were in possession of the very best Evidence which could be given them, Miracle and Prophecy, and who had Craft enough to deceive thus far, should yet be so weak as to invalidate their own Evidence by Misapplications. We might rather expect they would have let their Cause rest upon a good Footing, when they had once got it there, and not have taken the most probable Step to the Ruin of it. But be this as it will, certain it is that only Impostors can misapply: the Question then is, whether the Texts apply'd by *Jesus* and his Apostles, are Misapplications.

Now if *Jesus*, or his Apostles, affix'd a Sense to Words which they could not possibly

sibly bear; if they apply'd Characters to themselves which could not belong to them, if they pretend to be spoken of when they are not spoken of, then they are guilty of Misapplications, and are Impostors.

But we must remember, as before, that nothing but their affixing impossible Meanings, can be call'd Misapplications; and as they were in possession of Miracle and Prophecy, they have a Right before all other Persons, to interpret Difficulties; and a possible Sense supported by Miracle and Prophecy, ought to be receiv'd before that which is only the Product of Human Judgment.

We do not say with some Persons that the Miracles of *Jesus* give him a Right to explain all Prophecies concerning himself: for this is indeed putting his whole Evidence of being the Messiah upon Miracles; but we say and justly, that his Miracles give him a Right to explain doubtful Prophecies; and farther, that Miracle and Prophecy united make his Right to do this yet more unquestionable.

We are then to proceed to an Examination of the objected Places, and in order to this, think it proper to take a view of the Jewish Dispensation.

The Jewish Dispensation consisted of many *Rites, Ceremonies, and Sacrifices*, which seem in their own Nature to have no Worth or Excellency

cellency in them, and to have nothing to recommend them but the Commands of the Legislator.

Again, The Legislator himself places no Worth or Excellency in them, tells the Jews that he gave them ^a *Statutes which were not good*; and assures them that the most punctual Observation of these *Statutes* would be to no purpose, nor render them acceptable to him, if they were deficient in other Duties.

This is the Jewish Law as we find it: Now let us see the Gospel account of it.

And this acquaints us that these *Rites, Ceremonies, Sacrifices*, and whole Law, were preparatory to, and symbolical of the Dispensation by *Jesus*; that they were given *only for a time*, and *because of Transgression*, and until the Dispensation should arrive *promised to Abraham four hundred Years before the giving of the Law*, in which *all the Families of ^b the Earth* were to be blessed, in which *Jesus* appear'd to bless us, in turning ^c *every one of us from our Iniquities*. Thus the Author to the Hebrews, *Being ^d made perfect*, he became the Author of *Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him*. By ^e *his own Blood* he entered in once into the holy place, having obtain'd *Eternal Salvation for us*. Once ^f *in the*

a Ezek. 20. 25.

1 Ch. Isaiah.

b Gal. 3. 8. 17.

c Acts. 3. 26.

d Heb. 5. 9.

e Heb. 9. 12.

f Heb. 9. 26.

End

End of the World, hath he appeared to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.

Now in what manner the first Dispensation was symbolical, and representative of the second, this Author in several Chapters sets before us. He says, that the *Priests under the Law serve as an^a example and shadow of Heavenly Things, that the High^b Priest went alone, once every year, into the Holy of Holies, the Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the Holiest of all, was not yet made manifest while as the first Tabernacle was yet standing: which was a Figure for the time then present, in which were offer'd both Gifts and Sacrifices, &c.* And speaking of the Rites, Sacrifices, and Sprinklings under the Law by the blood of Calves and Goats; he says, *It was therefore necessary^c that the patterns of Things in the Heavens should be purified with these, but the Heavenly Things themselves with better Sacrifices than these. For Christ is not enter'd into the Holy Places made with hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven it self, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

This is this Author's Account of the Jewish Dispensation; and those strangely mistake Things who say that these Places in the Hebrews are only *Allusions* or *Accommodations*. He plainly tells us, That the *Priests, High-Priests,*

^a Heb. 8. 5. 9. 24.

^b Heb. 9. 7, 8.

^c Heb. 9. 23, 24.

Taber-

Tabernacles, Sacrifices and Law were Shadows, Patterns, Figures, Examples of the Dispensation by Jesus. And Jesus himself says, That the Law^a and Prophets prophecy'd until John. That he^b came to fulfill the Law and Prophets; and that till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled; that is, the Law should in no part be abolish'd till that Dispensation should arrive, of which the Law was only a Resemblance. Again Jesus says, he^c will not eat any more of the Passover till it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of Heaven: that is, till the Lamb is sacrificed, which this Paschal Lamb was to represent.

Now then, this being the Account which *Jesus* and his Apostles give us of the *Jewish* Dispensation, the Question is, Whether it is a possible one? If it is, it will follow that it ought to be received as a true one, being supported by Miracle and Prophecy.

And upon the first View we find that this is not only a possible Account of the *Jewish* Dispensation, but likewise the most rational and consistent one that can be given of it; and if it was suitable to the Divine Wisdom to give *Jesus* to live and dye for the sake of Mankind, it is reasonable to expect that a

a Matt. 11. 13.

b Matt. 5. 17, 18.

c Luk. 22. 16.

Mode of Worship, which himself would institute, should bear Resemblance to this great propitiatory Sacrifice; That the whole *Jewish* Dispensation should shew forth his Death before he came, after the same manner as that Sacrament which he himself instituted, does shew forth his Death since he is come.

The Jews cannot object to the Reasonableness of such an Institution, they who were commanded to express their deliverances by Symbols of them, who yearly offered up the ^a *Paschal Lamb, the Firstlings* ^b *of their Flocks,* and who observed *the Feast* ^c *of Tabernacles.*

And other Nations cannot object to it, it being a common practice with them, as may be shewn from many Instances taken from different Countries, to celebrate great deliverances by Symbols of those Deliverances.

But, as before, not so much as this is wanted in the present Argument; and if the Account given of the Jewish Dispensation by *Jesus* and his Apostles is only a possible one, it ought to be received as a true one.

And if it ought to be receiv'd as a true one, many of those Difficulties, which arise from certain Applications made by these Persons, will vanish, as will appear from a Consideration of them.

a Ex. 12.

b Ex. 13.

c Lev. 23. 34.

Farther,

Farther, As God might make the Law Symbolical of the Gospel, so might he, if he pleas'd, purposely make some Events under the first Dispensation, resemble others under the Second; the reason why he should do this may be consider'd afterwards; all we at present want is, that it be allow'd possible for him to do it. But it must be allow'd possible for him to do it, there being nothing in this way of acting disagreeable to his Attributes.

Again, it is likewise possible for God, that is, it is not unsuitable to his Nature to give the Jewish Nation Signs of temporal Deliverance which should bear Resemblance to a greater Deliverance, the Appearance of the Messiah. As he often pointed out temporal Deliverances by Signs of them, as may be shewn from many Instances, it could be no contradiction to his Attributes to make these Signs, if he pleas'd, Signs also of that great Deliverance.

Yet once more, If the first Dispensation was given for the sake of the Second, and only added *for a time because of Transgressions*, as from a view of both Dispensations it is rational to think it was, then we may expect that the Prophets under the first should be full of Descriptions of this last; that what they deliver should tend to something farther than the present State of Things, and to draw the
People's

People's Attention to the great Deliverance design'd for them.

We now proceed to examine some Applications made by *Jesus* and his Apostles, in order to see whether they are impossible ones.

We will divide the apply'd Texts into two sorts; and first speak of those which seem to be indeterminate, neither applicable to the present Circumstances of Affairs at the time of delivery, nor to the Person of the Prophet who delivered them.

2dly. Of those which seem determinate, that is, which at first view appear to relate to the Person of the Prophet, present Times, or State of Things.

Of the first sort are the following ones. *All ye^a shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the Sheep of the Flock shall be scattered abroad. And he^b was number'd with the Transgressors, &c.*

These Places are apply'd to *Jesus* by himself, now the Question is, what is the Evidence that they related to him?

1st. They exactly in all Parts and Circumstances correspond with the Character of *Jesus*.

^a Matt. 26. 31. Zech. 13. 7.
Isaiah 53. 13.

^b Mark 15. 28.

2dly. There is the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy that they do relate to him.

But we want not so much as this in the present Argument; and if it cannot be proved that these Texts could not possibly relate to *Jesus*, it cannot be proved that he has misapply'd them: but it cannot be proved that they could not possibly relate to *Jesus*, then it cannot be proved that he has misapply'd them.

2dly. The following Texts from the manner in which they are delivered, at first view seem to relate to the Person of the Prophet, Time of Delivery, or the then State of Things. Behold, ^a a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Emanuel. When ^b Israel was a Child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt. They ^c part my Garments among them, and cast lots upon my Vesture. They ^d weighed for my price thirty pieces of Silver. And the Lord said unto me, cast it unto the Potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of Silver, and cast them to the Potter in the House of the Lord. And Peter speaking of Judas produces a place out of the *Psalms*, as a direct Prophecy of him. Men and ^e Brethren, this Scripture must

a Matt. 1. 23. Is. 7. 14.

b Matt. 2. 15. Hof. 11. 1.

c Matt. 27. 35. Ps. 22. 18.

d Matt. 27. 9. Zech. 11. 12.

e Acts 1. 16.

needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was number'd with us, and had obtain'd part of this Ministry, &c. For it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his Habitation be desolate, and let no Man dwell therein: and his Bishoprick (Office) let another take. And ^a Peter and Paul directly assert, that David in the sixteenth Psalm spake of the Resurrection of Jesus. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my Face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my Heart rejoyce, and my Tongue was glad: Moreover also, my Flesh shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of Life, thou shalt make me full of Joy with thy Countenance. Men and Brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day: Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ, to sit on his Throne: He seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left

^a Acts 2. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. Ch. 13. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption. And Paul again, And we declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their Children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to Corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption. For David after he had served his own Generation by the will of God, fell on Sleep, and was laid unto his Fathers, and saw Corruption: But he whom God raised again, saw no Corruption.

These and many other Places which seem at first view to relate to the times in which they were spoken, are produced and differently apply'd by Jesus or his Apostles.

It is then Evasion to say that all the Texts produced or refer'd to by Jesus or his Apostles, are mere Allusions or Accommodations; these Persons did plainly assert that several Texts related to the *Messiah*, and particular Expressions in the Psalms to *Judas* his Betray-er. We are then to see whether they can possibly belong to the Persons they are apply'd to.

H

Now,

Now, tho' some of these Texts do at first View seem to relate to the Times in which they were delivered, or the Person of the Speaker, yet upon Examination we find they do not, but must relate to other Persons or Times. Thus, of those cited, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost Parts of the Earth for thy Possession.* These were Circumstances never applicable to *David*, and consequently, he could not in these Places speak of himself. So the Words cited out of the sixteenth Psalm could not relate to *David*; he could not call himself the *Holy One*, this Term being unsuitable to his Character, and to that Humility which appeared in his Writings. Again his Warmth in cursing his Enemies is not agreeable to the Character of a good Man, nor with his own Behaviour towards them, witness his sparing *Saul* when he had him in his Power. But it is suitable to a Zeal against the Enemies, the Crucifiers of his Saviour. And those particular Expressions, ^a *They gave me Gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me Vinegar to drink,* ^b *they part my Garments among them, and cast lots upon my Vesture,* which were apply'd to *Jesus* by one of his Apostles, we have reason to think from *David's* History, were Circumstances that never happen'd in his Life.

^a Ps. 69. 21.

^b Ps. 22. 18.

Now,

Now, then if these Characters and Circumstances delivered by *David* could not relate to himself, they must relate to some other Person; and if they do this, he has the best Right to them whom they suit, and who can give the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy that they really relate to him.

But *2dly*. As for those other Texts which directly suit the Circumstances of Affairs when delivered, the Person of the Prophet, or the then State of Things, the Answer is direct, and if it was not unsuitable to the Wisdom of God, to let some Events under the first Dispensation resemble the great Events under the Second; if it was no Contradiction to his Attributes sometimes to give his People a Sign of temporal Deliverance, which should bear Resemblance to the greatest Deliverance they were capable of receiving: then could it be no Misapplication to apply the Words of the first Event to the Second, of the Sign to the Thing signify'd, they being directly according to the Will of God fulfilled in both Cases.

To instance, Supposing God when he gave *Ahaz* a Sign of Deliverance from *Pekah*, and *Remaliah*, likewise intended that this should be a Sign of that great future Deliverance of Mankind, by a Child born of a Virgin, then, when *Jesus* was born of a Virgin

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might

might *Matthew* properly say, *Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, (That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, when he gave a Sign which prefigured the Birth of the Messiah,) Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, &c.*

Thus again, Supposing God when He sent his People into *Egypt*, designed sending his own Son thither, and intended that one Event should prefigure the other, then, when *Jesus* came out of *Egypt*, might *Matthew* again justly say, *That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, (That this Event might come to pass according to the Will of God, and the Expression of the Prophet concerning a former one that prefigured it,) Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

But not so much as this is wanted in the present Argument; it is not necessary that the Sign given to *Ahaz* should be a Sign of the Birth of the *Messiah*; or the Event of *Israel's* being called out of *Egypt* prefigure the calling of the *Messiah* from thence, to make *Matthew's* Application just. For if a *Messiah* was intended, the whole Manner and Circumstances of his Life and Death must be also predetermin'd by God. Well then might *Matthew* when *Jesus* was born of a Virgin, or when he came out of *Egypt*, upon a Consideration

sideration of God's determinate Counsel and Knowledge, say, *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet,* (That this Event which God has long ago determin'd should come to pass, may now do so, according to the Expression of the Prophet,) *Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, &c. Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

But we need not seek for many Solutions of the above propos'd Difficulty, one possible one is sufficient as has been before observed.

The whole Mistake concerning these Applications seems to be taking them in a wrong view, and imagining that *Matthew* brings them as Proof that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*. He offers at no such thing, nor is it his business in this place. He is only telling a plain Narrative, the History of *Jesus*, and by the way remarks upon several Events in which the Will of God was fulfill'd according to the Expressions of the Prophets.

In short, unless it can be proved, that the Texts apply'd by *Matthew* could not possibly relate to *Jesus*; that God could not, if he pleased, make Events under the first Dispensation resemble others under the Second; give Signs of temporal Deliverance which should be Signs also of Deliverance by *Messiah*; and that the Manner and Circumstance of the Appearance of the *Messiah*, was not predeter-

min'd by God; it cannot be proved that he has been guilty of Misapplication; but neither of the above mention'd Particulars, (much less all of them) can be proved; then it cannot be proved that *Matthew* has been guilty of Misapplication.

But 2dly. Another Mark of Falshood is objected against the Christian Religion, and that is, *Matthew* makes a false Quotation, and says, *He [Jesus]^a came and dwelt in a City called Nazareth: that it might be fulfill'd which was spoken by the Prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene.*

This Objection is almost too slight to answer. Suppose the *Jews* had a Tradition, which arose from the Mouth of some of their Prophets, that the *Messiah* was to be a *Nazarene*; this is a much more easy Supposition than that *Matthew* should make a false Quotation, which would manifestly have been an Injury, and could not possibly have been any way an advantage to his Cause. As then we are sure, that if *Matthew* was not an Impostor he could not, and as we have Reason to think that if he was one, he would not make a false Quotation, we ought not to look upon it as such, notwithstanding we cannot, at so great a distance of Time find whence it is produced.

^a Matt. 2. 23.

^b John 1. 45.

But

But another Objection yet remains, and that is, *Elias* was to come before the coming of the *Messiah*; but *Elias* is not come; consequently, *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

The Argument stands thus. The Followers of *Jesus* do not pretend to say that *Elias* is come, if *John Baptist* is not *Elias*: but *John Baptist* is not *Elias*, (Proof his ^a own words;) then *Elias* is not come.

Now the Account given by *Jesus* of this Matter is this, that *John Baptist* was the ^b *Elias* which was to come; that he was the Person promised by the Prophets under the name of *Elias*.

The Query is, whether this is a possible Account of the Matter, whether this Assertion of *Jesus's* concerning *John Baptist* is consistent with *Jewish* Prophecy, that is, whether the calling one Person by the Name of another whom he resembles, whose Character he takes and by *whose Spirit and Power* he acts (which is the Account given of *John Baptist* by the Angel ^c *Gabriel*) is agreeable to *Jewish* Scriptures.

This way of speaking is certainly agreeable to *Jewish* Scriptures, where we often find the Characters and Offices of Persons given us in their Names, and the same Person called by

^a John 1. 21.

^b Matt. 11. 14.

^c Luke 1. 17.

different Names. Instances of the first kind are frequent; of the second, the following one is sufficient. It is said, that ^a*David, the Son of* ^b*David, and the* ^c*Lord shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever.*

It follows then, that provided *John Baptist* acted *by the Spirit and Power of Elias*, acted as *Elias* would have himself acted, if he had been upon Earth, it was not unsuitable to *Jewish Prophecy* to foretell him under the Name of *Elias*; but *John Baptist* did *act in the Spirit and Power of Elias*; act as *Elias* would himself have acted, if he had been upon Earth, for which we have the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy; then it was not unsuitable to *Jewish Prophecy* to foretell him under the Name of *Elias*. And if it was not unsuitable to *Jewish Prophecy* to foretell *John Baptist* under the Name of *Elias*, then *Jesus's* Assertion that *John Baptist* was the promised *Elias*, was not unsuitable to *Jewish Prophecy*; and if *Jesus's* Assertion concerning *John Baptist* is neither unsuitable to *Jewish Prophecy* nor is an impossible one, then it ought to be received before any other whatsoever, having the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy, and *John Baptist* ought to be received as the promised *Elias*.

That the speaking of Persons under the

^a Ezek. 37. 25,

^b Jer. 33. 17. 21.

^c Micah 4. 7.

Names of others, whom they resemble is common to other Nations besides the *Jews*, is too well known to need Instances.

S E C T. XI.

AND now having shewn that the Christian Religion has the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy; that the Jews cannot consistently with a Belief of *Moses*, reject *Jesus* as not being the *Messiah*, the Person he pretends to be; and having seen the Insignificancy of the Objections commonly urged against him, I proceed to assert,

That so far are the Jews from being able to prove *Jesus* not the *Messiah*, that on the contrary, their own Books are Imposture, if he is not this Person.

I pass by all those repeated Promises above produced of a *King* and *Kingdom*, *Deliverances*, *Blessings*, &c. which if not fulfilled in *Jesus*, are yet unfulfilled, and consequently are justly suspected of never coming from God; and only insist on the following ones.

God in a particular manner calls *Abraham* from his Kindred and his Country, and three times solemnly assures him, ^a *That in him and his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed.*

^a Gen. 12. 3. Ib. 18. 18. Ib. 22. 18.

Now

Now there is no pretence that all the Nations of the Earth have been really blessed in *Abraham*, or in any Person descended from him unless it be in *Jesus*; and tho' we were to understand the Words according to the Sense which some put on them (which doubtless is not the obvious and literal one) that is, that *Abraham* should be a Standard of Blessedness to Mankind, and People should say when they bless, *God make you as Abraham*, they are even in this Sense unfulfilled, *Abraham* or any of his Descendants having never been a Standard of Blessedness to any Nation (unless perhaps a short time to the Jewish) much less to all; and the Seed of *Abraham*, but in the fourth or fifth Generation from him, fell into Bondage and Slavery, recovered but short lived Prosperity, came again into Distress, and have continued many Ages in a Condition, that is the reverse of Blessedness.

This Promise is then yet unfulfilled, or fulfilled in *Jesus*; if it is unfulfilled, then there is a Mark of Falshood in the Jewish Religion, it being impossible for God to promise and not to perform in due time.

If it be reply'd that this Promise is yet to be fulfilled, and that *a thousand Years with the Lord are as one Day*; I answer, that tho' *a thousand Years with the Lord are as one Day*, yet they are not so with Man; and that when
 \ the

the Supreme Being condescends to communicate himself to Man, he must act with him according to his Nature, as well as his own; he cannot then give so solemn a Promise of such a Nature to *Abraham*, and not fulfill it in above three thousand Years, and besides let the Seed of *Abraham* continue for many Generations, in such a distressed and dispersed Condition that all Hopes and Human Prospect of it's being ever fulfilled ceases.

If the Jew yet tells us, That according to our Account of Things, this Promise was not fulfilled till near two thousand Years after it was given, and that what might for wise and good Reasons be defer'd so long, might for as wise and good ones be defer'd longer; I again return, That tho' the promised Blessing was so long defer'd, yet by constant Revelations from God the Prospect of it's being fulfilled increased, and God kept up the Hopes and Expectations of the Jews by other Prophecies which pointed out the Time, Manner and Circumstances of this Blessing; he renew'd and confirm'd it to them by the Mouth of his Prophets. But now as all Prophecy has ceased for above two thousand Years, there is no Prospect of it's being ever fulfilled, and it stands as a Mark of Imposture in the Jewish Religion, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

This

This is the plain and direct View, in which this Text is to be consider'd; and those strangely mistake Things, who considering it simply give it in Evidence of the Christian Religion. *Jesus* must be first proved the *Messiah*, before we can apply the Blessedness; and those who deny his being the *Messiah*, deny the Blessedness. Yet this Text affords a strong Argument to the Jew, that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*; and as he cannot pretend that it is fulfilled in any Person if not in *Jesus*, he is driven to acknowledge, either that God promised and did not perform, or that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*.

2dly. *Jacob* blessing his Sons declares that *the Scepter* ^a shall not depart from *Judah*, nor a *Lawgiver* from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come. Here then is a remarkable Person foretold to come into the World before a certain Period; the Question then is, whether the Person foretold is the *Messiah* or some other Person: but the Jews cannot possibly apply this Prophecy to any other Person; then it is yet unfulfilled, or fulfilled in *Jesus*. If it is yet unfulfilled, then there is a Mark of Falshood in the Jewish Religion, the Period being manifestly past before which *Jacob* declared that this Person should appear.

3dly. *Moses's* Promise to the People that

a Gen. 49. 10.

God would send them *a Prophet like unto himself*, who should be in the place of God *and speak the Words of his Mouth*, &c. is fulfilled, or not fulfilled. If it is not fulfilled, there is another Mark of Falshood in the Jewish Religion; If it is fulfilled, that it can be fulfilled in no other Person than *Jesus* is evident from the Jewish Accounts of their own Prophets, none of whom were like unto *Moses*, and from the direct Confession of one of them, Deut. 34. 10, 11. *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses.*

The Event then, the State of the Jewish Nation since *Moses*, plainly shews that these Words cannot possibly relate to a Succession of Jewish Prophets, as some understand them, and that they must be fulfill'd in *Jesus* or are unfulfill'd. None of these Prophets were like unto *Moses*, nor pretended to be so; and as they taught nothing different from the Law of *Moses*, could not want the promised Evidence. Add to this the Confession above mention'd, which we have reason to think was made in the Time of *Ezra*, and there being not so much as a pretence amongst the Jews that they have since had a Prophet like unto *Moses*.

4thly. All those Promises to *David* of *establishing his Throne for ever, letting his Seed*

^a Psalm 89.

remain

remain as long as the Sun and Moon endureth, &c. must be fulfilled in Jesus, or are Delusion and Imposture. Ten Tribes were rent from David in the second Generation after him, and all Government has been taken from his Family for above these seventeen hundred Years: shall we then assert that God promised and did not perform; or that these Promises may yet be fulfilled, notwithstanding there has been so long an Interruption to all Dominion in the House of David? The Point is evident; either these Promises are Jewish Forgeries, or they are fulfilled in Jesus.

Indeed it seems as if God by taking ten Tribes from *Rehoboam*, purposely design'd to shew the People that it was not a Temporal Kingdom which was to be established in the House of *David*, and that these Promises had another Signification. And if we consider the last Words of the Son of *Jesse*, we have reason to think that he himself understood as much. *"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over Men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: And he shall be as the Light of the Morning, when the Sun riseth, even a Morning without Clouds; as the tender grass springing out*

^a 2 Sam. 23. 2, 3, 4, 5.

of the Earth by clear shining after rain. Altho' my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, altho' he make it not to grow.

5thly. The fifty third Chapter of *Isaiah* relates to the *Messiah*, or it does not relate to him; If it does not relate to the *Messiah*, then the Jew must shew to whom it does relate, and who that Person is that is so great, that *Kings shut their Mouths at him*, yet is led like a Lamb to the Slaughter wounded for our Transgressions; bears the Sins of many; makes intercession for Transgressors; sees his Seed, and prolongs his Days, after his Soul is made an offering for Sin; Let them shew who this Person is, if it be not the *Messiah*. If they cannot do this, then there is another Mark of Falshood in the Jewish Religion, the Time for the Appearance of this Person being so limited by the Prophet *Daniel* (as will appear presently) that he must be already come, if *Daniel* is not an Impostor. For that *Isaiah* and *Daniel* both describe the same Person is evident from comparing the Characters given by each of them.

6thly. The following remarkable Prophecy is fulfilled in *Jesus*, or the Person who delivered it is an Impostor. ^a *Seventy Weeks are deter-*

^a Dan. 9. 24. & 26.

min'd upon thy People, and upon thy holy City, to finish the Transgression, and to make an end of Sins, and to make reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to Seal up the Vision and Prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy, &c. And after threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the People of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City, and the Sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a Flood, and unto the end of the War Desolations are determined.

Now this Prophecy cannot possibly be apply'd to any Person who has yet appeared in the World unless it be *Jesus*: and tho' the Jews and some Persons for them would fain apply it to one of their own High-Priests, yet it is impossible they should do this, the Character of the Person, and Work he was to perform as *finishing Transgression, making an end of Sins, bringing in everlasting Righteousness, Sealing up the Vision and Prophecy, &c.* being no way applicable to any such Person.

If then this Prophecy cannot possibly be apply'd to any Person who has yet appear'd in the World unless to *Jesus*, then it is fulfilled in him or is unfulfilled: but it cannot possibly be unfulfilled, unless *Daniel* who delivered it, is an Impostor; because according to him this Person was to appear before the Destruction of the *City and Sanctuary*, and both these

these

these have been destroy'd seventeen hundred Years.

That this Prophecy is applicable to *Jesus* in all it's Parts, is confess'd by the Adversaries of Christianity, when they take Pains to shew that it is a Christian Forgery.

If we consider this Prophecy rightly, we shall not need to be Critical in a Calculation of *Daniel's seventy Weeks*; it is enough that it was to be fulfilled before the Destruction of the *City and Sanctuary*: so that these being destroy'd it must be fulfilled, or *Daniel*, who delivered it, an Impostor.

The true End of this remarkable Prophecy (like the 53^d. Chapter of *Isaiab*) seems to be, to take off Objections which might arise on Account of a suffering *Messiah*, and to confirm and establish the weak in future Ages. Thus,

As *Abraham* had been assured *that in his Seed all the Families of the Earth should be blessed*; *Moses* had told the People that *God would raise them up a Prophet from amidst their Brethren, who would speak to them the Words of God, and to whom they should hearken*; and *Nathan, Isaiab, Jeremiah* and other Prophets promised that *the Throne of David should be established for ever*; that a *King should rule in Righteousness, &c.* and were full of Descriptions of this *King and Kingdom*, lest the Jews might from hence con-

ceive Hopes of a Temporal Prince and Worldly Prosperity and Grandeur, God kindly guarded them against so dangerous a Mistake, and let them know by his Prophet *Isaiah* that the Prince who was to be their Deliverer was to have *no outward Form or Comeliness, but to be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief; that the Evil he was to deliver them from, was their Sins; and that the Manner in which he was to do it, was by Wounds, Sufferings, Stripes, Death; and again he by Daniel confirms this, perhaps unacceptable, Truth, and fixes a Period, namely the Destruction of their City and Sanctuary, before which he assures them their Prince should be thus treated and cut off.*

7thly. The time is so limited for the fulfilling another remarkable Prophecy that it must be fulfilled, or the Person who delivered it an Impostor, *a The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple: even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Now there is no Pretence, nor can be any, that this Text is fulfilled, if not in *Jesus* (in his being the *Messiah* and in Person in the Temple,) and if it is not fulfilled, then neither can it ever be; the Temple being destroyed. And if it neither is, nor can be ful-

a Malachi 3. 1.

filled,

filled, unless *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, then it is either fulfilled in him, or is Delusion and Imposture.

So again, those other Texts, *"I will shake all Nations, and the Desire of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts,* can in no Sense be true according to the best Accounts of both Temples, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

Again lastly, There are several Prophecies concerning the Calling of the Gentiles which are yet unfulfilled; or fulfilled by calling of them to the Christian Religion. If they are yet unfulfilled, then we cannot reconcile with the Wisdom and Justice of God his suffering so remarkable and amazing a Conversion of Gentiles to a false Religion, which was a direct Way to draw the Jews into Error by an Application of this Event to their Prophecies; If they are fulfilled, that they can only be fulfilled in the Conversion of the Gentiles to Christianity is evident.

Now if one remarkable Text standing for many Ages unfulfilled raises Suspicion of Falseness, several Texts doing so, and some of them such as now never can be fulfilled, are evident Proofs of it.

^a Hag. 2. 7. 9.

We can have no greater Certainty of a Revelation than we have, that God cannot deceive; that he will not require our Assent to his Will without giving us sufficient Evidence that it is such; that he will deal with us according to our Nature, &c. He cannot then promise to *Abraham*, that in his Seed all the Families of the Earth should be blessed, and yet defer this Blessedness above three thousand Years; to *Moses*, that he would raise up a Prophet like unto himself, who should speak the Words of God, yet never send any such Person; to *David*, to establish his Throne for ever, yet immediately rend ten Tribes from him, and let his Seed be scattered seventeen hundred Years together over the face of the Earth; to come suddenly to his Temple and fill it with glory, yet let the Temple be destroyed so that 'tis impossible he should do this; to make an end of Sins, to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in Everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the Vision and Prophecy, yet never send any Person on such an Errand. These are direct Impossibilities; and I must conclude according to my Proposition, That the Jewish Religion is Imposture, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*.

It is remarkable, and worth observing, that the Evidence to a Jew of *Jesus's* being the *Messiah* increas'd with the Difficulties which arose against it; and that every Circumstance was

was guarded, which might be an Occasion of stumbling to them. This seems to be the Wisdom of God.

Thus, When *Jesus* appear'd and preached the true God; gave the most perfect System of Morality; and work'd Miracles; he fulfill'd *Moses's* remarkable Prophecy: and consequently ought to have been received by the Jews as that Prophet whom *Moses* foretold. And accordingly, as has been observed, he expects their Conviction upon this Evidence, *Believe me for the very Works sake, &c. If I had not done among you the Works which no other Man did, &c.* And again, when *John* sent two of his Disciples to ask him, ^a *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* He only answers by recounting his Works, *Go and shew John, says he, those things which ye do hear and see: the Blind receive their sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* (The Number and Nature of my Works, my Miracles, are full Evidence that I am the promised Prophet, and blessed is he, who not prejudiced by Worldly Views can receive this Evidence, and be my Disciple.)

^a Matt. 11. 3. 4.

Here then the Works of *Jesus*, his Miracles, were full Evidence that he was the Prophet *Moses* foretold, and the promised *Messiah*. But when he came to suffer, then had the Jews a stumbling Block, owing to their own Prejudices and Worldly Attachments. Now was the Hour come, when *blessed was he who was not offended at a suffering Messiah*. Now was it time for the Jews again to look into their Books to which *Jesus* over and over kindly refers them. Here *Isaiah*, *Daniel* and *Zachary* set them right by telling them, that the *Messiah* was to be a *Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*; that he was to pour out his Soul to Death; that after threescore and two Weeks he should be cut off but not for himself; and that the Sword should awake against a Man that was fellow to the Lord of Hosts.

Again, When Persecution arose, which was another Bar to Flesh and Blood, then were those remarkable Prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles fulfilled, and fulfilled under this extraordinary disadvantageous Circumstance, that the Conversion was to a persecuted Church.

When the City and Temple were destroy'd, then had the Jews Demonstration that the *Messiah* was come, or that *Daniel*, who told them that the *Messiah* should be cut off before this Period; and *Malachi* and *Haggai* who had

had promised that *the Lord should come suddenly to his Temple, and that the glory of the second House should be greater than that of the former, were Impostors.*

And at this Day the dispersed and distressed Condition of the Jews, as well as their unfulfilled Prophecies, is an Evidence against them.

Tho' it is not necessary that God after he has once revealed himself, should give fresh Evidences to his Revelation in different Ages, yet 'tis necessary that he do not mislead and give grounds for Hope of Deliverance, yet not let this Deliverance ever arrive; and further let an Impostor arise to whom the Characters of the promised, and expected Person, are so suitable that by that Means he draws Multitudes into Error. In this Case the People favour'd with a Revelation are in a worse Condition than all others, one Part of them being deceived by an Impostor, the other left to languish in fruitless Hopes and Expectations.

But, if the Jewish Religion advances Inconsistencies and Impossibilities, if *Jesus* is not the *Messiah*; on the contrary change the Prospect, and, if he is this Person, the whole of it is rational and consistent.

In the first place it is rational to expect that the *Messiah*, a Person who was *to speak the Words of God, to be hearken'd to in all things,*

and to be the Author of a new Dispensation, should be foretold by the Jewish Prophets, particularly by *Moses*, this being a connecting Evidence, an Evidence that the Author of the first was the Author of the second Dispensation; that the very God who brought the People out of *Egypt* and gave them their Law, also sent them that Person who abolished it. And as it is rational to expect that the *Messiah* should be foretold in the Jewish Scriptures, so in *Jesus* we find a Concurrence of all the prophetic Characters of the *Messiah*; He is truly the *Blessing* promised to *Abraham*, and in the Saviour of the World *all the Families of the Earth are blessed*; the Prophet *Moses* describes, *He delivered a Doctrine worthy of God, and spake in his Name, and the thing which he spake followed and came to pass*; he had the divine Attestation that (according to his own Declaration) *he did not speak of himself, but^a whatever the Father commanded, that he spake*; he is the King promised to *David*, *Isaiah* and *Daniel*; in his Divine Nature truly reigns over the House of Israel for ever; does not judge after the sight of his Eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his Ears, but with Righteousness judge the Poor and reprove with Equity; and his Kingdom is such as shall not pass away

^a John 12. 49.

nor be left to other Hands, but shall stand for ever; He is the Man of Sufferings, Isaiah, Daniel and Zachary describes; he is born of the Tribe, Family, and in the Town foretold; he appeared at the promised, and what's more, at the expected Time: when therefore all things concur, when Miracle, Prophecy and Prophetical Characters all meet in Jesus, where is the Ground for Infidelity? Why is not Jesus acknowledged the Messiah of the Jews?

One Thing we must observe, and that is, that in a Dispute betwixt a Jew and a Christian who both acknowledge the Divinity of the Old Testament, the Christian Evidence, the Evidence that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, increases with Time, and consequently the Jewish Cause grows every day worse and worse. And as by the Confession of the Jews, their Prophecies are unfulfilled, if not fulfilled in *Jesus*, they have every day more Reason than other to believe they are fulfilled in him, or are Imposture.

On the other hand, every independent Argument for the Divinity of the *Jewish* Religion is a Proof of Christianity.

As to the Deist, the Evidence to him that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, in short is this; *Jesus* appears and teaches a Doctrine worthy of God, and worked Miracles to confirm his Divine Mission.

Mission. Whilst then *Jesus's* Miracles are not invalidated, he has a Right to be receiv'd as a Person sent from God. But he also pretends to fulfill Prophecies and to be spoken of in a certain Book, he must then fulfill Prophecies and be spoken of in this Book, or he is an Impostor. By this Book then which he appeals to, he must be try'd; and if it appears that he makes an impossible Claim, he is to be rejected. But no sooner is this examin'd, but we find that he does not make an impossible Claim; on the contrary such a Person, as he appears to be, is exactly described and foretold in this Book.

If any *Doubt* yet remains concerning the Meaning of certain Texts, it must be remembered that a possible Sense supported by Miracle and Prophecy ought to be received before any other whatsoever.

C O N C L U S I O N.

HITHERTO we have considered several Applications made by *Jesus* and his Apostles, as not vacating the Evidence of Miracle and Prophecy: we now proceed to look on them in another View, and to examine how far they may be reckoned to give Evidence, and be judged rational Parts of a great Design.

And

And 1st. Tho' these Characters and Circumstances might not singly be sufficient to prove a Revelation, yet join'd with Miracle and Prophecy they give additional Evidence, and form a threefold Cord not to be broken.

Miracle alone was sufficient Evidence that *Jesus* was sent by God; his fulfilling Prophecies proved him to be the *Messiah* of the *Jews*; and the Prophetical Characters and Circumstances come in as it were over and above, to guard against those Prejudices, and unreasonable Doubts of Mankind, which might possibly arise at the Manner of his Appearance and Sufferings. And surely, it is not only probable that the Christian Religion is a Divine Revelation, which would be sufficient to determine every rational Enquirer to embrace it, but it is no less than Demonstration, that Miracles, clear and express Prophecies, and a Number of Prophetical Characters, and Circumstances, cannot meet in an Impostor.

2^{dly}. As some of the Prophetical Characters and Descriptions of the *Messiah* might be given to remove Offences, which might arise from his mean Appearance and Sufferings; so might others which describe his Grandeur, Offices, and Kingdom, be delivered to keep up the Hopes and Expectations of the People,

ple, and make them have a constant Eye to this great Deliverer.

3dly. If *Jesus* be the Person he pretends to be, the Deliverer of us from our Sins, then the Dignity of his Person and Importance of his Errand make it reasonable to expect, that the Prophets who lived before him should be full of Characters and Descriptions of him; and these Characters and Descriptions may teach us in what manner we should receive and honour him.

4thly. As the making the Ceremonies and Sacrifices under the *Jewish* Law resemble the Sacrifice by *Jesus*, was a proper Mode of Worship for God to institute, because in these was the Death of *Jesus* the great Sacrifice constantly shewed forth; so was it reasonable God should make the first Dispensation a Pattern of the Second, that the *Jews* might be inclined to part with the first, give the Shadow for the Substance, when the perfect Dispensation should arrive.

This is one View of the Author to the *Hebrews* in his shewing a Resemblance betwixt the Law and the Gospel, and those strangely mistake Things, who say that this Author is proving Christianity by Typical Arguments. He is so far from attempting to prove Christianity, that he declares he will not do it,
that

that leaving the ^a Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, he will go on to Perfection. And he gives a Reason why he will not do it, namely, because he lookt on it as an impossible Work to renew again by ^b Repentance, those who had once been enlighten'd and were fallen off; he could not hope to offer new Arguments which might convince such Apostates. Writing then as to Believers he goes on to set before them the Difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel; the Imperfection of the one, and the Perfection of the other: He shews them how unable the Law was to do what they wanted of it, take ^c away Sins, but that in the Dispensation by Jesus, their ^d Sins and Iniquities would be remembred no more. That the ^e Law could make nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better Hope did; that under the first Dispensation, the High-Priest, ^f who offered for the Sins of others, himself wanted a Sacrifice; that under the Second, we had a ^g High-Priest who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, who after he had once offered one Sacrifice for Sins, for ever sat down on the right Hand of God; that the Dispensation by Moses was only a Pattern, Example, Shadow, Figure of the Dispensation by Jesus. From the Imperfection then

a Heb. 6. 1, &c.

b Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6, &c.

c Heb. 10. 4.

d Heb. 10. 17.

e Heb. 7. 19.

f Heb. 7. 27.

g Heb. 7. 26. 10. 12, &c.

of this *Dispensation*, this *first Covenant* as he calls it; from it's being *unable to take away Sins*; it's being only a *Shadow, Pattern, Figure* of the Second, as well as from God's Promise to the *Jews* to give them a new ^a *Covenant*, this Author proves that God never intended that it should remain always, but that *as it grew old, it should vanish away*, that there should be a ^b *disannulling of the Commandment* going before, for the *weakness and unprofitableness thereof*; and that the *Priest-hood* being ^c *changed*, there was of necessity a *Change also of the Law*.

3^{thly}. If some Events under the first Dispensation were made to resemble others under the Second, it was of great Use to the *Jews* to reconcile them to Difficulties under this last, and was a training of them up to believe the Mysteries of the Gospel.

Thus, if they should make a Difficulty of believing that *Jesus* bore their Sins on the Cross, this Difficulty would rationally be removed when they remembered that the Scape-Goat bore their Sins into the Wilderness. If they should object to the Possibility of *Jesus's* Resurrection after lying in the Grave three days, they might remember that *Jonas* was delivered from the Belly of the Whale after

^a Heb. 8. 6. 7, &c. to the end of the Chapter.

^b Heb. 7. 18.

^c Heb. 7. 12.

lying there an equal Time. If they doubted of Salvation by looking to a crucify'd Saviour, *Moses* would put them in mind that the *Israelites* were healed of bodily Diseases by looking on the Serpent. Thus could not the *Jews* rationally object to the second Dispensation on Account of any Difficulties it contained, when they were used to believe equal Difficulties in the First.

To conclude, If God was pleas'd to give Signs of Deliverances and Blessings under the first Dispensation which resembled others under the Second, which pointed to the great Deliverer *Jesus*; He by this lets us see the Insignificancy of Temporal Felicity consider'd abstractedly and by it self, and that there is but one Deliverance of Importance to Mankind, the Deliverance by *Jesus* the Redeemer.

T H E E N D.

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