Christianity as Old as the Creation:

OR, THE

GOSPEL,

A

REPUBLICATION

OF THE

Religion of Nature.


Eft autem Jus naturale adeo immutabile, ut ne quidem a Deo mutari poteft.

Grot, dt Jure Belli & Pacts. I. i.f. I. §. to. n. 5.

The Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the 'Things contained in

, the Law. Rom. 11.14.

Cod is no Refpefier of Per fens ; hut in every Nation, he that fearetb him ,

and worketh Righfcoufnefs is accepted with him. Ac-to x. 34, 35.

Profndc perfeftam illam Religionem, quae Chrifti prardicatione nobis tradita
eft,

non Novam aut Peregiinam, fed fi verum dicere oportet, primam, folam,

veramque efic liquido apparct.


Res ipfa, quae nunc Chriftiana Religio nuncupatur, erat & apud Antiquos, nee
defuit ab Initio generis humani, quoufque ipfe Chriftus veniret in came i
unde

vera Religio quae jam erat, ccepit appellari Chriftiana.


The Religion of the Gofpel, is the true original Religion of Reafon and

Nature – And its Precepts declarative of that original Religion, which was

as old as the Creation.

Serm. for prop, the Gofp. in fir. Parts, by Dr. Sherlock, now Bp.
God does nothing in the Government of the World by mere Will and Arbitrariness. — The Will of God always determines it to accord according to the eternal Reason of Things. — All rational Creatures are oblig'd to govern themselves in ALL their Actions by the same eternal Rule of Reason.

Dr. S. Claris Unchang. Qblig. of Nat. Relig. Edit. 4. p. 47, 48, 49.

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THE

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Sheets, makes no Apology for writing on a Subject of the last Importance; and which, as far as I can find, has no where been so fully treated: He builds nothing on a Thing so uncertain as Tradition, which differs in most Countries; and of which, in all Countries, the Bulk of Mankind are incapable of judging; but thinks he has laid down such plain and evident Rules, as may enable Men of the meanest Capacity, to distinguish between Religion and Superstition; and has represented the Former, in every Part, so beautiful, so amiable, and so strongly affeding; that they who in the least reflect, must be highly in love with it; and easily perceive, that their Duty and Happiness are inseparable. Whether he has succeeded in this Noble, and Generous Attempt, the Reader will be better able to judge, if he reads with the fame Freedom, and Impartiality, as the Author wrote.
The Manner of debating a Subject Dialogue—wife, (as this between A>
and B) was esteem'd by the Ancients
the most proper, as well as most
prudent Way of exposing prevailing
Absurdities; and Tu/lys two Discourses,
de Natur e Deorum and de Divina-
tio?ie both level'd against the Super-
ftition of his Country-men, are living
Monuments of the Expediency, and
Usefulness of this way of Writing.
And I certainly the Reader may be
better entertain'd thus, than by that
dry way of Objection and Answer,
with which Controversies are usually
"manaefd.

THE

THE

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

THAT God, at all Times ', has given Mankind
sufficient Means, of knowing whatever he re-
quires of them \ and what those Means are. Page i

C H A P. ' II.

That the Religion of Nature confifti in obferving those
Things, which our Reason, by considering the Nature
of God and Man, and the Relation we ft and in to
him, and one another, demonftrates to be our Duty •,
and that those Things are plain ; and likewife what
they are. p. l l
CHAP. III.

That the Reflection, and Happiness of all rational Beings, supreme, as well as sub ordinate, consists in living up to the Dictates of their Nature, p. i$
CHAP. IX.

Human Happinefs being the ultimate Dejign, and End of all Traditional, as well as Original Revelation* they muft both prescribe the fame Means \fince thofe Means i which, at one Time, promote human Happi-
nefs, equally promote it at all Times* p. 90

CHAP. X.

God does not acl arbitrarily, or interpofe unneceffarily, but leaves thofe Things, that can only be confider'd as Means (and asfuch, are in their own Nature mutable \) to human Difcretion ; to determine as it thinks moft conducing to thofe Things, whkh are in their own Nature obligatory. p. 100

CHAP. XI.

The fuppofing Things merely pofitive, to be made the In-
gredients of Religion is inconfiftent with the Good of Mankind, as well as the Honour of God. p. 123

CHAP. XII.

That they, who, to magnify Revelation, weaken the Force of the Religion of Reafon and Nature, fir ike at all Religion -, and that there can't be two Inde-
pendent Rules for the Government of Human AtJions.

CHAP. XIII.

The Bulk of Mankind, by their Reafon, muft be able to difihiguifh between Religion and Superftition ;

other wife

i\i The G O N T E NTS

etherwise they can never extricate themj elves from that Superfiition they chance to be educated in. p. 209

CHAP. XIV.

Br. ClarkeV Difcourfe of The Unchangeable Obli-
gation of Natural Religion, and the Truth, and Certainty of the Christian Revelation —, confided: And from thence is shewn, how inconsistent ever with the Design of that Discourse, "That Nothing can be a Part of Religion, but what is founded on the Nature, and Reason of Things.

P-3*9

(>)

CHRISTIANITY

As Old as the CREATION.

CHAR I.

That God, at all Times, has given Mankind sufficient Means of knowing what he requires of them; and what those Means are.

His early Visit, Sir, gives me hopes it will not be a short one.

B. I come to talk with you on a Subject, which may, perhaps, keep me longer than you desire.

A. Your uncommon Temper and Candor, in debating even the most important Points, will always make your Conversation agreeable, tho' ever so long *, but pray, what is to be the Subject of our Morning's Discourse. ' 

B. I was yesterday in company with a great many Clergymen, it being our Bishop's primary Visitation, where the Complaint was general, of the Coldness and Indifference, with which People received the Speculative Points of Christianity, and all its holy Rites; for which formerly they had shown so great a Zeal. This Coldness they chiefly imputed to those Low Churchmen, who lay the main Stress on Natural Religion; and withal so magnify the Doctrine of Sincerity, as in effect to place all Religions on a level, where the
The Promoters of these Notions, as well as these Notions themselves, were exposed with warmth; how justly, I will not determine, till we have talk'd the matter over with our usual Freedom: For which reason, I have made you this early Visit, and would be glad to know the Sentiments of so good a Judge, on these two important Points, viz. Sincerity and Natural Religion.

A. I thank you for this Favour, and shall freely tell you, I so little agree with those Gentlemen in relation to Sincerity, that I think a sincere Examination into religious matters can't be too much pressed; this being the only way to discover true Christianity. The Apostles thought themselves oblig'd, in making Profelytes, to recommend an impartial Search by they both desire'd, and requir'd Men to judge for themselves, to prove all things, &c. this they thought necessary, in order to renounce a Religion, which the Force of Education had imprest on their Minds, and embrace another directly contrary to the Notions and Prejudices they had imbib'd. Nay, even those very Men, who most ridicule the Doctrine of Sincerity, never fail, on other Occasions, to assert, that Infidelity is owing to the want of a sincere Examination, and that whosoever impartially considers Christianity, must be convinc'd of its Truth. And I might add, That could we suppose, a sincere Examination wouldn't always produce this Effect, yet must it always make Men acceptable to God; since that is all God can require, all that it is in their power to do for the Discovery of his Will. These, in short, are my Sentiments as to this Point; and as to the other, I think, too great a stress can't be laid on Natural Religion, which, as I take it, differs not from Reveal'd, but in the manner of its being communicated: The one being the Internal, as the other the External Revelation of the same unchangeable Will of a Being, who is alike at all times infinitely wise and good.

B. Surely, Sir, this must be extremely heterodox. Can you believe, that Natural and Reveal'd Religion differ in nothing, but the manner of their
being convey'd to us?

A. As heterodox as I may seem at present, I doubt not, but by asking you a few Questions, to Jet you see, I advance nothing in either of these Points without reason, and in order to it, I desire to be inform'd, whether God has not, from the Beginning, given Mankind some Rule, or Law for their Conduct: ? And whether the observing that, did not make 'em acceptable to him?

B. There can be no doubt, but the observing such a Law, must have answer'd the End for which it was given; and made Men acceptable to God.

A. What more can any external Revelation do, than render Men acceptable to God? Again,

If God, then, from the Beginning, gave Men a Religion; I ask, was that Religion imperfect, or perfect?

B. Most perfect, without doubt, since no Religion can come from a Being of infinite Wisdom and Perfection, but what is absolutely perfect.

A. Can, therefore, a Religion absolutely perfect, admit of any Alteration; or be capable of Addition, or Diminution; and not be as immutable as the Author of it? Can Revelation, I say, add any thing to a Religion thus absolutely perfect, universal and immutable? Besides, if God has given Mankind a Law, he must have given them likewise sufficient means of knowing it, he would, otherwise, have defeated his own Intent in giving it; since a Law, as far as it is unintelligible, ceases to be a Law. Shall we say, that God, who had the forming human Understanding, as well as his own Laws, did not know how to adjust the one to the other? If God at all times were willing all Men should come to the Knowledge of his Truth, could not his infinite Wisdom and Power, at all times, find sufficient means, for making, Mankind capable of knowing, what his infinite Goodness design'd they should know?

B. I grant you, that God was always willing, that ALL Men should come to the Knowledge of True Religion; and we say, that the Christian Religion being the Only True, and Absolutely Perfect Religion, was what God, from the Beginning,
defigri'd for all Mankind.

A. I r fo, it follows, That the Chrifton Religion has exifted from the Beginning *, and that God, both
When* and Everjince, has continued to give all Man-
kind fufficient Means to know it -, and that 'tis their
Duty to know, believe, profefs, and practife it: fo
that Griftianity, tho' the Name is of a later Date,
mull be as old, and as extenfive as human Nature v
and, as the Law of our Creation, muff have been
Then implanted in us by God himfelf.

B. It would be too prefuming in us poor Mor-
tals, to pretend to account for the Methods Provi-
dence takes, in relation to the Difcovery of its Will;
and, therefore* a Perfon of lefs Moderation might
condemn your Queftions, as captious, prefumptu-
ous, and (bunded in Heterodoxy.

: A. If God never intended Mankind fhould at any
time be without Religion, or have falfe Religions ;
and there be but One True Religion, which ALL
have been ever bound to believe and profefs •, I
can't ice any Heterodoxy in affirming, that the
Means to effect this End of infinite Wifdom, muff:
be as univerfal and extenfive as the End itself; or
that all Men, at all times, muff have had fufficient
Means to difcover whatever God defigned they
fhould know, and practife. I do not mean by this,
That All fhould have equal Knowledge ; but that
All mould have what is fufficient for the Circum-
ffances they are in.

B. Since you have afk'd me Queftions, let me,
in my turn, demand of you, What are your Senti-
ments in this matter ? Particularly, What are thole
-Means, which, you fuppofi y God ha, at all times ,
given

Ch. I.. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation,
given the whole Race of Mankind^ to enable them to
di ifcover what he wills them to know y believ\ profefs^
andpraclife ?

A. I ask'd you thofe few Queftions at prefer, t,
not to determine the Point ; but only to let you fee,
you had noreafon to be furpris'd at my faying, Na-
tural and Revealed Religion only differ as to the Man-
er of their being communicated. I fhall now readily
anfwer your Queftions : And, as I think it my Du-
ty never to difown my Religious Sentiments, fo I
freely declare, that the Ufe of thofe Faculties^ by
which Men are diftinguifh'd from Brutes, is the
only Means they have to discern whether there is a
God •, and whether he concerns himself with human
Affairs, or has given them any Laws •, and what
those Laws are? And as Men have no other Facul-
ties to judge with, so their using these after the best
manner they can, must answer the End for which
God gave them, and justify their Conduct. For,

If God will judge Mankind as they are ac-
countable, that is, as they are rational; the Judgment
must hold an exact Proportion to the Use they
make of their Reason. And it would be in vain to
use it, if the due Use of it would not justify them
before God: And Men would be in a miserable
Condition indeed, if, whether they used it, or not,
they should be alike criminal. And if God designed
all Mankind 'd at all times know, what he
wills them to know, believe, profess, and prac-
tice; and has given them no other Means for this, but the
Use of Reason —, Reason, human Reason, must then
be that Means: For as God has made us rational
Creatures, and Reason tells us, that 'tis his Will,
that we act up to the Dignity of our Natures: if
'tis Reason must tell when we do fo. What God
requires us to know, believe, profess, and prac-
tice, must be in itself a reasonable Service; but whether
what is offer'd to us as such, be really fo, 'tis Rea-
on alone which must judge. As the Eye is the
sole Judge of what is visible \ the Ear of what is

Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. ii

audible; so Reason, of what is reasonable. If then
Reason was given to bring them to the Knowledge
of God's Will, that must be sufficient to produce its
intended Effect, and can never bring Men to take
that for his Will, which he designed they, by using
their Reason, would avoid as contrary to it.

B. If Men, having done all in their Power, all
that God requires of them, to find out his Will,
must fall into opposite Sentiments —, must it not be
the Will of God that it would be so? Can God will
such a previous Examination, and not will what he
foreknows must be the necessary Consequence.

A. There is, I think, no way to avoid this
Objection, of God's willing Contrarieties; but by
supposing he requires nothing of Men, but what
is founded on the Nature of Things, and the im-
mutable Relations they bear to one another; and
what, consequently, they are, as far as concerns
3 em, capable of knowing. But this Objection is
unanswerable by those who believe the Will of God
is not always thus founded •, but may contain many merely positive Things: since Men may, after having taken all possible care to be in the right, have very opposite Sentiments, and be oblig'd, by the Will of God, to hold and act Contrarieties.

B. Tho' this Subject is attended with the utmost Difficulties, yet I find little or nothing said to solve 'em. I, for my Part, know not how to deny Mens being acceptable to God, whatever their Opinions may be, after having used all the Means God has endowed 'em with for the Discovery of his Will; and yet I don't know how to admit it: For then, what Religion over Men are of, if they have duly used such Means as God ordain'd for the Discovery of his Will, That, I say, how opposite forever to Christianity, must be the Religion God design'd 'em. And, on the other hand, should I own, that the duly using those Means would have caus'd Men to have been all of one Religion •, yet I can't see how that could be the Christian Religion, except it

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Ch. i. Christianity as Old as the Creation.

has existed from the Beginning; and all Men, all times, have had sufficient Means to discover it. For,

If God was always willing, That All Men should come to the Knowledge of his Truth; and there never was a time when God intended Men should have no Religion, or such an imperfect Religion, which could not answer the End of its being instituted by an infinitely wise Legislator; This seems, to my bewildered Reason, to imply, that there was, from the Beginning, but One True Religion, which all Men might know was their Duty to embrace. And if this is true, I can't well conceive how this Character can conflict with Christianity •, without allowing it, at the same time, to be as old as the Creation. And yet, notwithstanding all these seeming Difficulties, I am confident the Christian Religion is the Only True Religion. But since these Difficulties are of your raising, I may, in justice, expect that you should solve them.

i. This, I must own, is a difficult Point: However, I shall tell you my Sentiments •, which I, far from being a Dogmatizer, am ready to give up, if you can frame any other Hypothesis, not liable to the same Objections, or others equally strong •, tho' I may venture to say, that I take mine to be the only one which can give any tolerable Satisfaction
to your present Doubts. And therefore I shall attempt to mew you, That, Men, if they sincerely endeavour to discover the Will of God, will perceive, that there's a Law of Nature, or Reason, which is so call'd, as being a Law which is common, or natural, to all rational Creatures; and that this Law, like its Author, is absolutely perfect, eternal, and unchangeable: and that the Design of the Gospel was not to add to, or take from this Law; but to free Men from that Load of Superstition which had been mix'd with it: So that True Christianity is not a Religion of Yesterday, but what God, at the Beginning, dictated, and full continues to dictate.

8 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Gb. f.

tate to Christians, as well as others. If I am so happy as to succeed in this Attempt, I hope not only fully to satisfy your Doubts, but greatly to advance the Honour of External Revelation; by mewing the perfect Agreement between "That and Internal Revelation; and by so doing, destroy one of the most successful Attempts that has been made on Religion, by setting the Laws of God at variance.

But first I must premise, That in supposing an External Revelation I take it for granted, that there's sufficient Evidence of the Person's being sent from God who publish'd it: And I further own, that this divine Person, by living up to what he taught, has set us a noble Example, and that as he was highly exalted for so doing, so we, if we use our best Endeavours, may expect a suitable Reward. This, and everything of the same Nature, I freely own, which is not inconsistent with the Law of God's being the same, whether internally, or externally reveal'd.

B. Your Design I must own, is highly commendable; but in order to succeed, you are to prove two things. First, that the supreme Governor of Mankind has given his Subjects an universal Law, which they, when they come to the Use of their Reason, are capable of knowing. Secondly, That the Divine Precepts must be the same, whether internally, or externally reveal'd. If you prove these two Points, you will entirely clear my Doubts; but I almost despair of your doing it, since you seem to me to advance a New Hypotbesis.

A. Hear the Evidence, and then judge. But before I produce it, lest the supposed Novelty of this Opinion may prejudice you, I shall put you in mind
of what Archbimop Laud fays upon a like Occa-
Laud's Pref. fion : "* That when Errors are grown by Age and
against P/". "Continuance to strength ; they who fptak for
" the Truth, trip' far older, are ordinarily challenged
M for bringing in new Opinions : and there's no
'* greater

Ch. f. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 9
*
< greater Abfardity ftirring this Day in Chrifien-
" dom. '* Now,

By putting me to prove, that there is a Low of
frature, you, I fuppofe, have a mind to hear what I
can fay on this Subject. Since none then that be-
lieve there's a God, who governs Mankind, but
believe he has given them a Law for the governing
their Actions ; this being imply'd in the very No-
 tion of Governour and Governed: And fince the
Law by which he governs Men, and his Govern-
 ment mud commence together, and extend alike to
all his Subjects *," Is it not, as BiJIoop Tillofcfon p re f. to WiU
**« obferves, a great Mi flake, to think that the Obli-
4,1 sation of Moral Duties does foely depend uoon Rcli i-
" the Revelation of God's Will made to us in the
H Holy Scriptures ? Is it not plain, that Mankind
" was always under a Law^ even before God made
" an external or extraordinary Revelation ? Elfe,
4C how cou'd God judge the World? How mould
< they, to whom the Word of God never came,
u be acquitted or condemned at the lafl Day ? for
cc where there is no Law, there can neither be
*' Obedience, nor Tranfgres/Lion,

If then, it be abfurd to fuppofe, that Men, tho'
they liv'd ever fo impioufiyand immorally, did no-
thing which God had forbid them *, or if ever fo
pioufy and virtuously, nothing that God had com-
manded them ; muft there not always have been aft
univerfal Law fo fully promulgated to Mankind,
that they could have no iuft Plea from their Igno-
rance, not to be tried by it. And cou'd any thing
iefs than its being founded on the Nature of Things,
and the Relation Men ftand in to God, and one
another, vifible at all times to all, m.ike it thus
univerfally promulgated ? But further to illuftrate
this Matter *, can it be imagined, that if God has
been fo good to all other Animals, as to give them,
not in one Country only, but in all Places whatfo-
ever, fufficient means to act for their own Preferva-
jion ; that he has had lefs kinidneff* for the immor-
tal
Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. i.

tal Souls of those made after his own Image, and has not given them, at one time as well as another, and at one place as well as another, sufficient Means to provide for their eternal Happiness? Or,

Can it be supposed, an infinitely good and gracious Being, which gives Men notice, by their Senses, what does good or hurt to their Bodies; has had less regard for their immortal Parts, and has not given them at all times, by the Light of their Understanding, sufficient Means to discover what makes for the good of their Souls—, but has necessitated them, or any of them, to continue from Age to Age in destructive Ignorance, or Error? To press this Matter further, let me ask you, Whether there is not a clear and distinct Light, that enlightens all Men; and which, the Moment they attend to it, makes them perceive those eternal Truths, which are the Foundation of all our Knowledge? And is it not God himself who illuminates them? What other Reason then can you assign, why infinite Wisdom should act thus; but to give Mankind standing rules to distinguish Truth from Falseness, especially in Matters of the higher! consequence to their eternal as well as temporal Happiness?

There has, no doubt, been a great Number of traditional Religions succeeding one another; and, as far as we know, there is no traditional Religion, which has, except in Name, continu'd the same for any long time; and tho' there are a great Number of Sects, who go under the same common Denomination, yet they are almost as much divided among themselves, as if they own'd different Religions, and accordingly charge one another with erring fundamentally, yet all these agree in acknowledging a Law of Nature, and that they are indifferently obliged to obey its Dictates: So that this Light of Nature, like that of the Sun, is universal, and wou'd, did not. Men shut the Eyes of their Understanding, or suffer others to blind them, soon disperse all those Mills and Fogs, which arise, either from

Ch. 2. Christianity as Old as the Creation. I Ir

from false Traditions, or false Interpretations of the true Tradition.
that the Religion of Nature consists in observing those Things, which our Reason, by considering the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation we stand to him and one another, demonstratively to be our Duty; and that those things are plain; and likewise what they are.

B. What we may the better know whether the Law, or Religion of Nature is universal, and the Gospel a Reproduction of it, and not a new Religion; I desire you will give a Definition of the Religion of Nature.

A. By Natural Religion, I understand the Belief of the Exigence of a God, and the Sense and Practice of those Duties which result from the Knowledge we, by our Reason, have of him and his Perfections, and of ourselves, and our own Imperfections; and of the relation we stand in; to him and our Fellow-Creatures, so that the Religion of Nature takes in every thing that is founded on the Reason and Nature of things. Hence Grotius defines the Law of Nature to be Bitlatum Lib. i. c.%. reta raiionis, indicans aclui alicui, ex ejus conveniencia antif tentia com ipfa natura rationally inaeffe moralem turpitudinem, aut neceffitatem moralem, ac confequenter ab auctor natura Deo talem atium aut vetari aut pracipi.

I suppose you will allow, that 'tis evident by the Light of Nature, that there is a God; or in other words, a Being absolutely perfect, and infinitely Happy in himself, who is the Source of all other Beings.

B. This, no doubt, has been demonstrated over and over; and I must own, that I can't be more certain of my own Existence, than of the Existence of such a Being.

A. Since then it is demonstrable there is such a Being, it is equally demonstrable, that the Crea-
tures can neither add to, or take from the Happinefs of that Being; and that he could have no Motive in framing his Creatures, or in giving Laws to fuch of them as he made capable of knowing his Will, but their own Good.

To imagine he created them at firft for his own fake, and has fince required things of them for that Reafon, is to fuppofe he was not perfectly happy in himfelf before the Creation; and that the Creatures, by either obferving, or not obferving the Rules prefer ib'd them, cou'd add to, or take from his Happinefs.

If then a Being infinitely happy in himfelf, cou'd not command his Creatures any thing for his own Good; nor an all-wise Being things to no end or purpofe; nor an all-good Being any thing but for their good: It unavoidably follows, nothing can be a part of the divine Law, but what tends to pro-
romote the common Intereft, and mutual Happinefs of his rational Creatures \ and every thing that does fo, muft be a part of it.

As God can require nothing of us, but what makes for our Happinefs *, fo he, who can't envy us any Happinefs our Nature is capable of, can forbid us thofe Things only, which tend to our Hurt *, and this we are as certain of, as that there is a God infinitely happy in himfelf, infinitely good and wise •, and as God can defign nothing by his Laws but our Good, fo by being infinitely power-
ful, he can bring every thing to pafs which he de-
ffifjns for that End.

From

Ch. 2 . Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. "jj

From the Confideration of thefe Perfections, we cannot but have the higheft Veneration, nay, the greateft Adoration and Love for this suprême Be-
ing •, who, that we may not fail to be as happy as poftible for fuch Creatures to be, has made our act-
ing for our prefent, to be the only Means of obtain-
ing our future Happinefs; fo that we can't fin againft him, but by acting againft ourfelves, i.e. our reafon-
able Natures: These Reflections, which occur to every one who in the leaft confiders, muft give us a wonderful and furprizing Senfe of the divine Good-
nefs, fill us with Admiration, Tranport and Ex-
tasy; (of which we daily fee among contemplative Perfons remarkable Inftances): And not only force us to exprefs a never-failing Gratitude in Raptures of the higheft Praife and Thankfgiving; but make
us drive to imitate him in our extensive Love to our Fellow-Creatures: And thus copying after the Divine Original, must conform us to his Image, who is all Perfection and all Happiness; and who must have an inexhaustible Love for all, who thus endeavour to imitate him. And here

The difference between the supreme Being, infinitely happy in himself, and the Creatures who are not so, is, That all his Actions, in relation to his Creatures, flow from a pure disinterested Love •, whereas the Spring of all the Actions of the Creatures is their own Good: We love God, because he 1 John 4. 19, first loved us; and consequently, our Love to him will be in proportion to our Sense of his Goodness to us. Nor can we in the least vary from those Sentiments, which the Consideration of the divine Attributes implant in us, but we must in proportion take off from the Goodness of God, and from those Motives we have to love him as we ought.

Gun Reason, which gives us a Demonstration of the divine Perfections, affords us the same concern concerning the Nature of those Duties God requires; not only with relation to himself, but to ourselves, and

11. Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 2.

and one another: These we can't but fee, if we look into ourselves, consider our own Natures, and the Circumstances God has placed us in with relation to our Fellow-Creatures, and what conduces to our mutual Happiness: Our Senses, our Reason, the Experience of others as well as our own, can't fail to give us sufficient Information.

With relation to ourselves, we can't but know how we are to act; if we consider, that God has endow'd Man with such a Nature, as makes him necessarily desire his own Good and, therefore, he may be sure, that God, who has bestowed this Nature on him, could not require any thing of him in prejudice of it •, but, on the contrary, that he should do every thing which tends to promote the Good of it. The Health of the Body, and the Vigor of the Mind, being highly conducing to our Good, we must be sensible we offend our Maker, if we indulge our Senses to the prejudice of these: And because not only all irregular Passions, all unfriendly Affections carry their own Torment with them, and endless Inconveniences attend the Excess of sensual Delights *, and all immoderate Desires (human
Nature being able to bear but a certain Proportion) disorder both Mind and Body; we can't but know we ought to use great Moderation with relation to our Passions, or in other Words, govern all our Actions by Reason •, That, our true Interest being inseparable. And, in a word, whoever so regulates his natural Appetites, as will conduce most to the Exercise of his Reason, the Health of his Body, and the Pleasure of his Senses, taken and consider'd together, (since herein his Happiness consists) may be certain he can never offend his Maker —, who, as he governs all things according to their Natures, can't but expect his rational Creatures would act according to their Natures.

As to what God expects from Man with relation to each other every one must know his Duty, who considers that the common Parent of Mankind has

Ch. 2. Christianity as Old as the Creation* IK

has the whole Species alike under his Protection, and will equally punish him for injuring others, as he would others for injuring him; and concomitantly, that it is his Duty to deal with them, as he expects they would deal with him in like Circumstances. How much this is his Duty, every one must perceive, who considers himself as a weak Creature, not able to subsist without the Assistance of others, who have it in their Power to retaliate the Usage he gives them: And that he may expect, if he breaks those Rules which are necessary for Men's mutual Happiness, to be treated like a common Enemy, not only by the Persons injur'd, but by all others •, who, by the common Ties of Nature, are obliged to defend and assist each other. And not only a Man's own particular Interest, but that of his Children, his Family, and all that's dear to him, obliges him to promote the common Happiness, and to endeavour to convey the same to posterity.

All Moralists agree, that human Nature is so constituted, that Men can't live without Society and mutual Assistance; and that God has endow'd them with Reason, Speech, and other Faculties, evidently fitted to enable them to assist each other in all the Concerns of Life; that, therefore, 'tis the Will of God, who gives them this Nature, and endows them with these Faculties, that they must employ them for their common Benefit and mutual Assistance. And the Philosophers, who faw that all Society would be difficult, and Men soon become destitute
of even the Necelfaries of Life, and be a Prey to one another, if each Man was only to mind him-
felf, and his own Angle Interere *, and that every
thing pointed out the Necellity of mutual Benevo-
ence among Mankind *, did therefore rightly judge,
that Men were by their Nature fram'd to be usefull
to one another; Ad tuendos conservandofque homines Oe fin. I. j,
bominem natum cife y fays Cicero, Therefore, every caf ' zo '
Man, lor the fake of others as well as himsself, is

1 6 Chrijlianity As Old as the Creation. Ch. 2*

not to disabie his Body or Mind by fuch Irregulari-
ties, as may make him lefs serviceable to them.

Infhort, confidering the variety of Circum (lances
Men are under* and thefe continually changing, as
well as being for the moil part unforefeen; 'tis im-
poffible to have Rules laid down by any External
Revelation for every particular Caf; and therefore,
there mud be fome Handing Rule, diſcoverable by
the Light of Nature* to direct us in all fuch Cafes.
And we can't be more certain, that 'tis the Will of
God, that thofe Effects which flow from natural Cauf-
es Should fo flow *, than we are, that 'tis the Will of
God, that Men fhould ob ferv e, whatever the Nature
of Things, and the Relation they have to one ano-
ther, make fit to be ob ferv' d ; or in other Words, we
can't but know, if we in the leafl confider, that*
whatever Circumftances Men are plac'd in, by the
univerfal Caufe of all things ; that 'tis his eternal and
immutable Will, by his placing them in thofe Cir*
cumftances, that they act as thofe require. 'Tis ab-
furd to imagine we are oblig'd to act thus in fome
Cafes, and not in others *, when the reafon for act-
ing thus in all is the fame. This Confideration alone
will direct a Man how to act in all Conditions of Life,
whether Fat her* Son* Husband* Servant*Subjeft-*Maf-
ter* King, &c. Thus we fee how the reafon of things,
or the relation they have to each other, teaches us
our Duty in all cafes whatever. And I may add,
that the better to caufe Men to ob ferv e thofe Rules,
which make for their mutual Benefit, infinite Good-
nefs has fown in their Hearts Seeds of Pity, Huma-
nity and Tendernefs, which, without much difficul-
ty, cannot be eradicated *, but nothing operates more
flrongly than that Delfire Men have of being in Ef •
tem, Credit, and Reputation with their Fellow-Crea-
tures, not to be obtain'd without acting on the Prin-
ciples of natural Juflice, Equity, Benevolent, &c.

In a word, as a moil beneficent Difpofition in the
fuppeeme Being is the Source of all his Actions in re-
lation to ins Creatures ** fo he has implanted in Man,
whom

Ch. 2. Chri/iianity as Old as the Creation. r *7

whom he has made after his own Image, a Love for his Species; the gratifying of which, in doing Acts of Benevolence, Companion, and Good Will, produces a Pleasure that never fatiates; as on the contrary, Actions of Ill-Nature, Envy, Malice, &c. never fail to produce Shame, Confusion, and everlasting Self-reproach.

And now let any one say, how 'tis possible God could more fully make known his Will to all intelligent Creatures, than by making every thing within, and without them a Declaration of it, and an Argument for observing it.

Having thus discovered our Duty, we may be sure it will always be the same; since Inconstancy, as it argues a Defect either of Wisdom or Power, can't belong to a Being infinitely wise and powerful: What unerring Wisdom has once instituted, can have no Defects; and as God is entirely free from all Partiality, his Laws must alike extend to all Times and Places.

From these Premises, I think, we may boldly draw this Conclusion, That if Religion consists in the Practice of those Duties, that result from the Relation we stand in to God and Man, our Religion must always be the same. If God is unchangeable, our Duty to him must be so too; if Human Nature continues the same, and Men at all Times stand in the same Relation to one another, the Duties which result from thence too, must always be the same: And consequently our Duty both to God and Man must, from the Beginning of the World to the End, remain unalterable; be always alike plain and perspicuous; neither changed in Whole, or Part: which demonstrates that no Person, if he comes from God, can teach us any other Religion, or give us any Precepts, but what are founded on those Relations. Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away, than one Tittle of this Eternal Law shall either be abrogated or altered.

C To

Criliianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. %\n
To sum up all in few words: As Nature teaches Men to unite for their mutual Defence and Happi-
nefs, and Government was instituted solely for this End*, io to make this more effectual, was Religion, which reaches the Thoughts, wholly ordain'd, k being impossible for God, in governing the World, to propose to himself any other End than the Good of the Governed *, and consequently, whoever does his best for the Good of his Fellow-Creatures, does all that either God or Man requires. Thus from the Consideration of our own Imperfections, which we continually feel j and the Perfections of our Creator, which we constantly find in all his Works y we may arrive at the Knowledge of our Duty, both to our Creator and Fellow-Creatures. | Hence, I think, we may define True Religion to consist in a constant Disposition of Mind to do all the Good we can; and thereby render ourselves acceptable to God in answering the End of his Creation. f

C HA P. III.

That the Perfection and Happiness of all rational Beings > supreme as well as subordinate^ consists in living up to the Dibates of their Nature*

TO make This, (since all our Happiness depends on it) if possible, more plain: The Principle from which all human Actions flow* is the Desire of Happiness; and God, who does nothing in vain, would in vain have implanted this Principle, This only innate Principle in Mankind, if he had not given them Reason to discern what Actions make for, and against their Happiness.

B. W'hen do you take the Happiness of rational Creatures to consist ? Without knowing That, this Controversy can't be determin'd -, and when 'tis known, our Dispute must soon be ended.,

A.

Ch. 3. Chrifrianity as Old as the Creation. '19

yf. The Happiness of all Beings whatever, consists in the Perfections of their Nature; and the Nature of a rational Being is most perfect, when it is perfectly rational \ that is, when it governs all its Actions by the Rules of right Reason; for then it arrives at the most perfect, and consequently the happiest State a rational Nature can aspire to: and every Deviation from the Rules of Right Reason, being an Imperfection, must carry with it a proportionable Unhappiness *, and a Man's Happiness and
Duty must consist in the same things, since no one can be oblig'd to do any thing that does not some way or other contribute to his Happiness; and consequently, according to the Sense Men have of their own Happines, and of the Means which will naturally procure it, they may assuredly attain the Knowledge of their respective Duties.

B. If we know wherein the Happines of God* who is necessarily happy, consists, we might judge wherein consists the Happines of Man made after God's own Image *, and whether Happines, or Misery, are the necessary Consequence of his Actions.

A. Because this is a Point of the highest Consequence, I shall speak my Sentiments (that they may the better pass with you) in the words of the judicious Dr. Scott * who says, " That which renders Christ. Life, " God so infinitely happy in himself, is not so*" ti-Vol. " much the Almighty Power he has to defend * I " by himelf from foreign Hurts or Injuries, as the " exact Agreement of all his Actions* with the all - u comprehending Reafon of his own Mind. God <c loves not himelf merely becaufe he is him elf, " but becaufe he is in all respects morally good, and cc his Will and Power perfectly compliant with the ic infallible Dictates of his own Reafon : Hence arises " his infinite Complacency in himelf, that there's u nothing in him but what his own Reafon perfect - M ly approves; no Inclinations in his Will or Na- " c ture, but what are exactly agreeable to the fairest* " Ideas of his own Mind."

C 2 If

zo Chrijlianltly as Old as the Creation. Ch, 3*

If the Perfection, and consequently the Happines of God, consists in the Purity and Rectitude of his Nature, we, as far as we can arrive to a like Purity and Rectitude, must be so far necessarily happy y since by living according to the Rules of Right Reafon, we more and more implant in us the moral Perfections of God, from which his Happines is ineparable. We then T if I may fo fay, live the Life of God; that is, we, in our Place and Station, live after the fame manner, and by the fame Rules as he does in his; and we do what God himelf would do* was he in our place; and there would be no other difference between his Life and ours, but what arises from our different States and Relations; since the same Rules would determine our Wills as determine his Will; and by our repeated Acts of Virtue, we should be continually making nearer and nearer" Ap- v . preaches to the moit perfect, and the moft happy
Being. By this Conduct, we, as the Scriptures allure us, thou'd be made Partakers of the Divine Nature, he born of God, and be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect; and can that be without being as happy as we are perfect? Hence we may contemplate the great Dignity of our Rational Nature, since our Reason for Kind, tho' not for Degree, is of the same Nature with that of God's, nay, 'tis our Reason which makes as the Image of God himself, and is the common Bond which unites Heaven and Earth; the Creatures, and the Creator—t and if our Happiness is limited, 'tis because our Reason is so: 'Tis God alone, who has an unlimited Reason and Happiness.

The excellent Author just now mention'd, says, brief. Life, w The best thing we can receive from God is Himself; and Himself we do receive in our strict Compliance with the eternal Laws of Goodness, which Laws being transferred from the Nature of God, from his eternal Righteousness and Goodness, we do, by obeying them, derive God's Nature into our own; so that while we write after the Copy of his Laws, we write out the Perfections of his Being.

Ch. 3. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 2

ff Being; and his Laws being the Seal on which he has engraven his Nature, we, in obeying them, take Impression from them, and lamp his blessed Nature on our own." Which, certainly, must make "us necessarily happy, as a contrary Conduct would make us unhappy. And, I think, I may venture to say, that could we suppose God himself to act otherwise, he would then be as unhappy as he now is happy; and his Omnipotence could not hinder him from being continually expos'd to the Reproach of his own infallible Reason.

From these Premises, I think, we may conclude, that Men, according as they do, or do not partake of the Nature of God, must unavoidably be either happy, or miserable: And herein appears the great Wisdom of God, in making Mens Miserability and Happiness the necessary and inseparable Consequence of their Actions, and that rational Actions carry with them their own Reward, and irrational their own Punishment: This, I think, can't be deny'd, as long as there are some Actions naturally beneficial to us, and others as hurtful; and that there's no Virtue, but what has some Good inseparably annex'd to it, and no Vice, but what as necessarily carries with it some Evil: and if our rational Nature is to be the same in the next Life, as it is in this, our Actions I S
muft produce Effects of the fame Kind and that
too in a much higher degree.

In this Life, 'tis true, we can't be perfectly hap-
py •, as subjevert to Diseafes and Dififters: We are
imperfect ourfelves and have none to converfe with
but imperfect Creatures; and yet if we act accord-
ing to the Dictates of Right Reafon, we fhall re-
ceive, even here, true inward Comfort and Satis-
faction •, and hereafter, v/hen we are freed from
thofe Imperfections, compleat Happinefs: On the
contrary, the Man who abandons his Reafon, befides
the Mifery of all forts an irrational Conduct will
bring on him, muft feel in his Mind, Pain and An-
guish even in this Life •, and m the Life to come,
C 3 when

2z Chrijlianiy as Old as the Creation. Cb. 3,
when there are no fenfual things to divert his
Thoughts, infupportable Grief and Mifery.

Tho' human Law -givers are forced to have re-
courfe to Punimments, which are not connected
with the things they forbid j yet a Being of infinite
Power is not thus fttraiten'd, but may make one the
necessary Confequence of the other: And, indeed,
how can it be otherwife, fince Good and Evil have
their Foundation in the effTential Difference of
Things, and their Nature is fix'd and immoveable \nAnd confequently, our Happinefs depends on the
intrin fick Nature of the one, and our Mifery on the
intrin fick Nature of the other.

As God, whose infinite Wifdom fets him above
being deceived, or influenc'd by any wrong Affec-
tions, acts in conftant Conformity to the Reafon and
Nature of Things •, and 'tis a Contradiction to his
Nature for him to do any thing that is not fit and
reafonable •, fo he would have fram'd our Nature in
contradiction to his own, if he had oblig'd us to
act otherwife. No, God can never give us Com-
mands repugnant to his own Nature, or require us
to do what he himfelf abhors to do. The End for
which God has given us Reafon, is to compare
Things, and the Relation they fland in to each other •,
and from thence to judge of the Fitnefs and Unfit-
nefs of Actions •, and could not our Reafon judge
ibundly in all fuch Matters, it could not have an-
swer'd the End for which in finite Wifdom and Good-
nefs beftow'd that excellent Gift •, and for which we
can't enough adore the Goodnefs of God.

Had God, from time to time, fpoke to all
Mankind in their feveral Languages, and his Woros
had miraculously convey'd the fame Ideas to all
Perfons:* yet he could not speak more plainly than
he has done by the Things themselves, and the Re-
lation which Reason shews there is between them :
Nay, since'tis imposible in any Book, or Books,
that a particular Rule cou'd be given for every Gafe,
we must even then have had recourse to the Light
of

Ch. 3. Chriftiamty as Old as the Creation. 23

of Nature to reach our Duty in mod Cafes; es-
pecially confidering the nuinberless Circumfitances
which attend us, and which, perpetually varying,
may make the same Actions, according as Men are
differently &fayed by them, either good or bad,
An!: I may add, that oft of the particular Rules
laid down in the Gospel for our Direction, are fo-
k after fuch a figurative Manner, that except we
judge of their Meaning, not merely by the Letter,
but by what the Law of Nature antecedently de-
clares to be our Duty, they are apt to lead us
wrong; And if Precepts relating to Morality are
deliver'd after an obfcure manner, when they might
have been deliver'd otherwife * what Reason can
you affign for its being fo, but that infinite Wisdom
meant to refer us to that Law, for the explaining
them ? Sufficient Inftances of this nature I lhall give
you hereafter \ tho' I mud own, I can't carry this
Point fo far as a learned Divine, who reprefents the
Scriptures more obfcure (which one would think im-
poflible) than even the Fathers. He tells us, "That Pref. to
a certain Author (v'\ %.F1accus Illyricus) has furnifli-
ed us with one and fifty Reafons for the Obfcurity © Cm P*45*4 6 -
of the Scriptures •,*" adding, "I think, I may
" truly fay that the Writings of the Prophets and
" Apoftles abound with Tropes and Metaphors,
16 Types and Allegories, Parables and dark Speeches ;
iC and are as much, nay, much more unintelligible
" in many Places, than the Writings of the An r
" cients." *Tis well this Author, who talks of ref. concern.
People being ftrark Bible-mad, ftopp'd here k and ^kYf . ° f
did not with a celebrated Wit cry, The truly illu- p . u .
minated Books are the darkeft of al. Tale ofa Tub.

The Writer above- mention'd flippofes it impof-
fible, that God's Will mould be fully revealed by
Books; *f Except, fays he, it might be faid perhaps Prelim. Dif-
" without a Figure, that even the World iftelj fert. to Vin-
" could not contain the Books which fhould be cent ' u m*»f-
" written." But with SubmifHon to this Reverend P ' ""
Perfon, I can't help thinking, but that (fuch is the
C 4 divine
divine Goodness) God's Will is so clearly, and fully manifested in the Book of Nature, that he who runs may read it.

This can't be deny'd, if the Book of Nature mews us in Characters legible by the whole World, the Relation we (land in to God and our Fellow-Creatures, and the Duties refulting from thence; for then it muft teach us the whole of our Duty, fince it would be unjuft and tyrannical in any Being, to require more of others than the Relation they fland in to him makes it their Duty to pay; it being that Relation alone which gives him his juft Power and Authority. We are encompass'd with any artificial Relations, such as Gqvemour and Governed* Mafter and Servant* Husband and Wife* &c. and the End of thefe Relations teaches us what they require * and they being enter'd into for the fake of each other's Affi}ntance, either Party is injur'd by the others not obferving what thefe Relations demand, or by exacting more than the End of entring into them requires.

Tho' the Relation we fland in to God, is not artificial as mod are amonggt Men, who want each other's Affi}ntance; but is natural at leaft on our part; yet this does not hinder, but that we may know by Reafon, the End he had in being related to us as Creator and Go\ernour -, and what he requires of his Creatures and Subjects: This the divine Nature, which contains in itfelf all Perfection, and all Happinefs, plainly points out to us. And if we are once certain of the End of God's entring into this Relation with Man, we may be as certain from his Wifdom and Goodnefs, and all his divine Perfec- tions, that 'he will require no more of us than the End he had in entring into this Relation requires.

If it would be unjuit and tyrannical in an earthly Governour, to exact Things of his Subjects, that do not contribute to the End for which this Relation between them was enter'd into * can we fuppofe a Governour. of infinite Wifdom and Goodnefs, who has

has always in his mind the End for which he governs Mankind, will ad the Tyrant, and put them under feve} Penalties for not obferving fuch things as
have no relation to the End for which he created, and governs them?

There's no Relation among Men without a mutual Obligation arising from it; Parents owe a Duty to Children as well as Children to Parents; but are not we in a stricter Sense, the Children of God, and Parents only Instruments in his hands? Since 'tis God, who from Nothing brings us into Being, frames us after the Manner that pleases him, imprints on us what Faculties, Inclinations, Desires and Passions he thinks fit: And is not God from his innate Goodness and Equity, under an Obligation to treat us more kindly than earthly Parents do their beft-beloved Children, who beget them without designing it? Whereas God, whose Actions are govern'd by infinite Goodness, could have no Motive to bring us into Being (which of itself is no Blefsing) but our Good, and for the fame Reason prefers us in Being: nor can fo kind and tender a Parent play the Tyrant, and impose Commands on us, which do not flow from the Relations we stand in to him, and to one another.

If we consider what our Reason will inform us, of the Nature of our great Creator and Govern our, we can't fail of knowing our Duty, for as Dr. Scott justly observes, "If you will serve the great King of the World in such Ways as are pleasing and p/ acceptable to him, you must study his Nature, Ch. 6.\^321, and inform your selves, which way his infinite Perfections incline, that you may know how to comport yourfelves towards him, and to render him such Services as are agreeable to his Nature, for there's no Rule in the World, but only that of his Nature, by which you can certainly con-

elude what will please him. So that in all

our Enquiries what is pleasing to God, our faft Appeal must be to his Nature, which is the great Standard

26 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creationu Ch. f.

Standard of Good and Evil; by which we are to measure what is pleasing and displeasing to him.

If then, with this judicious Author, you allow, that we are to measure what is pleasing and displeasing to God, (which takes in the whole of Religion) from what our Reason teaclyes concerning his Nature, you allow all I contend for.
In short, if the Relations between Things, and the Fithefs resulting from thence, be not the sole Rule of God's Actions, mull not God be an arbitrary Being? and then what a miserable Condition will Mankind be in! Since an arbitrary Will might change every Moment, and thofe Things which entitled Men to God's Favour to-day, might make them incur his Difpleafure to-morrow: Nay, he might at the fame time have a secret Will oppofite to his revea!d Will \ or have different Wills for every different Perfon; or might reveal his arbitrary Commands fo obfcurely, as to caufe the utmoit Confufion *, but if God only commands what the Nature of Things fnew to be fit, 'tis fcarce poffible, that Men (tho' now endlelly divided upon the account of their different Traditions) fhould mif-take their Duty; fince a Mind that's attentive can as eafily diftinguifh// from unfits as the Eye can Beauty from Deformity, or the Ear Harmony from Difcord. And if no Commands can alter the Nature of Things, or make that// which is in itself unfit y external Relevation muft attend the Nature and Relation of Things, and can only fpeak what thofe fpeak. As for infance, 'tis not in our power, tho' eve'r fo often commanded, to love the Deity, while we conceive him an arbitrary Being acting out of Humour and Caprice; nor could any Commands, suppoing fuch poffible, oblige us not to love him, while we believe him a kind and beneficent Being; fo that as long as we have right Notions of God, we can't but love, and adore him as we ought.

Thus, I think, I have fully prov'd from the Nature of God and Man, and the Relations we

(land

Ch. 3. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 27

f tand in to him. and one another, that the divine Precepts can't vary; and that thefe Relations, which are the permanent Voice of God, by which JieSpeaks to all Mankind, do at all times infalli-bly point out to us our Duty in all the various Cir-cumstances of Life.

Should Revelation require lefs than thofe Relations require, would it not be an imperfect Rule? And if it enjoins more, would it not argue the Author of it to be of a tyrannical Nature, impofing on his Subjects, and under moit fevere Penalties, unnecesfary Things; and likewife (hew a Defign, not of being belov'd, but hated and dreaded? And therefore, thofe who fee the Confequences of Things, defcribe the Chriftian Religion as requiring
fuch things only, as confidering the Relations we
Hand in to Goocl and one another, are apparently
for our Good.

The moft accurate Dr. Barrow gives this Cha-
racter of the Chriftian Religion, " That its Precepts Vol. of Sernu
" are no other than fuch as Phyficians preffcribe for p. 82.
I* the Health of our Bodies; as Politicians wou'd
M allow to be needful for the Peace of the State; as " Epicurean Philofophers recommend for the Tran-
" quility of our Minds, and Pleafures of our Lives;
" fuch as Reafon dictates, and daily mews conducive
c to our Welfare in all refpects—, which confluent-
• ly, were there no Law enacting them, we mould
f in Wifdom choofe to obferve, and voluntarily
" impofe them on ourfelves ; confefting them to be
" fit Matters of Law, as moit advantageous and
" requifite to the Good, general and particular, of
" Mankind.

That great and good Man Dr. T'Motfon fays,
" That all the Precepts of Chriftianity are reafona- Serm. Vol i>
" ble and wife, requiring fuch Duties as are fauitable P- 86>
" to the Light of Nature, and do approve them-
" felves to the beft Reafon of Mankind *, fuch as
" have their Foundation in the Nature of God, and
" are an Imitation of the divine Excellencies \ fuch
" as

23 Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 3.

Ci as tend to the Perfection of Human Nature, and
" to raife the Minds of Men to the highefl Pitch of

" Goodnefs and Virtue. They command

" nothing that's unnecefTary, they omit nothing
4C that may tend to the Glory of God, or the Wel-
" fare of Men, nor do they reftrainus in any thing,
44 but what is contrary to the regular Inclinations of
" Nature, or to our Reafon, and truelnterefl *, they
" forbid us nothing but what is bafe and unworthy
46 to ferve our Humours and Paffions, to make

" ourfelves Fools and Beafts. In a word, no-

44 thing but what tendsto our private Harm, or Pre-
44 judice, or to publ fick Diforder and Confufion. "
T he late Dean of Canterbury, in a Sermon
Lea. preach'd in Defence of Chriflianity, fays, " What
46 can be a more powerful Incentive to Obedience,
" than for a rational Creature clearly to difcern the
" Equity, the NeceffTity, the Benefit, the Decency
• " and Beauty of every Action he is call'd to do,
4C and thence to be duly fenfible how gracious a
4C Mafter he serves •, one that is fo far from load-
44 ing him with fruitlefs, arbitrary, and tyrannical
" Impositions, that each Command abft rafted from
44 his Command who iffues it, is able to recommend
44 itself •, and nothing requir'd but what every wife
4i Man wou'd choofe of his own accord -, and can-
44 not without being his own Enemy, wifh to be
M exempted from. M And this Character of Chrifli-
anity he makes to be efTenrial to its being from
God, and therefore muft make it the fame with
natural Religion, which has this Character imprefs'd
on it.
Serm. before " There was none of the Doctrines of our Sa-
ThnETS™ viom (fays the late Archbifbop of York) calcula-
ted for the Gratification of Mens idle Curiofities,
" the bufyingand amufmgthem with airy andufe-
iC lefs Speculations ; much lefs were they intended
M for an Exercife of our Credulity, or a Trial how far
" we could bring our Reafon to submit to our Faith:
" But as on theone hand they were plain and fimple,
" and

Ch. 3. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 29

ff and fuch as by their Agreeablenefs to the rational
'* Faculties of Mankind, did highly recommend
ic themfelves to our Belief 5 fo on the other hand
" they had an immediate Relation to Practice, and
** were the genuine Principles and Foundation up-
" on which all human and divine Virtues were na-
M turally to be fuperfructured." Does not every one
fee, that if the Religion of Nature had been put in-
ftead of Chriftianity, thefe Descriptions would have
exactly agreed with it ?

The judicious Dr. &?// affirms, "God never im- Chrift. Life,
" pofes Laws on us pro Imperio, as arbitrary Tefts Part ^Vol.i.

" and Trials of our Obedience. The great f 7 h ' 4,p * 1 7 *

" De SIGN of them, fays he, is to do us Good, and

" direct our Actions to our own Intereft. This,

" if we firmly believe, will infinitely encourage our
<c Obedience •, for when I am fure God commands
tc me nothing but what my own Health, Eafe, and
** Happinefs requires ; and that every Law of his is
44 both a neceffTaryand fovereign Precriptionagainft
" the Difeafes of my Nature, and he could not pre-
" fcribe lefs than he has, without being defective
44 in his Care of my Recovery and Happinefs ;
44 with what Prudence and Mode fly can I grudge
Nay, themoft confiderable Men, even among the Papifls, do not fcruple to maintain there's no-
thing, in Religion but what is moral. The Divines of Port-Royal for Inftance fay, " All the Precepts, Pref.auNouv;
44 and all the Myfteries that are exprefs'd in fo Teftament - " many different Ways in the holy Volumes, do all
cc center in this one Commandment, of loving God " with all our Hearty and in loving our Neighbours
44 as our elves : For the Scripture (it is St. Auftin who
" fays it) forbids but one only thing, which is Con-
44 cupifcence, or the Love of the Creature % as it t& commands but one only thing, which is Charity y
44 and the Love of God: Upon this double Precept '* is founded the whole Syftem- of the Chrillian Re-
44 Jigion i and ir is unto this, fay they ■, according
" to

3& Chrijlianity ds Old ds the Creation. Ch. 3 1
cc to the Expreftion of Jefus Chrift, that all the an-
" tient Law and the Prophets have reference ; and
" we may add alfo, all the Myfteries, and all the
u Precepts of the new Law : For Love, fays St.PaulI,
u is the Fulfilling of the Law" And thefe Divines
likewise cite a remarkable Paftage of St. Auftin on
lb. this Subject ♦, viz. " He that knows how to love
" God, and to regulate his Life by that Love*
* c knows all that the Scripture propounds to be
** known." They alfo might have quoted a known
Saying of this Father, Omnia peccata funt in univer-
fum contra Rationem IS Natura Legem. And 1
might add the Authority of a greater Man, and a
rchbp. of Papiji too, who fays, " Religion adds nothing to
Cambraylatt- « natural Probity* but the Conflation of doing
trg fur la Re- „, tha£ fo L and o^dience to our heavenly
a Paris. " Father * which Reafon itfelf requires us to do in fa-
"vour of Virtue." And the famous Pere QuefneUe says on Affs 2.21. Le vrai culte n'est plus attach^ a un Peuple -, Le Chrifiantifme eft une Religion uni* verfelle.

B. Do Divines always give this Character of Chriftianity, do they never distinguih it from the Religion of Nature, by fuppofing it contains cer- tain arbitrary Precepts ?

A. When they confider how repugnant 'tis to the Nature of God to give any arbitrary Com- mands* then indeed the Force of Truth obliges them to declare there's nothing in Religion but what tends to the Good of Mankind ; but if at any time they talk otherwife, 'us for the fake of fuch things as either directly or indirectly ferve their In- tereft. But to remove all Scruples, I mall more fully prove,

CHAP.

Ch. 4. Chrifiantianity as Old as the Creation. 3 i

CHAP. IV.

That not only the Matter of all God's Laws, but the Penalties annexed to them y are for the Good of Mankind y even for thofe who fuffer for the Breach of them.

jB.CHOU'D I allow you, that the Natural \3 Knowledge we have of God is the Founda- tion of all Religion, and that arguing from the Di- vine Attributes is a moft certain Way of Reafoning, yet is not God's Glory one of his divine Attributes? And does not the wifefe of Men fay, that God made Prov. 16. 4. all Things for him/elf, and the Wicked for the Day of Evil ; and confequently God's Glory, rather than the Good of Man, occafion'd the Almighty to create Man, and to give him Laws ?

A. As to this Text, I mail anfwer you from Arch- bithop Tillotfon ; that " If by God's making all Things serm. Vol. 7, " for himelf^ be meant, that he aim'd at and in- p. 19. <c tended the Manifeftation of his Wifdom, Power, " and Goodnefs in the Creation of the World, 'tis " moft true, that in this Senfe he made all Things " for himelf , but if we underfand it fo, as if the " Goodnefs of his Nature did not move him thereto,
"but that he had some Design to serve Ends and
"Necessities of his own, upon his Creatures, this
** is far from him •> but it's very probable, that nei-
"ther of these are the Meaning of the Text, which
"may be render'd with much better Sense, and
"nearer to the Hebrew thus ♦, God hath ordain'd deve-
ry thing to that which is fit for it^ and the Wicked
"hath he ordained for the Bay of Evil % that is, the
"Wisdom of God hath fitted one Thing to an-
"other; Punishment to Sin, the Evil Day to the
4i Evil Doci-s." This is the Sense that Grotius,
and most of the best Commentators put on the
Text,

3 z Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. fa

Text. And here let me add, that if there are in-
numerable Places as capable of different Interpreta-
tions, even with Relation to God and his Attributes,
this, sure, will be no Argument not to adhere to
what the Light of Nature teaches us in this matter;
fince where Texts may be taken in different Senses,
things are as much left to be determin'd by our Rea-
on, as if there were no such Texts. And when we
meet with Expressions of God's doing any thing for
his own Glory, they can only mean, that fuch is the
transcendent Excellency of his Nature, fuch the in-
expressible Marks of his Wisdom and Power in all
his Works, that he could not have given greater,
had he design'd nothing but his own Glory. And
when we impute the Glory of all we do to him, we
thereby signify, that we have no Power, but what
we derive from him ♦, and that we desire to acknow-
ledge him the Author of whatever is praiie- worthy
in us.

B. Tho' it be allowed, that God fram'd his
Laws, and confequently, the Sanctions that make
them Laws, for the Good of Man ♦, yet a due re-
gard to his own Honour, the Dignity of his Laws
and Government, will oblige him to punifh thofe,
who violate his Laws, as for an Injury done to him-
self, diffinct from the harm that by the Breach of
them accrues to his Creatures.

A. As no Man breaks the divine Laws out of Con-
tempt to his Maker, or imagines he can do God an
Injury ; fo God does not make Laws for one end,
and require the obferving them for another; that be-
ing inconfiftent with the Dignity of the divine Legif-
lator, his Laws and Government: But as it was for
the fake of Man that he gave him Lavs, fo he exe-
cutes them purely for the fame Reafon; fince upon
his own account, he can't be in the lead anccted,
whether his Laws be, or be not obferv'd; and con* 
fequently in pun i filing, no more than rewarding,
does he ad as a Party, much lcfs an injur' d Party, 
who wants Satisfaction, or Reparation of Honour.

And

Ch. 4- Chri{lianHy as Old as the Creaiolofc 33

And indeed, to fuppofe it, is highly to difhonour 
him, fmce God, as he never can be injur'd, fo he 
can never want Reparation *, and he, who is infinite-
ly fatisfy'd in himfelf, can gain no addition of Satis*
faction by his Creatures obferving h*s Laws; nor can i 
he, by their not obferving them, be reduc'd to a 
condition of wanting Satisfaction, or Reparation of 
Honour, or any of thofe things, which, depending 
on the Opinion of. others, are main Ingredients in 
human Happinefs : and yet even among Men, none 
ought to be puninVd (fince what is paft can't be 
help'd) but to prevent a future Breach of the Law ; 
and all Laws being defign'd for the Good of the Go-
verneda"The greateft Monarch is not to puni/h the 
i6 Breach of his Laws any otherwife, than the moft 
petty State:" And tho* all own, it would be Ty-
rannty in an earthly Governour to multiply Punifh-
ments, on pretence of vindicating the Honour of the 
Legiflatort; or as the Breach of Law is an Injury 
done to him, and fuch like; yet fome are not a-
ham*d to impute fuch Tyranny to GoJ; and there-
by take off from that Efteem and Love Men muft 
have for him, did they believe he only puninVd when* 
and no further than their Good requir’d.

Do not we bring God down to ourfelves, when 
we fuppofe he acts like us poor indigent Creatures, 
in feeKing Worfsip and Honour for his own fake; 
nay, do we not cloath him, who has neither Parts 
nor Pafiions, with the worn of our Infirmitics, if we 
reprefent him as an ambitious* fufpicious* wrathful* 
and revengeful Being?

If we dare confult our Reafon, it will tell us that 
Jealoufy in Point of Honour and Power, Love of 
Fame and Glory can only belong to limited Cre-
tures *, but are as neceffTarily excluded from an unli-
mited, absolutely perfect Being, as Anger, Revenge, 
and fuch like PaltTions; which would make the 
Deity refemble the weak, womanifh, and impotent 
part of our Nature, rather than the manly, noble, 
and generous.
Could God, ftricHy fpeaking, be made angry, provok'd, or griev'd by the Conduce of us wretched Mortals, he wou'd not enjoy a moment's Quiet; but muft be much more miferable than the moil unhappy of his Creatures. Or,

Had God any Comfort or Satisfaction to gain from the Thoughts and Actions of his Creatures, he would never have been without an Infinity of 'em jointly contributing to this End.

If Religion in general, and every Part of it was not ufe ful to Mankind, there would be no reafon why they mould know it more than other Animals -, who tho' they have wonderful Talents (in many of which they exceed Men) given them by God for preferring themselves and their Species, yet are utter Strangers' to Religion, as a thing, wholly ufelefs to them.

The Sum of what I have been faying is fully ex-
Chr35.6.fcrv. pref'd by Job in thefe words -, If thou finneft, what deft thou againfthim ? Or if thy Tranfgrejfion be mul-
tipy' d, what doft.th&u unto him ? If thou be righ-
teous, what giveft thou him ? Or what receiveth he at thy hands ? Thy Wickednefs may hurt a Man as then art, and thy Right eounefs profit the Son of Man. zEfdr. 8. 34. Or, as Efdras fays. What is Man that thou jhoiddft take difple afire at him ? Or what is a corruptible Ge-
eration, that thou fhoid ait be fo bitter towards it?

Our greater! Felicity confines in having fuch an impartial and difinterested Judge as well as Legifla-
tor, that whether he punifhes, or rewards, he acts alike for our good -, that being the End of all his Laws, and confequently of the Penalties as well as Rewards which make them Laws: whereas your common Syftems of Divinity repreffent him full of Wrath and Fury, ready to glut himfelf with Re-
venge lor the Injuries he has fuffer'd by the breach of his Laws.

B. Is not God's Juftice as well as his Mercy a di-
vine Attribute, and will not That as much oblige him to punim the Breakers of his Laws, as if he had been, as he is fomtimes repreffed, full' of Anger* Wrath and Revenge ? ' rf>

A. Tho' Juftice and Mercy can't at the fame
timebe exercis'd in one and the fame Inftance on the fame Subject; yet your Syftem-Writers, left they
fhou'd limit these two Attributes in God, extend them alike to all Persons, which is making him neither just, nor merciful •, because these Attributes drawing contrary ways, must hinder each other's Effect.

B. I must confess, I do not see how the same Act can be an Act both of Justice and Mercy in relation to the same Person \ or how it can be said that God does Justice on a Sinner, when he shows Mercy to him •, and yet we must suppose the Justice as well as Mercy of God to be infinite.

A. The Justice by which God is righteous in all his Actions, and the Mercy by which he is good or beneficent are infinite, and eternally inherent in the divine Nature \ but these oblige not God either to punish* or pardon any further than his infinite Wisdom sees fit •, and such punishings and pardoning are transient Acts, the Effects of his will, not Properties belonging to his Nature. Justice and Mercy among Men relate to different Subjects: When the Magistrate punishes a Criminal, 'tis an Act of Justice to the Publick •, and when he pardons him, 'tis an Act of Mercy to the Criminal, tho' an Act of Injustice to the Publick ♦, except in such Circumstances, where he has ground to believe that pardoning him may be no disadvantage to the Publick, whose Interest it is not to lose a useful Member.

The greatest Difference in this Case between God and Man is, that the most powerful Monarch on Earth is of the same Nature with his Subjects, and his Good involv'd in the Good of the Whole, and by the Breach of his Laws may be injur'd •, and, as a Party injur'd, may exact Reparation and Satisfaction: But this without Blasphemy can't be said of God, whose Nature is infinitely happy in himself before there was any Creature to adore him, or be obedient to his Will; so he must still be such, tho' none of them did obey his Laws, or acknowledge his Being •, and therefore, in doing Acts of Justice he can't, like the Monarchs of this World, propose any Security to himself, but acts purely for the Good of his Creatures, and the Effects of his Justice (they never extending to Annihilation) must not only be for the Good of others, but even of the Persons punish'd; because God, whose Love infinitely exceeds that of mortal Parents, chastises his Children (and all Mankind are alike his Offspring) because he loves them, and designs their Amend-
inent: And the Reason why God in Scripture is said to be Love, must be because all his Acts, by what name soever you call them, are Acts of pure, impartial, and disinterested Love.

All Punishment for Punishment's sake is mere Cruelty and Malice, which can never be in God; nor can he hate any thing he has made, or be subject to flinch Weakness or Impotence as to act arbitrarily, or out of Spite, Wrath, Revenge, or any Self-Interest; and consequently, whatever Punishment he inflicts, must be a Mark of his Love, in not suffering his Creatures to remain in that miserable State, which is inseparable from Sin and Wickedness.

As God's infinite Goodness appears in the Sanctions as well as Matter of his Laws, so his infinite Wisdom knows how to adjust the Punishment to the Offence; that it may be exactly fitted to produce the desired Amendment.

B. Does not your supposing that God has no other Motive in executing his Laws, than he had in making them; viz. the Good of his Creatures; and that all Punishment must bear an exact proportion to the Offence it is designed to amend, strike at the absolute Eternity of Hell-Torments? Since there's no proportion between Temporary Injuries done to all Men, and Eternal Misery of but one Man; nor can everlasting Torment work Amendment.

A. I mall at present refer you to Dr. Burnet de Statu MorliiGvum, and only say with Archbishop Billot,
CHAP V.

'That God requires nothing for his own fake; no, not the Worjhip we are to render him, nor the Faith we are to have in him.

B. XT OUR arguing from the Nature of God, JL that every thing, consequently Faith in him, and even the Worhip and Service we render to him, is wholly for our own fake, will hardly go down with the Balk of Mankind, who imagine, they by thofe Acts do him fome real Service.

A. If they think fo, 'tis a fign they have not been well inructed *, the moft eminent of our Di-vines would teach them, that Prayer itfelf, God knowing before-hand what we will ask, chiefly be-comes a Duty, as it raifes in us a due Contemplation of the divine Attributes, and an Acknowledgement of his great and conftant Goodnefs, and ferves to keep up a conftant Senfe of our Dependence on him ; and as it difpofes us to imitate thofe Perfections we adore

? Chriftianlty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 5.

adore in him, in being kind and beneficent to one another. There are few fo grofs as to imagine, we can direct infinite Wifdom in the Difpenfation of Providence, or perfuade him to alter thofe Laws he contriv'd before the Foundation of the World for putting things in a regular Courfe.

. 7. p. 28. " Tis, fays Archbifhop 'Tillotfon^ a great Con-
2 " defcenfion and Goodnefs in him, to accept our

K* imperfect Praifes, and ignorant Admiratio of <c him; and were he not as wonderfully good, as V he is great and glorious, he would not ufer us " to fully his great and glorious Name by taking it * c in our Mouths -, and were it not for our Advan-
+ c tage and Happinefs to own and acknowledge his " Benefits, for any real Happinefs and Glory that <c comes to him by it, he cou'd well enough be " without it, and difpenewithus for ever entreat-
<e ingone Thought of him; and were it not for <c his Goodnefs, might deprife ""the"" Praifes of his cc Creatures, with infinitely more Reafon than wife cc Men do the Applaufe of Fools."

" To imagine, as Dr. Scott obferves, that God
cc needs our Services, and requires them to serve his own Interest, is to blaspheme his All-sufficiency, and suppose him a poor indigent Being, who for want of perfect Satisfaction within himself, is forced to roam abroad, and raise Taxes on his Creatures, to enrich and supply himself: So that whatever some high-flown Enthusiasts may pretend, that 'tis fordid and mercenary to serve God for our Good, I am sure, to serve him for his Good, is profane and blasphemous.'

As able a Divine as this, or perhaps any other Age has produc'd, observes, that nothing can be more false, or contrary to the Nature of the Gospel, than to fancy God in part design'd to shew he was Master, by enjoining some Commands, which have no relation to the Good of Mankind, Religion was reveal'd for us, and not for God, who absolutely speaking, neither wants what Ch. 5. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 39

"f what we think of him, nor the Worship we pay him, but has manifested himself to us, only to make us happy." And therefore, if from excess of Devotion, a Man neglects the Duties of civil Life, he is so far from doing a thing acceptable to God, that he mistakes the End of Religion, which is to render him as perfect as may be in all moral Duties whatever.

If any Command was ever given for the sake of God, it must certainly be that relating to the Institution of the Sabbath; and yet we find it laid, The Sabbath is made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath: So true is it in Divinity as well as "Politicks, the Good of the People is the supreme Law.

In short, the Worship God requires, is either for his own sake, which supposes his Happiness from some way or other depends on it, or else (except he requires things to no purpose) for the sake of Men, to raise and keep in their Minds the Contemplation of an infinitely good Being, and of his Laws, all founded on a disinterested Love to the whole Race of Mankind. To imagine the Worship of God is ordain'd on any other Account, not only destroys one of the greater! Motives of Mens doing good to one another -, but supposes God not sufficient for, or infinitely happy in himself; but subject to the Pafions of ambitious and vain-glorying Mortals.
The Generality of Christians not only believe, that in worshipping God they do him real Service, but think he is extremely uneasy, if publick Worship is not performed in such a Manner, and with such Rites and Ceremonies, and being endly divided about these Trifles, think they make their Court to Heaven, and highly oblige an omnipotent Being, in destroying those formidable Enemies of God, who presume, without their Leave, to worship him after that Manner they judge agreeable to his Will. And, 

P 4 TheiU

40 j Chrißlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 5.

There are no Measures tho' ever fo destructive, but what they, who do not consider the End of God's Laws, may be brought into; as all History sufficiently proves. The Jews not only thought that doing the greater Good on their Sabbath, was profaning the Day; but were so superstitious as to make 2 things not unlawful; and therefore durst not lift up their Hands against their Enemies, who butcher'd them as they pleas'd: And many of the primitive Fathers thought the Gospel forbid all Self-defence; and herein they are follow'd by a modern Sect, who are their strict Imitators in most things.

*Tis no wonder, if some Ecclesiastics have not been very forward to teach People, that what Worship God requires of them, is for their own Sakes, since then they could not, on pretence of that Worship, have claim'd such Powers and Privileges, as are inconsistent with the common Good, and People might then think it their Duty to regulate Matters, as that their Priests, upon the whole, considering the Charge of maintaining them, and other Incidents, would do more Good than Hurt: Which can never happen, till Men are taught 'tis their Duty to do good to all, notwithstanding their widest Differences as to Worship, or any other Matter of meer Religion; and 'tis to the Honour of our Clergy at present, that so many of them now endeavour to infuse such humane and benevolent Principles into a People, who, not long since, thought they fliew'd a ffficient Zeal for Religion, in hating those their Priests hated, without knowing wherefore - , and, toV by their Pulpit Invectives, thought it their Duty to pull down Houses of religious Worship, and were ready at the Direction of their impious Leaders, to have perpetrated worse Crimes.

B. There's one Difficulty, which to me seems insuperable, how to make the Faith requir'd by the
Religion of Nature and of the Gospel, to have the
same Views, and tend to the same End,

**4**. If

Ch.5 - Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 41

A. If Faith, in God himself, no more than in any
other Act of Religion, is requir'd for God's sake,
but our own ; can Faith in one sent by God be re-
quir'd for any other End? EspecIly confidering,
that noPerfon is ever the more known toPcIerity,
because his Name is tranfmitted to them. When we
fay, Cefar conquer'd Pompey, we having no Idea
of either, can only mean, Some-body conquer'd
Some-body *. and have we more diftinCI Ideas of
Jcbru and Pilate? And tho' we had a patronal Idea
of the former, he could receive no Advantage, or
pifadvange by what we thought of him. And if
Faith in him v/as requir'd for a Caufe antecedent to
his being fo fent, founded in his and our Nature,
and the Relation we always fcood in to him; wou'd
not the eternal Reafon of things have made it manifeft?
That which concern'd all, mull be knowable by all,
for which reafon the ApoftIc fays, That which may
be known of God (and none can know that which may
not be known) was manifeft in the Gentiles. And,
The End of ChrifKs coming feems not to teach
Men new Duties, but (Repentance being the firft
thing preach'd by him and his ApoftIcsbothto'mr
and Gentiles) to repent of the Breach of known Du-
ties. And Jefus does not fay, He was fent to all Matt - l 5-1-H-
Ifrael. but to the loft Sheep of the Hcufe of Ifrael \ and
that the Son of Man is come to fave that which was --18. 11.
loft*: And his Parable about the loft Sheep », suppos'd Luke if. 7.

. all were not loft. And when it was objected to him,
that he kept Company with Sinners, he owns the
Charge, and fays, The Whole need no Phyfician, but Matt. 9. 12.
they that are fick \ which would have been an impro-
per Anfwer, if he thought that all flood in need of
him, and his fpirtuaI Phyfick. And to confirm
this, he adds, I am not come to call the Righteous, but 1b. Ver. 13.
Sinners to Repentance : and that there's more Joy in
Heaven for one Sinner that repents, than ninety nine
juft Perfons that need no Repentance. Which is divi-
ings Mankind into two Parts, the Whole or Right ecus ,
and the Sick or Sinners ½ and that his Bufinefs was

intirely

4.2 Chrijlianity as Oil as the Creation. Ch.'£.
intirely with the latter. The not obferving this Di-
ftinion, has been the Occafion of many uncharitable
andgrofs Miftakes ♦, and 'tis somewhat ftrange, that
Jefus, who beft knew how far his Commiffion ex-
tended, mould not be credited in this Matter •, ef-
peccially confidering that in Religion there are no
Noftrum, or Secrets, but all may know what God
requires of all •, and there is but one univerfal Re-
medy for all fick Perfons, Repentance and Amend-
ment. And if God, who is noRefpecler of Perfons, will-
judge the World in Right eoufnefs ; and they that in eve-
ry Nation fear him, and work Right eolifnefs, /hall be*-ac-
cepted of him ; they certainly are whole, and need
no Phyfician, who do of themfelves what will make
them acceptable to him ; living as thoefe whom
Chrift came to reform were taught to live : It is not
abfurdf to fuppofe, that till then none had fufficient
Means given them to anfwer the End for which all'
were created ?

The Catholick Epiftle of St. Barnabas will in-
form you of the Sentiments of the Ancients on
this Head. This great Apoftle (as tranflated by
WstersTranf. Dr. Wake) fays, " That Jefus, when he chofe his
§.5. p. 272. c<. Apoftles, which were afterwards to f publifh his
" Gofpel, took Men who had been very great Sin-
" ners -, that thereby he might plainly fhew, that //?
Matt. 9. 13. << came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Re-
" pentance" The Words are fuller in the Original^
Belief of Christ's temporal Kingdom was so firmly rooted in them, that Jesus neither during his Life, nor even after his Resurrection was able to remove it. At the last Supper there was a Strife amongst them, Who should be accounted the greatest? "The Lord 22. 24, " meaner! (as Bishop Parker expreffes it) hoped at least to have been made Lord Mayor of Caper* " naum" And even at his Ascension the only Question his Disciples asked was, Lord, wilt thou at this Time receive again the Kingdom to Israel?

But to take away all Subterfuges, what can be more requir'd than those Qualifications as will make Jesus in the last Day declare, Come ye bleffed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Beginning of the World? And what are those Qualifications, but living up to the Law of Reason, in exercising Acts of Benevolence, Goodness, &c? That this was the Unum necessarium is plain from his Answer, Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity, made to those who had omitted these things, tho they pleaded, They had prophecy'd in his Name, and &c Matt. 22, his Name cast out Devils, and done many wonderful Works. St. Paul in the first Chapter to the Romans is very large, in fhewing that the Gentiles could not plead Ignorance of their Duty, either to God or Man, and as finning against Knowledge, were inexculpable; and pursing the fame Subject in the fecond, he fays, that God who is no Refpeffer of Persons will deal with every one both Jew and Gentile according to their Deeds & those by which they are to be judged are either moral or immoral: And had there been any thing else requir'd by the written Law, it could not be laid that the Gentiles, who were not ignorant of their Duty either to God or Man, did by Nature the Things contained in the Law.

And does not St. Paul, in another place, put our future State on the fame Foot, in figuring we shall be dealt with at the last day according to what we have done in the Body, whether good or bad. In if 3 if the Tree is to be known by its Fruit, and it brings

Cor. 5. 10.
good Fruit is produced are not material; but if it
does not, no Means whatever can hinder it from be-
Mat. 7. 19. ing hewn down* end cast into the Fire. " The grand
Serm. Vol. 3. « deciding Queftion (fays Dr. South) at the Lift Day
P- 1 7v cc w jjj ^ f10C w hat you have said, or what you
" have bcliev'd; but what you have done more
lb. p. 172. " than others. God is pleas'd to vouchfafe the bi-ft
" he can give, only to the beft we can do." But
to go on to the bottom of this matter;

Faith confider'd in itfelf can neither be a Vir-
tue, or a Vice; becaufe Mqn can no other wife be-
lieve than as things appear t0 them: Nay, can there
be an higher Affront to God than to fuppofe, he re-
quires Men to judge otherwife than the Faculties he
has given them enable them to do? Or what can be
more abfurdf than to imagine, that God will fhw his
Favour to one for believing what he could not but
believe; and his Difpleafure to another for not be-
lieving what he could not believe? And therefore
Faith is only to be efteem'd by the Works it produ-
ces; for the ftrongeft Faith may be worfe than no
Faith at all. The Devils themfelves, (who are held the
mod wicked Beings in the Univerfe) believe, and
tremble. Happy had it been for Chrijiendom, it Zeal
for, what the prevailing Parties call'd, The Or-
thodox Fathly had made none but themfelves to
tremble!

Dr. Whitby expreffes himfelf very accurately on
Whithyh Laff' this Point; " Belief, or Disbelief, can neither be a
Thoughts, p. « Virtue, or a Crime in any one, who ufes the beft
4 "* ^ means in his power of being inform'd. If a Pro-
tc poftion is evident, we cannot avoid believing it;
" and where is the Merit or Piety of a necefTaryAf-
fent? If it is not evident, we cannot help rejecting
" it, or doubting of it: And where is the Crime of
" not peforming ImpofTibilities, or not believing
* c what does not appear to us to be true? M What
worse Opinion can we have of the divine Goodness,

than to imagine a mean Denial of our Reason, or a

wretched

Ch. 5. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 

wretched Arrogance of believing any Point too hard

for our Understanding, can entitle us to the Favour

of God.

If Charity, which comprehends doing all possible Good to our Fellow-Creature, is to be destroyed for the sake of Faith; or if Incapacities, Fines, Imprisonments, Rods, Gibbets, Racks, and Fire, are Marks of Charity, the Christian World has outdone all Mankind in Acts of Charity, but the Description St. Paul gives of Charity, is so far from requiring us to make others suffer, that if I suffer so long, seeks not 1 Cor. 13. her own, bears all things, endures all things \ and frigidly enjoins us so to do.

Here is the Practice of the Christian World on the side of Faith, sacrificing Charity, and all that's valuable to it *, and on the other side, Christ and his Apostles preferring Charity before it. St. Paul, speaking of himself, says, Tbo 9 I have the Gift of Prophecy, 1 Cor. 13. and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, and cou'd remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing : Ortho' I give my Body to be burnt (which shews the highest Act of Faith) and have not Charity, it profiteth nothing. And in another place he says, Above all things put on Charity, which is Col. 3. 14. the Bond of Perfection. And again, Tbe End of the 1 Tim. 1. 5. Commandment is Charity; and Love is the fulfilling of the Law. And, J f any provide not for his own, especially those of this own House (which is but one Species of Charity) he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel. And St. Peter likewise speaks as highly of it, in saying, Above all things, have fervent Charity among your elves, for Charity shall all cover a Multitude of Sins; which can't be said of Faith, because that without Charity profiteth nothing; in not answering the End for which it was given. And St. James calls Love James 2. 8. the Royal Law. And St. John says, If any Man says I John 4-20v I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lyar. And is not he likewise a Lyar, who shews all the Marks of Hatred to his Brother, and yet pretends to love him, and makes those very Marks an Argument of his
Gal. 5.6. his Love. In Jesus Christ, saith the Apostle Paul, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but Faith which worketh by Love. For all the Law is fulfilled in one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy might. And Jesus saith, By this shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another. Origen contra Origen, speaking of the Faith of Christians, could not say there was anything peculiar in their Faith. The Scripture-Notion of Faith is very plain and obvious, viz. not a speculative and philosophical, but a religious and practical Faith, and is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him; that religious Faith is a full Conviction or Mind, that an eternal, immense Being, infinitely wise, just, and good, not only actually existeth, but is the Governor of the World; prescribes Laws to the Conferences, and to the Actions of Men, takes notice of their Compliance with, or Transgression of them; and will certainly reward or punish them, according as their Works have been. To live under...
under this Sense and Expectation, is to live a
Life of Faith, and is co-incident with a Life of
Virtue. All the Species, or particular Inftances
of Faith, may be reduc'd to this, as fo many
Branches fpringing from it *, and to explain them
in any other Sense, as if Faith and Reafon were
oppos'd to each other, and Religion and Virtue
<co two different things, is to bind Mens Under-
{landings, and to confound the pJaineft, and moil
numerous Texts of Scripture."

Another learned Divine, in defence of the
Chriftian Religion, fays, " If it mould happen, that Nye of Nar.
we cannot fo fatisfa&orily evince the Certainty of ^ ^ . Reveal 2 \\
the Scripture- Hiftory again ft fcrupulous, nice,
and fceptical "Wits, yet we find ourfelves oblig'd
to the Belief and Practice of what is really the
Chriftian Religion ; becaule 'tis nothing elfe, as
46 to the Faith and Morals of it, but natural Reli-
gion."

The great Grotius^ in a Difcourfe own'd to be
tjie beft that was ever writ in defence of Chriftiani-
ty, lays it down as a Maxim, that " 'Tis abfolutely GrotiusdeVe-
44 repugnant to the Goodnefs of God, that thofe, "' 9 h I , J ? eI '
4C who without refpect to worldly Advantage, leek
44 after the way which leads to eternal Happinefs i
£C imploring withal the divine Affiftance, and sub-
44 mitting themfelves intirely to his Providence,
44 ftiould not be able to find it." And if this is too
evident to be deny'd, can there be any thing either
in relation to Faith or Manners in the way that
leads to eternal Happinefs, but may be found at
all Times and Places of every one, who diligently
fearches after it.

And an eminent Divine, who is notlook'd onto
have altogether fo extenfive a Charity as Groiius^ yet
fays, "I think we may pronounce fafely in this South's Serin.
f< Matter, that the Goodnefs and Mercy of God is Vol. 1. p. 293.
44 fuch, that he never deferts a fincere Perfon, nor
44 fullers any one that fnall live (even according to
5i theie Mcafurcs of Sincerity) up to what he knows,

" to

^8 Chrifiltianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. $*

" c to peri (h for want of any Knowledge neceTary ;
tc and what is more, Efficient to fave him." Which
fuppenes no Faith, cr Knowledge neceTary to Sal-
vation, but what all are capable of requiring by

John i. 9. virtue of that Lights which light eth every Man that
cometh into the World. And our Saviour himfelf fays,

Mat. 7> 7- Seek, and you fhall all find. By this you may fee what Faith is requir'd, and for what End.

If Man, as our Divines maintain againfl Hobbs, is a focial Creature, who naturally loves his own Species, and is full of Pity, Tendernefs, and Benevolence *, and if Reafon, which is the proper Nature of Man, can never lead Men to any thing but univerfal Love and Kindnefs, and there be no Part of Natural Religion, or any Faith it requires, but highly tends to improve this kind and benign Temper; how comes it to pafs, that what is taught for Religion in fo many places of Chrift endow, has tranform'd this mild and gentle Creature into fierce and cruel *, and made him act with Rage and Fury againft thofe who never did, or intended him the leaf! harm? Is not this chiefly owing to fuch &Faith as works not by Love 5 and fuch a Zeal as, not being according to Knowledge, has deftroy'd all good Works *, and is utterly inconfiftent with the End of all Religion? But no wonder, if Men, who moft uncharitably damn one another for fuch Matters of Faith as they dare nottruft Reafon to judge of, fhould hate, andperfecute each other on the fame account.

The Epicureans, tho' they had exalted Notions of their Gods, yet becaufe they afferted it beneath their Dignity to concern themfelves with human Af- fairs, were at all times cenfur'd as Atheiils 3 which ihews that 'twas accounted much the fame to believe no Gods, as to believe them ufeles to Mankind: But certainly, believing the Deity to be indolen can'tbefo bad as believing him focruel, a* to oblige Chriftians toperfecute, ruin, and deftroy even their Brethren, for things too, no ways contributing to the Good of Mankind -, fince this is downright Dcomnifm: And yet

yet in what Age of the Church would not thofe confeientious People, that chane'd to be undermoft* have thought themfelves happy, if the Men in Pow'er had not had a worfe Notion of the Deity, than that of Indolence.

CHAP. VI

Tthat the Religion of Nature is an abfolutely perfect Religion-, and that external Reveala-
tion can neither add to nor take from its Perfection and that true Religion, whether internally, or externally revealed, must be the same.

HAVING proved that God requires nothing for his own sake, I shall now, the way being thus prepared, show you, that the Religion of Nature is absolutely perfect that external Revelation can neither add to nor take from its Perfection: And in order to it let me ask you, why you believe the Gofpel a Law of absolute Perfection, incapable of any Addition Diminution or Alteration?

B. Because 'tis the last Law of God's giving.

A. Was it not such in itself, that could not make it so since the Law given to the Jews was for many Ages the Only External Law: And yet, I suppose you grant that this abrogated Law was far from deserving such a Character; but were there any thing in this argument, it makes wholly for the Law of Nature, since that is not only the first, but the last Law of God's giving; if that can be said to be last, which is eternal: A Law by which God governs his own Actions, and by which he expects all the rational World to govern theirs. And therefore notwithstanding the Promulgation of the Gofpel, he continues daily to implant it in the Minds of all Men, Christians as well as others: and consequently.

50 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 6,

quently, 'tis as receivable for them as for Others; as necessary since, as before the Coming of Christ: And I may add too, not only necessary to be observed in this World, and ten Thousand more, were there ever so many; but in Heaven itself, and that too for ever.

< 5. Should I grant, that my Argument, from the Gofpel's being the last Law of God's giving, does not fully prove its absolute Perfection, yet it will undeniably follow from the great Agreement there is between That and the Law of Nature; it neither forbidding what that requires, nor requiring what That forbids; and in a Word, containing nothing in it unworthy, but every Thing worthy, of an absolutely-perfect Law-giver.

J. In saying This, you own the Law of Nature to be the Standard of Perfection; and that by it we must, judge, antecedently to any traditional Religion,
what is, or is not a Law absolutely perfect, and worthy of such a Being for its Legiflator.

B. Indeed, it multi be own'd, that Divines as well as Others, make the same Conceptions in relation to Natural Religion, which Dr. Prideaux does in his celebrated Letter to the Beifts at the End of Mahomet's Life: "Let what is written in all the" Books of the New Testament be try'd by That "which is the Touch-done of all Religions; I mean * c that Religion of Nature and Reafon, which God * c has written in the Hearts of every one of us from * £ the firft Creation ; and if it varies from it in any " one Particular, if it precribes any one Thing, ' ; which may in the minutest Circumstances thereof Cv be contrary to its Righteoufnefs, I will then ac-
knowledge this to be an Argument againfl us, cC Itrono- enough to overthrow the whole Caufe, and ct make all Thing- 5 ; elfe that can be laid for it total-
w iy ineffectual for its Support,' 5
■ A, I delire no more than to be allow'd, That there's a Religion of Nature and Reafon written in the Hearts of every one of us from the firftCreation *

Cf. 6. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 5 1

by which all Mankind muft judge of the Truth of any infituted Religion whatever v and if it varies from the Religion of Nature and Reafon in any one Particular, nay, in the minutest Circumstance, That alone is an Argument, which makes all Things elfe that can be paid for its Support totally ineffectual. If fo, mud not Natural Religion and external Reve-
lation, like two Tallies, exactly anfwre one another; without any other Difference between them, but as to the Manner of their being delivered ? And how can it be otherwife ? Can Laws be imper fed, where a Legiflator is absolutely perfect ? Can Time cjift cover any Thing to him, which he did not forefee from Eternity ? And as his Wisdom is always the fame, fo is his Goodnefs ; and confequently, from the Consideration of both thefe, his Laws muft al-
ways be the fame. - Is is not from the infinite Wif-
dom and Goodnefs of God, that you fuppofe the Gofpel a moft perfect Law/, incapable of being re-
peal'd, or alter'd, or of hating Additions ; and muff not you own the Law of Nature as perfect a Law, except you will fay, that God did not arrive to the
Perfection of Wisdom and Goodness till about seventeen Hundred Years since ?

To plead, That the Gospel is incapable of any Additions, because the Will of God is immutable, and his Laws too perfect to need them, is an Argument, was Christianity a new Religion, which destroys itself; for from the Time it commenced, you must own God is mutable •, and that such Additions have been made to the all-perfect Laws of infinite Wisdom, as constitute a New Religion. The Reason why the Law of Nature is immutable, is, because it is founded on the unalterable Reason of Things •, but it God is an arbitrary Being, and can command Things merely from Will and Pleasure; some Things to-day, and others to-morrow \ there is nothing either in the Nature of God, or in the Things themselves, to hinder him from perpetually changing his Mind. If he once commanded Things without

E 2 Rea-

$2 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. S r

Reason, there can be no Reason why he may not endlefly change such Commands.

I think, no Man has more fully done Justice to the Law of Nature, than a Divine of that Church which requires so many Things contrary to that Law •, I mean the celebrated Charron, in his Treatise of Wisdom, whose Authority is certainly not the less for being translated by the late Dean of Canterbury \; L. 2. c. 5. He says, " The Law of Nature, by which I mean p. 69. \ Univerfal Reason and Equity, is the Candle of

" our Maker, lighted up in every Breast, to guide, " and mine perpetually. This is the Dictate of God cc himself, he is the King, and this the Fundamental " Law of the Universe; a Ray and Beam of the divine Nature, which flows from, and has a necessary Connection and Dependence upon that eternal and immutable Law, which the Almighty " prescribes to his own Actions. A Man, who " proceeds on this Principle, is his own Rule; for " he acts in Agreement with the noblest, and most " valuable Part of his Nature: This Man's Heart- " fry is essential to, and inseparable from him, not " precarious and uncertain, and owing merely to cc Chance and Occasion \ for this Light and Law is " born with, and bred in us ; a Piece of our Frame " c and Constitution; and from thence obtains the cc Name of Nature, and the Law of Nature: Such w a Man, by Consequence, will be a good Man " confantly, and at all Times, his Virtue will be
cc uniform, and every Place, every Emergency will

" find him the fame ^ for this Law of Nature is per-

" petual, the Obligation of it is lafcing and invio-

- c - table ; the Equity and Reafon of it are eternal,

Ci written in large and indelible Characters, noAcci-

" dent can deface them, no Length of Time waile,

" or wear them out. — These firft Principles, which

cc are the Ground of all moral Infritutions, admit of

" no Change, no Increale, no Abatement, no Fits,

" no Starts, no Ebbings and Flowing... Why

* c then, vain Man, dofl thou trouble thyfelf to feck

" abroad

Gli. 6. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 53

abroad for fome Law or Rale to Mankind ?
What can Books or Matters tell thee, which thou
might'ft not tell thyfelf? What can Study, or
Travel mew, which, without being at the ex-
pence of fo much Pains, thou might'ft not fee at
home, by defending into thy own Confcienc,
and hearkening attentively to its own Admo-
nitions ?

" To what Purpofe is all this Labour and Coft?
The toilfome tumbling over of Codes and Infti-
tutes ? — the two Tables of Mofes, the twelve
Tables of the Greeks, the Law written in the
Heart of them who had no Law^ and infhort all
the Rules of Equity and good Laws, that have
any where been enacted, and obtained in the
World, are nothing but Copies and Tranfcripts
produd in open Court, and publim'd from that
Original, which thou keepeft clcfe within thee ;
and yet all the while pretender! to know nothing
of the Matter, {lifting and fupprefling as much as
in thee lieth theBrightnefs of that Light, which
shines within thee. As this invifible Fountain
within is more exuberant and plenteous, fo it is
more lively, pure and ftrong, than any of the
ftreams deriv'd from it ; of which we need but
this fingle Teftimony, That when any Difputes
arife about the right Meaning of any poitive
Law, the conftant, and bcfl Method of under-
flanding the Equity and true Intent of it, is by
running back to its Head and obferving what
is mo ft agreeable to the Law of Nature : This is
the Teft and Touch, This is the Level, and the
Truth, by which the refi are to be judged."
And in truth all Laws, whether the Law of Na-
tions, or Thofe of particular Countries, are only the
Law of Nature adjuf ted, and accommodated toCir-
cumstances, nor can Religion, even in relation to the Worship of God, as it is a reasonable Service, be any thing, but what necessarily flows from the Consideration of God, and the Creatures. Twas this

54 Christianity is Old as the Creation. Ch, 6,

this made the great Mr. Selden say, in an Expression, Table-Talk, somewhat homely, " That Men look after Religion, as the Butcher did after his Knife, when he had it in his Mouth."

The Religion of Nature is so entirely calculated for the Good of human Society, that tho' a Man, hurry'd with the Violence of his Passions, breaks it himself, yet he wou'd have all others most sincerely observe it.; and accordingly all Legislators punish Breach of it: Whereas no Man rejects any positive Institution himself, but is willing that all others should do so too; which plainly flies, Men do not apprehend it to be for the general Good of Mankind. And the contending Parties in Religion, with equal Confidence cry, " That if our Religion be not true, to God must be wanting to Mankind, in what concerns their eternal Happiness, he must be wanting to himself, and to his own Attributes" of Good-ness, Justice and Truth: It's repugnant to the very Notion of a God, to let Men be ignorant in a Matter of such Importance without any Help or Remedy." This Reasoning, if true, necessarily infers some universal Law knowable at all Times, and can't be apply'd to any partial Religion unknown to the World for many Ages, and, as not being discoverable by Reason, till unknown to the greatest Part of it.

In a word, if the highest internal Excellence, the greatest Plainness and Simplicity, Unanimity, Univer- sality, Antiquity, nay Eternity, can recommend a Law to all These, 'tis own'd, do, in an eminent Degree, belong to the Law of Nature. A Law, which does not depend on the uncertain Meaning of Words and Phrases in dead Languages, much less on Types, Metaphors, Allegories, Parables, or on the Skill or Honesty of weak or designing Transcribers (not to mention Translators) for many Ages together but on the immutable Relation of Things always visible to the whole World: And therefore Dr.
Dr. £<:<// juftly fays, "Moral Obligations are not Scotts Chrift.  
M founfed like pofitive ones upon mutable Circum-^jfe; p p, C2 * 
C fiances (which fuppofe they can only oblige inr v "^"  
" certain Circumftances) but upon firm and everlaft- * 
" ingReafons; upon Reafons that, to all Eternity, 
" will carry with them the fame Force and Necefli- 
" ty ; as long as we are Creatures of an infinjtelyeiv 
" feci Creator, it will be as much our Duty, as 'cis 
" now, to fubmit our Will and Affections to our 
" Reafon ; and as long as we are related to other 
"l reafonable Creatures, it will be as much our Du- 
" ty, as now, to be kind, juft and peaceable in all 
" our Intercourfes with them : So that Thefe are 
" U fuch Duties as no Will can difpenfewith, noRea- 
" fon abrogate, no Circumftances difannul *, but 
M as long as God is what he is, and we are what 
" we are, they muft, and will oblige us."  

I could, from many other Confiderations, mew 
you the abolute Perfection of Natural Religion ; for 
Infstance, muft we not, except we fpeak without any 
Meaning, or have no true Meaning of the Word 
God, intend by it a Being of all Perfections, free 
from all thofe Defects, which belong even to the 
moft perfect Creatures ? And muft we not have an 
Idea of thefe Perfections, before we can know whe- 
ther there is any Being who has enjoyM them from 
Eternity *-> and muft we not know there is fuch a 
Being from our Reafon, before w r e can come to 
this Queftion, tVhethcr he has made any Kxttrnal 
Revelation ? Nay, Examining into this Que- 
ftion wou’d be to very little Purpofe, except we 
could know whether this Being is bound by his ex- 
ternal Word #, and had not, either at the Time of 
giving it, a fecretWill inconfiftentwith his reveal’d 
Will *, or has not fince changed his Will 
This 
can't be known from any external Revelation, 
tho' it exprefs'd itfelf ever fo plainly ; becaufe 
the Queftion being, Whether God is obliged to do,
as he in it fays he will do ? this muft be refolvVt antecedently by the Light of Nature, which muft
difcover to us the Veracity of" God, and the Immu-
tability of his Will-, and the fame Reafons which
will prove he could not change his Will fince he
made an external Revelation, will prove his Will
was alwaysunchangeable, and at all Times thefame;
whether internally, or externally reveal'd : Norcou'd
we take a Step towards proving the Veracity of God,
or the Immutability of his Will ; or indeed, any of
his Perfections befides Power, without knowingthat
the Will of God is always determin'd by the Nature
and Reafon of Things : Otherwife Falfhood and
Mutability might be the Will of God, and there
! could be no fuch Thing in Nature as Good and
Evil, but an arbitrary Will wou'd govern all
Things.

Were we not capable by our Reafon of diftin-
guiming Good from Evil, or knowing from the
Confideration of the invariable Perfections of God,
what the divine Goodnefs cou'd command, or for-
bid his Creatures antecedently to any external Re-
velation, we cou'd not diftinguifh the true inftituted
Religion from the many falie ones : Or if by Acci-
dent we ftumbPd on it, avoid running into many
Abfuridities in the Interpretation of it, thro' the Diff-
culties that muft attend a Book writ in a dead
Language, and fo many Ages fince *, and where,
thro' the vaft Variety of Readings, we might mi-
flake the true Reading ; and tho 3 we were certain
2 Ccr. 3. 6- of the Letter, even the Letter killeth.

If Man had not natural Abilities to diftinguifh
between Good and Evil, or to know what is plea-
s;, or difpleafing to God \ how cou'd we fay he
was" a moral Agent, or even an accountable Crea-
ture ?

Did we not allow that Men, by the Light of
Nature, are capable of forming a found Judgment in
Matters of Religion, they may be fo impos'd on by
controverted, or mif-interpreted, not to fay forg'd
Texts, as to admit feveral Objects of divine Worfhip
in their Practice, while in their Words they own
2 but

Ch. 6; Chriflianity as Old as the Creation, 37
but One •, or, in order to advance a supernatural Charity, destroy all natural Humanity; and believe our Love to God may be best jfhewn by our Hatred to our Fellow-Creatures; and introduce such abominable Notions, as may make Religion, instead of a Benefit, become a Mifchief to Mankind.

Whereas, if we allow the Light of Nature sufficient to enable us to judge rightly in these Matters, and consequently to distinguish Truth from Falfhood; we must own, since there can be no Disagreement in Truth, that there's an exact Conformity between internal and external Revelation; with no other Difference but as to the Manner of their being reveal'd: Or in other Words, that the Gospel, since 'tis impoflible for Men at the fame time to be under different Obligations, can't command those Things which the Law of Nature forbids •, or forbid what That commands 5 nor can anything be a Pare of Religion by one Law, which by the other is Suspersion; nor can External Revelation make That the Will of God, which the Light of Nature continually rep relents as unworthy of having God for its Author.

The judicious Writer of the Rational Catechism lately reprinted fays, " That one of the molt uni- p re f. to Cats verbal Causes of the great Differences among chism. " Men in Matters of Religion, is, that they have " not examin'd Things to the Bottom; they have " fail'd in their Foundation-Work; they have " too much flighted that Philofophy which is the <c Natural Religion of all Men 5 and which being « natural, muft needs be Univerfal and Eternal:

" fon, which is only capable to produce trueSym- ci metry in their intellectual Buildings; and they ct have apply'd themselves without any Rule to the " Interpretation of Words and Phrafes, which be- c - ing eafily fufceptible of various Senfes, have pro- £ tfue'd as many‘deform'd Irregularities."

J 8 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 7.

Tho' all Parties alike pretend to aim nt Truth, yet none of them, I think, inform us what Truth is, or wherein it confifts: Now if Truth in general, implies an Agreement of our Ideas with the Things themselves, Religious Truth, or True Religion must confift in the Agreement of our Ideas with thofe Things, which are the Subjects of our religious In- quiry; viz. The Nature of God and Man •, and
falfe Religion must consist in having Ideas that are not agreeable to, or do not truly represent those Subjects; and this Agreement which we call Truth in respect to Theory, is what we term, in relation to Action, fit, just, good, or reasonable. Thus God is frequently itiy'd in Scripture the God of Truth, because his Ideas of Things, and the Things themselves exactly correspond, and all his Actions are agreeable to the Relation Things have to one another: And when our Actions are such, we do all that's fit, just, and reasonable, all that God or Man can require; and from hence too it follows, that Iniquity is the same in Action, as Falfity is in Theory.

CHAP. VII.

That Natural and Revealed Religion having the same End, their Precepts must be the same.

B. FOLLOWING that the natural Knowledge we have of God, ourselves, and our fellow-Creatures, is the Foundation of all Religion, may not external Revelation, building on this Foundation, erect a larger and nobler Edifice, by extending it to such things as the Light of Nature cou'd not reach, without contradicting any thing it teaches?

Ch. 7. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 59

A. I thought I had obviated this Objection, by proving that the Religion of Nature was so perfect, that nothing cou'd be added to it; and that the Truth of all Revelation was to be judged of by its Agreement with it: However, since this Objection is the most plausible of any you have yet made; I reply, that if our Natural Notions of the divine Perfections demonstrate, that God will require nothing of his Creatures but what tends to their Good; whatsoever is of this Kind, is a Superstructure that belongs to the Law of Nature; or, in other Words, what the Reason, or the Nature of the things themselves plainly point out to us; and for all other Matters, which have no such Tendency, you must seek another Foundation, another Nature very different from the Divine, to build your Hay and Stubble upon. Ani,

If it be evident' from the Light of Nature, what are those Relations we find in to God and our fellow-Creatures, and that neither God nor Man,
without acting tyrannically, can require more than those require; can external Revelation any more than internal exceed those Bonds?

If original Revelation comprehends everything obligatory on the account of its Excellency; that is, everything which tends to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man; and these are the only Ends of 'Traditional Religion*', no arbitrary, or merely positive Precepts, as not tending to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man, can belong either to natural, or reveal'd Religion.

By the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel, the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, being the two grand, or general Commandments -> all part; particular Precepts must be comprehended under these.

two, and belong alike to the Law of Nature as well as the Gospel; and what does not, can belong to neither. Thus any particular Precept, if by change of Circumstances it ceases to contribute to the Honour of God, or the Good of Man. much more it

6q Christianity as old as the Creation. Ch. 7.

it become prejudicial to either, must lose its obliging Force.

There must be some Rule, or Rules, which bind without Exception; because every Exception to a Rule is built on some Rule or other *, and as there can't be Rules, so there can't be Exceptions ad infinitum: And I suppose, you will not deny, but that these two grand Rules, or Commandments, the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, are obligatory without Exception. And yet these would be to little Purpose, you'd not Reason tell Men how to apply them in all Conditions and Circumstances of Life.

B. Supposing no particular Precepts can oblige, if they chance to clam with either, of those Commandments, yet what is to be done if these two interfere with one another; must the Good of Man, or the Honour of God take place?

A. These two grand Laws are in effect the same, for what promotes the Honour of God, necessarily promotes the Good of Man: The more we love and honour God, the more we shall imitate him in our extensive Love to our Fellow-Creatures, who are equally the Children of God. The greater our Veneration is for our Maker, the more it will excite us to copy those Perfections of Goodness and Benevolence we adore in him; so that the
Duty of a truly religious Person, and of a good Subject and Citizen are the same with relation to God and Man; for the more he honours God, the more zealous will he be to act the Patriot; and the more he does that, the more he honours God; because the happier Men are, the more Reason they have to honour that God, who made 'em fo. The

Matt. 5.16. way to glorify your Father which is in Heaven, is to let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your Good.

John 15. 8. ye are the Light of the World. And herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit. And indeed, nothing can be plainer from Scripture, than that these two great Duties of the Love of God, and our Neighbour, include

Ob. 7. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 61 elude each other. If, says the Apostle, a Man say 1 John 4. 20.

I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar.

And, if we love one another, God dwelleth in us; 1 John 3. 21.

and the Love of God is perfected in us. Again, Let 1 John 3. 8.

us love one another; Every one that loveth, is bom of God, and knoweth God. He that loves not, knoweth not God. But whofo hath this World's Goods, and 1 John 3/17.

seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Companion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him? And it was this Consideration, that made that great Emperor and Philosopher' Mzratf"

Antoninus say!, "Thou wilt never do any thing Lib. 3. C. 12.

"purely human in a right Manner, unlefs thou knowest the relation it bears to things Divine; Verfioa!"' " 

"nor any thing Divine, unlefs thou knowest all the Ties it has to things Human."

In a Word, as Man is by Nature qualify s d to answer all the Purposes of a social Life, and to act a Part agreeable to Reason, fo in doing this he gives Glory to his Maker, by fulfilling the End of his
Creatio •, but if he goes contrary to the Light of Nature, in acting an unfociable and hurtful Part, he reflects Dishonour on his Creator, by defeating, as far as in him lies, the Defign of God in making him a socia Creature. But,

Because Bigots repreft thefe two grand Obligations as frequently claftching; and oppofe things which are for the Good of Man, on pretence that die Honour of God will either directly, or indi- rectly fuffer by it , and on this pretence have fre- quently done fuch Mifchiefs to their Fellow-Crea- tures, as to give occafion for that proverbial Saying, In Nomine Domini incipit omne malum : Give me leave to lay, That we can no otherwife honour God, fmce that conffts in having the mod exalted Ideas of him, than by fuppofing him benevolent in the moil uni- verfal and impartial Manner; and confequently, to imagine he can command any thing inconfiflent with this uni verfal Benevolence, is highly to difhonour him it'is to deftroy his impatia] Goodnefs, and make

62. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. f.

make liis Power and Wifdom degenerate into Cru- elty and Craft.

Tho* we have received our All from God, we can give him nothing, nor do him the leaft Kindnefs, much lefs return Kindnefs for Kindnefs'; and therefore, the only way we have to shew our real Grati- tude to our great Creator and Benefactor, is to be as useful as we can to his Creatures, whom we ought to love as ourfelves; and if there can now be a Sin again ft the Holy Ghost, I mould not fcruple to fay, It is making Religion the Means of defroying the End of all Religion, and rendring the Creature mi- ferable, on pretence of doing; Honour to the Crea- tor; who, as he has imprefsMon Bodies , in order to p re- fer ve the Natural World, a Tendency to each other; fo he has implanted in Minds, the better to suppor the moral World, a Tendency to be kind, and be- neficent to one another. And fo deep is the Im- prerTion of Benevolence, that we can't but applaud a Perfon who does brave and generous Actions, even tho' we furTer by riien; and its much condemn him who act's bafely and treacheroudy, tho* we are ever fo great Gainers.

Charaferlift. " Is there x.hcn (Jtys a -noble Author) a natural Vx1 2^4.14. « Beauty of Figures; and is thfare net as natural a " one of Actions ? Norouner the Eye opens upon " Figures, the Ear to Sounds, than (height the " Beau/ifulrA>Ats, and Gritableitsi Harfnony are known
"and acknowledged. No fonocr are Actions view'd, 
"no fonocr the i>t;.;a?> AffcPiicsns and Pfiffions dif-
"cern'd (and they are mot of them as fogn dif-
"cern'd as kh) than (raight an in .crd Ky^ dif-
"tinguivVs, and fees the Fair and Sbapclx, the 
"Antic: Ac and Admirable apart from the Difavtiffd, 
*« the Ft -;;//, the Odious, or the Drjpicai>LeA How is 
it potjh/ie therefore not to own, u That as the w 
Dijlinciicns have their Foundation in Nature, 
"the Dilcernnmcm klelf is natural, and from Na-
" lure khrn"

B.

Ch. 7. Chrijiiamty as Old as the Creation. 63

B. This, I own, is a beautiful Description of 
Human Nature, and a ftrong Evidence of theGood-
nefs of its Author *, but do Men act as if they had 
fuch an innate Love of Nature, or fuch a benevo-

A. An execrable Superftition has in many Chi-
Stian Countries, in amanner, extinguih'd thefe kind 
Sentiments, and even all Humanity and Pity \ in-
fo much that the Tender Sex can rejoice to hear ftie 
Shrieks, and fee the Agonies of Men expiring un-
der the moil cruelf Torments ; and there's fcarce any 
Place, fo much does this curfed Bigotry prevail, 
where we do not almoft daily fee too much Reafon 
to cry,

Tantum Religie potuit fuadere malorum.

The noble Author npw quoted juftly obferves, Chara6erift. 
"If there be a Religion that teaches the Adoration Voi ' 2 ' p " 48 
cc and Love of a God, whose Character it is to be 
"capitious, and of high Refentment, subjet to 
"Wrath and Anger, furious, revengeful, and re-
"venging himfelf, when offended, on others than 
"thole who gave the Offence ; and if there be 
"added to the Character of this God, a fraudu-
"lent Difpofition, encouraging Deceit and Trea 
"chery among Men ; favourable to a few, tho* 
"for flight Caufes, and cruel to the reft ; 'tis evi-
ic dent that fuch a Religion as this being ftrongly 
u enforc'd, mud of neccefity raife even an Appro-

bation and Refpect towards theVices of this kind, 
c * and breed a fuitable Difpofition, a capricious, 
\iC partial, revengeful, and deceitful Temper. For 
*' even Irregularities and Enormities of a heinous 
"kind muii in many Cafes appear illuftrious to 
"one, who confiders them in a Being admir'd 
u and contemplated with the highell Honoii and
Veneration, Whensoever, therefore, a Reli-

igion teaches the Love and Admiration of a Deity, "at

rt that has any apparent Character of ill it teaches,

at

64 Chriftiannity as Old as the Creation. CL 'ft

cc at the fame time, a Love and Admiration of that " 77/, and cauves that to be taken for good and a-
" miable, which is in itfelf horrid and delefable." Scrm. Vol. i. Archbifhop f///^, than whom none better
P.18i. & underflood Human Nature, fays, that " Accord-
" p# °* " ing as Mens Notions of God are, fuch will their cc Religion be. If they have grofs and falfeConcep-
* c tions of God, their Religion will be abfurdf and
** fuperfitious : If Men fancy God to be an ill-na-
" tur'd Being, afm'd with infinite Power, who
"*' takes delight in the Mifery and Ruin ofhisCrea-
tures, and is ready to take all advantages againft
" them, they may fear him, but they will hate
" him -, and they will be apt to be fuch towards' tc one another, as they fancy God to be -towards tc them; for all Religion doth naturally incline
4t Men to imitate him whom they worhip.

Dr. S!ou 7 to root out all fuch injurious Notions
as derogate from the Goodnefs of God, very juftly
Chrift. Life, obferves ; that " God being infinitely good in his part 2. Vol. t. <c own ]sj" a ture, it is im pouible we mould conceive
" him to be better than he is *, and therefore every " falfe Notion we entertain of his Goodnefs mult
" detract from it ; and lb much as we detract from
4t his Goodnefs, fo much we detract from the prin-
" cipal Reafon and Motive of our loving him."

And, indeed, Power and Knowledge, of them-
\elves, can't engage our Love ; if they cou'd, we
fould love the Devil in proportion to his Power
and Knowledge : Tis Goodnefs alone which can be-
get Confidence, Love, and Veneration ; and there's
none of thofe Queftions, whether relating to God or
Man, but what may beailily determined, by confider-
ing which fide of the Queftion carries with it the great-
eft Goodnefs ; fince the fame Light of Nature, which
mews us there is fuch a good Being, fhews us alio
what fuch Goodnefs expeeb. And did Men confi-
der how repugnant 'tis to his Goodnefs, to require
any tiling of them which they had no reaion to o-
L :y, but bccaufe they had no Power to difobey * 5 they
Ch. 7. Christianity as Old as the Creation.

muft abhor the Notion of all arbitrary Com-
mands.

And therefore I mall not fcruple to affirm, That
he who fledfaftly adheres to what the Light of Na-
ture teaches him concerning the Divine Goodnefs,as
he will avoid the comfortlefs Profcpt of the Atheift, See Plutarch
the perpetual Anxiety of the Superflitious, the wild de Superfti-J ]
Perturbation of the Enthuflaft, and the pernicious ^'"''i
Fury of the Bigot; fo he can't fail of the true Re- Edit. Franca-
ligion, happily feated in the middle between thefe fort.
Extremes. And, as fuch a Perfon can't but love
God as he ought -, fo, in imitation of the Divine
Goodnefs, which influences all his Actions, he will
contribute his utmost to the Good of others •, and
his Love and Kindnefs will beasextenfive as Human
Nature -, and going on rational and evident Princi-
ples, which muft give him entire Satisfaction, he
will act a fteddy uniform Part. And what can be
\yanting to a Man who has this heavenly, this god-
like Difpofition, which renders him happy in him-
felf, and, as far as it is in his power, makes the
whole World fo too.

And fince 'tis not eafy to part with a Subject
which one can fcarcely think of without Rapture ; I
muft fay, that Men can never have true Sentiments
of the Goodnefs of the Divine Legiflator, or efteem
his Laws as they ought, till they are convine'd he
requires nothing of them but what is for their Good
and that they can't but be miserable as long as they
fwerve from Rules fo elTential to their Happinefs
and that the longer they do fo, the more difficult
will it be to acquire a contrary Habit. These No-
tions, early inculcated, will caufe Men with Joy to
obey the Divine Laws, and make them in reality
love God, as well as be bclov'd by him ; who has
the chief Regard to the Heart, and above all things
requires the Purity of the Mind ; and that Men
fhould act, not out of a Principle of flavifh Fear,
but from pe?=-feti Lo:-e" vcid of all Fear /

L Pluarch x

66 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. CTi. j\
Plutarch speaking of Religion, as it flourished in the Heathen Church, and in his own Time, represents it as full of Satisfaction, Hope, and Delight, and Treatise says: "It is plain and evident from mod demon- mf'&" ftrable Testimonies, that neither the Societies, tp'.p.uoil** nor P'blick Meetings in the Temples, nor any D. E. ** other diverting Parties, Sights, or Entertainments 64 are more delightful, or rejoicing, than what we *' our selves behold, and practife in the Church-
44 Worfhip. —Our Difpofition and Temper is 44 not, on this Occasion, as if we were in the Pre- 4t fence of worldly Potentates, dread Sovereigns, and 44 defpotick Princes; nor are we here found meanly 44 humbling our selves, crouching in Fear and Awe 44 and full of Anxiety and Confuion, as would be 44 natural to us in fuch a Cafe *, but where the Di- 4*• vinity is ^ efteem'd the rear eft, and mod immediate-
44 ly prefent, there Horrors and Amazement are 44 the further banifh'd •, there the Heart, we find, 44 gives the freeft way to Pleafure, to Entertainment, " — and this even to Excefs." And,

Ch r ist i a ns in addrefTing to the divineMajefty, m111t be fill'd with inexpressible Joy and Delight, Te. i. p. 24. did they confider the true Notion of God; "Who, 44 as Archbiftjop Tillotfon fays* would appear to * be fo lovely a Being, fo full of G-oodnefs, and a all defirable Perfections, that even tho' who are M of fo irregular Underftanding, as not to believe 44 there is a God, yet could not refrain from wifh-
44 ing with all their hearts there was one. Who ** takes particular care of every one of us, and loves 44 us, and delights to do us good. Who un-
44 u derftands all our Wants, and is able and willing 48 to relieve us in our greatefl Streights. Is

44 k not every Man's Intereft, that there fhould be 44 fuch a Governour of the World as really defigns 44 our Happinefs, and has omitted nothing neceftary 4fc to it ? as governs us for our Advantage,, and will 44 require nothing of us but what is for our Good -, * 4 and yet will infinitely reward us for doing of that
Ch. 7. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 67

"which is beft for ourſelves; that will puniſh any
"Man that mail go about to injure us, or to deal
"otherwise with us, than himſelf, in like Cafes,

"would be dealt withal?—We have reaſon to

"believe God to be fuch a Being, if he be at all."

B. Are not the laſt Words too bold, in fuppo-
frog there could be no God, were he not fuch as he
defcribes him?

A. With ſubmiſſion, I think not; fince there
can be nothing in God, but what is God-like {he
either muſt be perfectly good, or not be at all. It
would be well, if all who in words give this Cha-
racter of the Deity, were confident with themſelves,
and did not impute fuch Actions to him, as make
him reſemble the word of Beings, and fo run into
downright Demonifm. And let me add, Men of good
Senfe, and who mean well, will naturally fall into
the fame Sentiments; a Shaftesbury will fay the fame
as a c Tollotfon.

"If there be, fays that Noble Author, a general Letter con*
"Minds it can have no particular Intereſt; but c f rf r."| Ka "
cc the general Good, and the Good of the Whole, . Q L 4I#'
"and its own private Good, muſt of neceſſity be
 cri one and the fame. It can intend nothing befides,
"nor aim at any thing beyond, nor be provok'd
to any thing contrary. So that we have only to
tc confider, whether there be really fuch a thing as
"a Mind that has relation to the Whole, or not. For,
tc if unhappily there be no Minds we may comfort
cc ourſelves, however, that Nature has no Malice :
cs If there be really a Mind, we may reſt fids.-
"iy'd, that it is the beſt natur'd one in the WorW.
"The laft Café, one would imagine, fhoould be
"moft comfortable ;* and the Notion of a common
"Parent lefs frightful than that of forlorn Nature,
"and zfatherlefs World. Tho% as Religion ftands
' c amongſt us, there are many good People who
"would have leſs Fear in being thus expos'd; and
"would be eafer, perhaps, in their Minds, if they
cc were affTur'd they had only mere Chance to truft

F 2 "to

'.<•>/:
"to. For no body trembles to think there would be no God, but rather, that xhzyQfhzou'd be one. This* however would be otherwise, if Deity were thought as kindly of as Humanity; and we could be persuaded to believe, that if there really was a God, the heighft Goodnefs must of neceflity belong to him, without any of thofe Defects of Pa/lion, thofe Meannefses and Imperfections, which we acknowledge fuch in ourfelves *, which as good Men, we endeavour all we can to be fu perior to, and which, we find, we every day conquer as we grow better."

In, recapitulating what I have laid of the Agreement of natural and reveaPd Religion, I can't do it more fully than in the words of Dr. Sherlock (now Bifhop of Bangr) who in a Sermon for propagating the Gofpel (where we may expect every thing which he ore recommends it) fays, tha't 44 The Religion of the Socrjfor Ci Gofpel is the true Original Religion of 'Reafon and *fi®ni* " Nature.—That the Doctrineof Repentance, with 16 &c/ P *' wmc ' q the Gofpel fet out in the World, had re- ference to the Law of Reafon and Nature, againift: which Men had everywhere offended: And fmce Repentance infers the Neceflky of a future Re- formation, and a Return to that Duty and Obe- dience, from which, by Tranfgreflion, we are fallen *, the Confequence is manifeftly this, that the Gofpel was a Republication of the Law of Na- ture, and its Precepts declarative of that Original Religion, which was as eld as the Creation.

' cC This,' continues he, will appear, by confider- ing the Nature of the thing itself. The Notions of Good and Evil are eternally and unalterably the fame, which Notions are the Rules andMea- lures of all moral Actions, and are confequently Ck neceffary, and conftitucnt Parts of Religion. And therefore* if the Religion of Nature, in her pri- mitive State, was pure and uncorrupt, which will not, I preiumc, be deny'd, tho' there was fuffi- dent Reafon for a Republication of it, becaufe of

i " the

Ch. 7. Chrljianity as Old as the Creation. 69

"the great Ignorance and Superilition which had' grown upon the World % yet there could be no Reafon for any Alteration of it: For tho' the World was the worfe for abufmg the Religion of
Nature, and might want to be reform'd by a divine. Instruer; yet the Religion of Nature was not the worse for being abus'd, but still retain'd its first Purity and Simplicity. The Duties of Religion, consider'd as the Rules of Action, flow from the Relation we bear to God, and to one another, and Religion must ever be the same, as long as these Relations continue unalter'd. If our first Parent was the Creature of God, so are we; and whatever Service and Duty he owed in virtue of this Dependance, is due from us; nor can this Relation be ever made the ground of different Duties in his Case and ours. If there ever Nature rightly instructed him at first how to serve his Maker, our Obligations being the same with his, our Rule must be the same also. The Case is the same with respect to the Duties owing from Man to Man. And it would be as reasonable to suppose, that the three Angles of a Triangle must be equal to two right ones in one Age, and unequal in another, as to suppose, that the Duties of Religion must differ in one Age from what they were in another; the Habitudes and Relations from which they flow continuing; always the same.

That the Case is in Fact what I have represented it to be might be inferred from the particular Laws of the Gospel, and their Dependance on the Maxims and Principles of Natural Religion.

I will content myself with one general Proof, which reaches to every Fun of the Christian Doctrine: If the Law and the Prophets hang on those two great Commandments, viz. The Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour; then the Doctrine of our Saviour, which is the Perfection of the Law and the Prophets, must hang on the same.

Fa them

70 Chrijliamty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 7.

cd them likewise. Now, if you will allow, that tie Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour, are Fundamentals in the Law of Reason and Nature (as undoubtedly they are) you must also allow, that whatever may be deduced from them by rational Consequence, must be a Precept of the Law of Nature: Whatever therefore hangs on these two Commandments, must necessarily be a Part of Natural Religion, and that all the Law and the Prophets do so hang, and consequently the Doctrine of the Gospel, which is the Perfection of them, you have had our Saviour's express Testimony. Since then, it appears (as I
think) that the Religion of the Gospel is the True Original Religion of Reason and Nature; 
* That it has, as such, a Claim to be receiv'd in*
dependent of those Miracles which were wrought 
** for its Confirmation *, will be admitted by all who *
' allow the Force and Obligation of Natural Re-
" ligion *, and can be denied by none who know or *
*f understand themselves. The Principles of Reli-
" gion are interwoven with the very Frame and Make 
N. " of our Minds, and we may as well run from our-
" selves, as from the Sense of the Obligations we 
«' are under."

B. But does not this Right Reverend Prelate in
this Sermon affirm, that there are Doctrines inChri-* 
ifianity, which, tho' not different, yet are distinct 
from the Principles of Reason and Nature ?

A. There's nothing more common with learned Authors, than Distinctions without any Difference;yet the Bifhop very cautiously words what he says, " That the Doctrines of Christianny, tho' not dif-
" ferent, are distinct from the Principles of Reason, 
" and Nature:" but he does not say they are dif-
tinct from those Doctrines which flow from the Prin-
ciples of Reason and Nature. And what he imme-
diately adds, that «' Our Saviour came into the 
" World to supply the Defect?, not of Religion, 
c which continued in its Purity and Perfection, but 2 " of

Ch. 7. CJoriftianhy as Old as the Creation. 7 1 1

* c of Nature £' plainly mews, that he thinks no-
thing could be added by our Saviour to a Law that had no Defects ; ard that the Defects of Nature cou'd only be supply'd, by obliging People to live up to this Natural Law of unchangeable Purity and Perfection.

Thcs is doing juftice to Reveal'd as well as Na-
tural Religion, and fhews the Author of both to be at all times equally wife, good, and beneficent -, and the Bifhop ought to be valued for speaking thus plainly : fific omnia dixijjet !

And to this Right Reverend Father, I may add
the Authority of the late Moft Reverend Arch-
bishop Sharpy who says, " That Religion (taking Serm. vol. 4. 
" that Word as it signifies that universal Duty we p * 2o8 "" 21lm 
" owe to God, and by which we are to recom-
<6 mend ourselves to his Favour) is not fo variable,
<c uncertain, and arbitrary a Matter, as some Men 
* c do perhaps suppose it ~, but is a conftant, fixed, 
cc permanent, immutable Thing. The fame now
c that it was in the Days of the Old Law; and
the fame then that it was in the Days before the
Law was given, and the fame both then and
now that it fhall be a thousand Years hence, if
the World mould laft fo long. True Religion,
4C and that which is from God, was, and is, and
ever will be, the fame in Substance in all Coun-
tries, and in all Nations, and among all forts
6 and Conditions of Men whatsoever; and the Sum
of it is, To love the Lord our God with all our
Heart Sy and with all our Minds, and with all our
Strength, and y next to that, To love our Neigh-
hour as ourfelves. This was the Religion that the
Patriarchs, and all the pious Men of Old lived
in, and by which they obtain'd God's favour
and Acceptance; when as yet there was no re-
vealed Religion in the World. That
this is the Sum of the Chrifian Religion, no
Man can in the leaft doubt, that has ever read
the New Teftament. In our Saviour's Inftitu-

^2 Chrifliatiity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 7."

ution there is hardly any one thing recommended
to us, that doth not directly relate to this Mat-
ter; not either an Inftance wherein we are
to express our Love to God, and our Neigh-
jour - 5 or a Means whereby we may be further'd
4C in the pradifing of thofe Duties, or an Argu-
ment, and Motive, and Encouragement to ex-
cite us to the practifing of them. It is the De-
ign of all his Doctrines, to give us right Notions
of God, and our Neighbour; to teach us how
excellent, how good God is in himfeIf, and how
kind, how gracious to us - , and therefore what
infinite Reafon we have to love and ferve all Man-
c kind (who are our Neighbours) for his fake. -

We have aneafy, and a true Notion of that
Religion which is from God, and we can never
be at a lofs to find out in what it doth conflift.
It is not a thing to be alter'd at pleafure -, both
to the Law of Nature, and the Law of God, both
the natural Difpenfation under v/hich all Men are
born, and the reveal'd Difpenfation as we have
either in the Old or New Teftament, do fuffi-
ciently inftruct us in the main Heads of it. Nay
I dare be bold to fay, fo long as Mankind do re-
tain their Nature, and are not transform'd into
to another fort of Creatures than what God made
them at first it is impossible that there fliould be any true Religion, but what may be summed up in these two things 5 to love God, and our Neighbour, \\

CHAP.

Ck 3. Chri/lianity as Old as the Creation. 73

CHAP. VIII.

7 hat the not adhering to thofe Notions Reafon dictates concerning the Nature of God y has been the Occafwn of all Superfti- tion, and all thofe innumerable Mi/chiefs, that Mankind^ on the Account of Religion^ have done either to themjelves, or o?:e ano- ther.

HAVING in general (hewn the Abfurdity of not being govern 'd by the Reafon of Things in all Matters of Religion, I fliall now in particu- lar, mew the fatal Confequences of not adhering to thofe Notions Reafon dictates concerning the Na- ture of God.

Charron, tho* a Pried of that Church which a- bounds with Superftition, the mod pernicious as well as abfurfd, feems to have a right Notion of Superftition as well as juftly to abhor it, in faying, that c; Superftition, and moil other Errors and De- Ckarron of cc feels in Religion, are, generally fpeaking, ow- wifdom - " ing chiefly to want of becoming and right Ap- p ^^" " prehenfions of God : We debate and bring him - iC down to us ; we compare, and judge him by our- " felves ; wecloath him with our Infirmities, and " then proportion, and fit our Fancy accordingly. " -- -- What horrid Prophanation and Blafphemy " is this!"

*Tis to this Abfurdity of debafing God, and cloathing him with our Infirmities, and judging of him by ourfelves, that the Mediatory Gods a- mongft the Heathen owe their Rife. Had they be- liev’d a fupreme Being was every where, and at all Times knew their Thoughts, they could never have taken fuch a round-about way of addrefling him ;

who
who not only knew what they desired, but their real wants, and what would relieve them, better, than any mediatory beings whatever.

5. They addressed to mediatory beings, to move their greater respect to the supreme being; and their own unworthiness to approach him.

A. This means what unworthy notions they had of the supreme being, since it would be an affront even to a temporal prince, if he was present, and heard everything you said, not to address to him, but to another, to let the prince know what you wanted from him.

The heathen must think, if they thought at all, that those mediatory gods could either escape to the supreme god some reasons he before was ignorant of; or that by their importunities they could prevail on his weakness, to do what otherwise he was not willing to do.

'This heathen notion, as it supposed the supreme god either ignorant or weak; so it made the mediatory gods to have a greater kindness for, and readiness to do good to mankind; and that their solicitations made him better-natured than otherwise he would be: This of course took off their love from the supreme, and placed it on those mediatory gods, upon whose powerful intercessions they so much depended. However, these heathens, allowing one, and but one mod high god, did not so far derogate from the honour of the one true god, as to pretend that the most distinguished among their several mediators was equal to him; equality and mediation beingas inconstant as equality and supremacy; and they would have made then-religion an errant jumble, if they had worship'd these gods sometimes as mediators only; sometimes as sovereign dispensers of things; and sometimes as both together.

Had the heathen believ'd God, to have been a purely-spiritual, invisible being, they cou'd never have supposed him viable to mortals or have thought

thought that an unlimited being cou'd appear under the limited form of a man, or other animal, or
that an Omnipresent Being cou'd any more be pre-
fent in one Place, or Creature, than another ; or
that such a Being cou'd be confin'd to a small Spot
of Earth, while another equally omnipresent was in
Heaven, and a third descend'd from thence, C5V.
Or that one God cou'd be sent on the Errand of an-
other God, after the manner that God Mercury was
by God Jupiter ♦, tho' there was nothing too abfurd
for the Heathen to believe, after they had destroy'd
the Unity of God \ except it was, that Jupiter and
Mercury, the Sender and the Sent, were the fame
God.

The primitive Fathers bitterly inveigh'd against
thefe heathenifh Notions : Juftin Martyr, for in-7 r #"'Oper.
fiance, fays, " None, who have the leaft Sense, will P- 2 "7-E*.
" dare to affirm, that the Maker and Father of the al p. 283. B,
" Univerfe did appear in a small Spot of Earth ; p. 356. E.
" the God of the Univerfe can neither ascend, nor
" descend, or come into any Place." Tertullian
fays, " He would not believe the sovereign God de- Adv. Prax.
" fended into the Womb of a Woman, tho' even ca P- 16 -
" the Scripture itself would fay it." " 'Tis impof- Demon Tv
4t fible, fays Eufebius, that the Eyes of Mortals i. 5
"c would ever fee the Supreme God -, viz. Him, p 248.
" c who is above all things, and whose Effeence is un-
"begotten and immutable." Again, " 'Tis abfurd, Eccl.Hift.I.i.
" and contrary to all Reason, that the unbegotten c. 2. p. 6. C.
"f and immutable Nature of the Almighty God-
"would take the Form of a Man •, or that the Scrip-
"ture mould forge fuch-like Falfities." Miniitius
Felix in his Apology fays, that " The Deity can't ^^VTrans.
"die, nor can any thing which is born be a God : g/j^y c 2-
"That only is divine, which has neither Begin-
"ning nor End -, if the Gods get Children, they
"would get them immortal : We muft conclude
"J thefe Gods to be Men, of whose Birth and Bu-
"rial we are fully fatisfy'd." Thus the Fathers ex-
poused the Pagan Polytheifm'.

an.

C. 20-

76" Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8.

A great deal more, as you may well imagine,
might be faid on this Head ; but now I mall briefly
consider what pernicious Effects the having wrong
and unnatural Conceptions of the Deity, has occa-
ftion'd among Men with relation to themfelves, and
one another.
If we take a general View of those Mischiefs
Mankind have at all times practis'd on a religious
account, either upon themselves or others; we (hall
find them owing to their entertaining such Notions
of God, as are entirely inconformt with his Nature;
and contrary to what their Reason, if attended to,
wou'd inform them of the Design and End of the I
Laws of God.

Had not numbers in all Ages thought,
that God

- delighted in the Pain and Misery of his Creatures;
they cou'd never have imagined, that the best way
to render them acceptable to him, was by torment-
ing themselves with immoderate Watchings, Fad-
ings, Penances, and Mortifications of all Sorts;
and the greater the more pleasing: And even at pre-
fent there are among Christians, Mahometans, and
Pagans, numbers of Men who devote themselves
to Exercises full of Pain and corporal Sufferings,
and either wound, or mangle their own Persons, or
find other ways of tormenting themselves; and in-

deed, the Superstitious everywhere think, the lefs
Mercy they shou'd to their Bodies, the more Mercy
God will shew to their Souls.

Many of the primitive Christians, in stead of fly-
ing, as the Gospel directs, not only ran voluntarily
to Execution, but provok'd their Judges to do them
that favour. And under "Trajan, all the Christians
in a City in Asia came in a body to the Proconsul,
and offer'd themselves to the Slaughter; which made
Tert. ad Sever. mnrn cr y> ®' y e whihappy People, tf ye have a mind to
c. 5. p. 11. die, have ye not Halter's and Precipices enough to end
your Lives *, but ye muft come here for Executioners?
And this was a general practice under the Antonini.

and

Ch. 8. Christianty as Old as the Creation. yj

and Marcus Antonius Severdly reflects on the obstinacy Sec Marc. An-
of the Christians, in running thus headlong to death. j^de rebus
And St. Cyprian labours to comfort those who might AnkilaJnl;
before unhappy, by the ceasing of the then Persecut. Pereg-
tion, to miss the Crown of Martyrdom; tho' one To - 2 - P 5 6 7»
would think there were but few who wanted this Con-. *J S : ^L
folation *, since he says, many of the Clergy, and the I.T^f
for greater part of the Laity apcftatiz'd. But when by p. 500. Fdit.
the Empire's becoming Christian, the Crown of Mar- ? a "? b; Tr
tyrdom was no longer to be obtain'd by the prevail- G f c^ Kb
ing Party of Christians, then exercising Cruelties on Un.'To. 12.*
themselves was esteem'd the next best Thing *, and p. 248, 249.
many Devotees put monstrous Hardships on them: "4- P-3 1 * 
felves, while others chose Poverty* Rags, and Nafti- * ' XOIU 
nefs ; or else retir'd to Caves, Defarts, and other fo-

titary places to figh away their miserable Lives : And 
Ecclefiastic History is full of Miracles done by such 
Madmen asSimeofyStyliteSyVthohiidsmo other Dwel-
ling than a Pillar, on which hefigent the best part of 
his Life; and 'twas owing to these superftitious No-
tions that such numbers oMonafieries and Nunneries 
were soon founded, to the great Opprefion and De-
population of the Chriftian World ; not but that 
the impudent Forgeries of Athanafuts, and other fuch See Athanaf.- 
like Saints about Miracles done by Monks, help'd * A Life of 
to increafe this Superftition *, whileft the Prelates, m'J? 6 

l , . , -s , r o • • 1 Monk, JTo.z. 

the they incourag'd thofe Seventies on others, were p.4^ A&d. 
far from practifing any on themfelves. Jerom of the 

Ha d fuch Notions been adher'd to concerning the Miracles * 
divineGoodnefs, as the Light of Nature dictates, the y** ion tw £ 
Egyptians, and fome other Pagan Nations could ne- Monks. To. 1. 
ever have thought that cutting off the Foreskin (not to P- 2 37- & d - 
be perform'd without great Pain and Hazard) cou'd p ' 24 *" * 
have been efteem'd a religious Duty acceptable to 
a good and gracious God •, who makes nothing in 
vain, much lefs what requires the cutting off, even 
with extreme Danger as well as Anguih. Had Na-
ture requir'd iuch an Operation, Nature, being al-
ways the. fame, wou'd itill have requir'd it,

This 

78 Chrlftlanity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8* 

Can. Chron; This Inftitution, as is prov'd by Marfnam, and 
f/ 3 F & d * f ot ^ cros $ ^ eems t0 be owing to the Egyptians, who 
* thought all to be prophane who ufed it not -, and it 
was after Abraham had been in Egypt, that Circum-
cifion was inftituted -, in order, 'tis likely, to recom-
mend his Pofterity to the Egyptians, on whom they 
were for fome Ages to depend : And what makes 
this the more probable, is, that 'twas not till after 
the Lord had order'd Mofes into Egypt, that the Lord 
Exod. 4. 24. met him by the way in the Inn, and fought to kill him 
for not circumcifmg his Son : And upon Jojhu'a's 
circumcifing the Ifraelites (Circumcifion not being 
obfer'ved during their flay in the Wildernefs, when 
Jofh.5.2- 9. they had no Communication with Egypt) the Lord 
himfelf fays, This day have I rolled away the Re~ 
f roach of Egypt from off you.

The Heathen World muft have very grofs Con-
ceptions, not only of their inferior Gods, but of the
Father of Gods and Men -, when they imagin'd him of fo cruel a Nature, as to be delighted with the butchering of innocent Animals; and that the Stench of burnt Flefh mould be such a sweet-smelling Sa-vour in his Noftrils, as to atone for the Wickednefs of Men ♦, and wicked, no doubt, they were, when they had fuch an Atonement at hand. So that the Harmhfs were burnt to fave the Hurtful; and Men the lefs innocent they grew, the more they deftroy'd the innocent Beads.

Non Bove maclaio Cceleftia Numina gaudent;
Sed, qu<e probanda eft, &JineTefte, Fide.

Ovid. Epift. p. §9. Ep. 20. v. 1 Si,

If the Pagans beliiev'd Beads were not given them for Food, why did they eat them? Or, if they thought they were, why did they ungratefully throw back the Gifts of God on the Donor? Or, why did they not drown, or bury them, rather than make fuch a Stench in burning them, as many times, by the number of Sacrifices, might infect the very Air i

>Tis

Ch. 8. Chrifiianity as Old as the Creation| J{}

'Tis probable, that the Heathen Prkfts who fhar'd with their Gods, and referv'd their bell Bits for themfelves, had the chief Hand in this as well as in all other gainful Superftitions y while the de-luded People, who many Times futter'd by the Scarcity of Provifions, cau'sd by the great Num-ber of Sacrifices, were at vaft Expence in maintain-ing thefe holy Butchers, whose very Trade infpir'd them with Cruelty.

And 'tis probable, this abfurd Notion prevail'd like all other Abfurdities by Degrees, and at firft Sacrifices were only religious Feafts, either in Com-memoration of fome National Benefit; where after ♦ God, their great Benefactor, was celebrated, they commemorated their particular Benefactors ♦, or elfe Feafts were made on a private Account by the Ma-iler of a Family, upon {hearing his Sheep, gather-ing in the Fruits or the Earth, &d where thofe that a1Bted him were entertained, and joyfully joyn'd in giving Thanks to the Author of thofe Bieflings, without deftroying, or burning any Part of the Creature given for their Ufe; and the Ma-tter of the Family was no doubt, Mailer of the Ceremonies at his own Feaft. But this fimple Me-thod notpleafing certain Perfons, who were refo1v'd to have the beft fhare in all thofe religious Feafts,
they persuaded the People that it was necessary some part of the Flesh of Animals was to. be burnt to feed the hungry Nostrils of the Deity, delighted with the sweet Savour of burnt Flesh j. and the better part to be reserved unburnt for themselves, to whom the (laying of the Animals, and the offering them up was appropriated. Tis then no wonder the Number of the Gods multiply'd, since the more Gods the more Sacrifices, and the Priests had better Fare; and that they might not want plentiful Feaftings, the People were made to believe, that they cou'd learn their Fortunes from the Intrails of the Beasts they sacrificed; and this Method continues to this day in those Places, where

they

j Q Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8,

they have not found out an easier and better Way $f cheating the People.

B. You seem to be of the Sentiments of the Poet, who says,

Natural Religion were easy first, and plain; Tales made it Mystery\ Offerings made it Gain: Sacrifices and Shews were at length prepared. The Priests eat Roafi-Meat, and the People star'd,

A. The Pagan sacrificing of Beasts was not so bad in itself, as what it soon occasion'd, human Sacrifices \ which Men, being of greater Value than Beads, were belie v'd to be more acceptable; and Parents, (lifting all natural Affections, offered up their own Children, as the most precious Gifts they cou'd bestow on the Gods \, except offering up their own Lives, and sacrificing themselves: And as this Sacrifice was thought moil meritorious, fo the more excellent the Persons, the more agreeable the Sacrifice \, and there are even at this Day, a Number of superflitious People in India, who out of great Devotion throw themselves under the Wheels of those heavy Chariots, which carry the Images of their Gods, and are crush'd to death; and others, out of the same miflaken Zeal, cut off their Flesh, and mangle their Limbs till they fall down dead: Which makes the People rejoice at their Sufferings, and reverence them as moil holy Martyrs; concluding that nothing but the Truth of their Religion cou'd enable them to shew such terrible Marks of Zeal on themselves, and become voluntary Martyrs.

B. I pity those deluded People, and wonder how .Men can persuade themselves, that the Mercy of
Heaven can be purchas'd by such Barbarities, as
Human Nature left to itself would start at.

A. That the Priests were everywhere for human Sacrifices, is no wonder \ Tince they had the
appointing the Men, whom the Gods did the great
Honour to accept for Burnt- Offerings : And indeed,

after

Ch. 8. Cbriftiantty as OU as the Creation.

after People once gave themselves up to believe in
their Priests, there was nothing too absurd to be receiv'd as divine. When the Ethiopians \ for inftance,
were once perfuaded that their Priests were intimate-
y acquainted with -the Will of the^Gods, it was too late to difpute any Orders they pretended to bring
from them ; and therefore, their Kings, as well as
private Perfons, well-knowing that the Commands of
the immortal Gods were not to be difputed by Mor- Diod. Sic. 1. *
tals, mod religioufly executed themfelves as foon as P '02.B.'d.
the Pleafure of the Gods were fignify'd to them by
thofe facred MefTengers of their Will \ and this blind
Devotion might have continu'd till how, had not an
Infidel Prince, bred up in the profane Philofophy
of the Greeks ', put a flop to it by furprizing, and
defroyrng at once all thofe holy Impoftors.

We learn from Bernier and Others, that it has
been an immemorial Cuftom in Indofitan' for the
Women (fo great a Power has Superftition even o-
ver that fearful Sex) to burn themfelves with their
dead Husbands, adorn'd with all the incombuftible
Riches they cou'd procure on their own Account; or
that the Folly of others would fend by them- to their-dead Friends : These their Priests fecure to them-
elves, by telling the credulous People that the
Allies of the Dead, and all burnt with them, are too
facred to be touch'd by any but themfelves.

B. Tho' human Sacrifices obtain'd among the
Heathen, yet fure the ~ Levi thai Law did not ap-
prove, or countenance' any fuch Practices.

A. Authors are divided, and they who main-
tain the Affirmative fay, That the Levitical Law
d i ft ingui flies between ordinary Vows, and thofe
Vows where any thing is devoted to the Lord *, and
this they pretend is plain from Levit. 27. whereaf-
ther many furprizing things about common Vows, by
which the Things themfelves, or Money in lieu of
them, were to be given to the Priests ; at Per. 28.
it comes to things devoted, and fays, JSFot with/land-
ings no devoted thing that a Man /ball devote unto the
G Lord,

^~ Chrijlianiity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 8.

Lord) of all that he hath, both of Men and Beajis,
and of the Field of his Fojfefflon, Jhall be fold or re^
deem'd; every thing devoted is mofi ho T y unto the Lord,
And what is meafitby being meft holy unto the Lord,
is explained in the next Verfe, None devoted* which
Jhall be devoted of Man Jhall be redeemed -, but Jhall
furely be put to death. And they lay it was before
declar'd, that whatever was the Lord's, as the Firft-born of Man and Beaf, was to be [lain ; if God did
Eralfto. 12, not order its Redemption. The Fir ft -born of Man
13, & 34. 19, was to be redeemed ; and that of anAfs, if not redeemed
20. "by a Lamb, was to have its Neck broke ; and the Cap-
tives taken in War, which fell to the Lcrd 9 s Share,
there being no Order for redeeming, were, as is
own'd by all, to be Jlain.

The Prophet Micah reckons the putting every
devoted Thing to death among the Jewifh Inftitu-
Mic.6.6, to 8. tions, in faying, Wherewith f hall I come before the
Lord, and how myfelf before the high God ? Shall I
come before him with Burnt-OffTerings, with Calves of
a Year eld ? Will the Lord be pleafed with Thoufands
of Rams, or with ten Thoufands of Rivers of Oil ?
Shall I give my Firft-born for my Tranfgreffion ; the
Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul ? He hath
Jhewed thee, O Man, what is good ; and what doth
the Lord require of thee ; but to do juftly, and to love
Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?

Here the facrificing of a Man's own Children
is mentioned equally with the facrificing of Beafcs,
which is allowed to be a Jewifh Institution •, how
abfurdfy muft the Prophet be llippos'd to have ar-
gu'd, after he had preierr'd Juft.ice and Mercy to a
Thing commanded by Goci, if he mould go en to
prefer it before a thing abhor'd by God !

If there could be any doubt in this Matter, Jep-
tba's Vow would clear it up •, for this Jewifh Hero
made the Vow when the Spirit of the Lord came up-
on him, and after making it he wrought a great De-
leverance for Ifrael : The Words or" the Vow are,
It 'balfoever (or rather Whofocvcr) comsib forth of
the
Ch. 8. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 

the Doors of my House to meet me, when I return in Peace from the Children </? Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's \ and I will offer it up to him for a Burnt-Offering. A Vow made by such an extraordinary Person, and upon such an extraordinary Occasion, looks as tho' something extraordinary pleasing to *' God* was design'd by that Vow ♦, which, tho' domestic Animals might have been sacrificed, much relate to Persons capable of acting with Design t, viz. of coming out of his House to meet him after the Victory *, which to his great Grief his only Child did. Had there been any Way of dispensing with this solemn Vow, he, since he had two Months Time to consider, would, no doubt, have found it out; but he say?, / have opened my Mouth unto the Lord) and I cannot go back: and he did with her according to his Vow. And his Daughter, worthy of a better Fate, was willing her Father would execute his cruel Vow, only regretting that she died without being a Mother in Israel; for that Reason she was yearly mourn'd by the Daughters of Israel.

St. Jerome, as well as the Author of the Questions E P—tojuam' to the Orthodox, thinks that Jeptha's Piety in sacrificing his Daughter, was the Reason of St. Paul's p. 454 a. numbering him among the just Persons. And 455. C.

Bishop Smalridge, in his Sermon about Jeptha's Vow, says, "That all the Fathers, as well as our own Homilies, own that he sacrificed his Daughter."

The Jews could not think it absolutely unlawful for a Father to sacrifice an innocent Child, since Abraham was highly extol'd for he—.g read;—to fa* crifice his only Son, and that t6o without th 18aft Expostulation ♦, tho' he was importunate with God to spare an inhospitable, I'd—atrous, an incefs us City.

No Wonder that a Tingle Person in the Power of another might be devoted to God, since free, and independent Nations were so devoted; fmd it was by Virtue of such a Vow, which Israel vowed unto—

G 2 ths

84 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8.
the Lord, that the Canaanites, who had never done
Numb. 21. Ifrael the leaft Injury, Men, Women, and Chil-

Chap 11 %2 d ren > were t0 ^ e u tter ty deftroy'd.

Had the Author of the Epiflle to the Hebrews,
who reckons Jeptha among the Jewifh Heroes,
thought the Jews abhor'd all human Sacrifices, he
would not, at leaft, without fome Apology for the
Lawfulness of human Sacrifices, have declar'd one
fuch Sacrifice, where the fame Perfon was both Sa-
crificer and Sacrifice, to have been of infinite Va-
27-3ue; in faying, that Chrift offer' d up himfelf 
and that He put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himfelf 
and endeavors to fnew the Hebrews, that the Blood of
the Beads that were facrifced, was of no Value in
comparifon of the Blood of Chrift, who, thro' the
eternal Spirit, offer* d up himfelf without Spot to God.

B. Admitting the Jewifh Law allowed hu-
man Sacrifices, yet the Chriftian Religion, fure,
forbids (fince Chrift, according to the Apoftles,
sacrificed himfelf) all human Sacrifices.

A. If putting innocent, and conftientious Men
to death on account of Religion, may be call'd/forwarding them, there have been more human Sacrifices than ever were before in the World; and thofe too not offer'd up to God, but to the Devil, by
burning their Bodies, and fentencing their Souls to
Hell--; and even at this Day the Papifts y to per-
fuade the Spectators, that thofe they condemn to
the Flames immediately go to Hell, drefs them up
in a San- Benito, or a Coat painted all over with
Flames and Devils •, and then take their Leave or
each Sufferer, with this charitable Expreflion, Jam
ayiimam tuam tradins Diabolo.

B. I muft own, this Bigotry, which has had fuch
terrible Effects among Chriftians, was little felt, or
known in the Pagan World.

A. Is not this cursed Bigotry owing to the mod
unworthy Notions Bigots have entertain'd of the di-
vine Perfections, imagining they do Service to the
Creator, by hurting, and deftroying his Creatures?

The

Ch. 8. Chrijliamty as Old as the Creation. 85

The fiery Zeal of fuch Wretches is capable of any
Mifchief: Mod other Men, tho' ever fo wicked,
have fome Remains of Pity and Humanity, fome
Checks of Confcience, and tho' ever fo much pro-
vok'd, Titne will affuage their Anger; but the Bigot feels not the leaft Remorfe, nor can Time abate his Fury; and he is fo far from having any Pity, that he glories in the cruellef Actions, and thinks the more hellif Facts he commits, the more he merits Heaven; and very often gets the Reputa-rtion of a Saint, for acting the Part of a Devil. So that his Notions of God and Religion, ferve only to make him infinitely a worfe Man, than if he had been without any Belief; for then he could have no Motives from the next World for doing Mifchief; nor would his Difbelief ftrip him of his Humanity, or hinder him, if he judg'd rightly of his own In-tereft, from acting fo by his Fellow-Creatures, as, taking in the whole of his Life, was best for him to do.

B. You repreffent Bigotry more odious than it is, in making it worfe than Atheifm itfelf.

A. As Bigotry is the word Sort of Superftition, fo you know the Philofophers in general fuppofe Superftition to be worfe than Atheifm itfelf. * u "T'o'ci' 16 * tarch, in particular, makes it his Bufinefs, in his Tract of Deifidemony, or Superftition, to prove that Atheifm, tho' anOpinion falfe, and even ftupid, yet is far lefs hurtful to Men than Superftition; and re- reflects lefs Difhonour on the Deity itfelf: For he in- p. 171. A. terprets J)eifidemony to be the continual Dread of a Deity, no lefs mifchievous than powerful; which is the molt odious Character that can belong to any intellectual Being, and has given birth to thofe ftoock-ing Notions, and difmal Rites in divine Worhip, that have either run Men into Atheifm, and exposd Reli- gion itfelf to Ridicule and Contempt; or made Man- kind the Dupe of designing Knaves, and taught fierce Bitot s to exercife, and then fansify the moft inhuman rarbaritus.— "

G x " Thb

86 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8.

p. 167. C,D. « The Atheift, fays he, knows no God at all; " the Superfluous none but what is monfrous and " terrible *, miflaking for dreadful, what is moft kind " and beneficent *, for tyrannical, what is truly pa- " ternal; for mifchievously inclin'd, what is full of " providential Care *, nay, for a Being brutally fa- " iC vage and fierce, what is meer Goodnefs itfelf. p. 169. E, F. " s na li then, adds be, the Atheift be counted impious, " and not this superftitious Perfom much more fo? I, cc for my part, had rather Men fhoudf say there is " no fuch Perfom as Plutarch, than that he is a Man " inconfiant, fickle, prone to Anger, ready to re-
p. 170. D. " venge himself upon the flighted Occafion, and full
" of Indignation for meer Trifles, &c. And yet this
6C is no more than what the Superfluous think of
" the Deity —, whom of confequence they nioft as well
V hate as fear; They worship, indeed, and adore
'" him, and fo do Men even thofe very Tyrants they
p. ??1 —A, " would be glad of an Opportunity to deitroy. The
&c * " Atheift contributes not in the lead to Superflition;

" but Superflition having given out fo hideous an
*" Idea of the Deity, some have been frighted into
cc the utter Difbelief of any fuch Being, becaufe they
tc think it much better, nay, more reafoonable, that
" there mould be no Deity, than one whom they
*\' fee more reafoon to hate, and abominate, than to
p. 171 . E. << love, honour and reverence. Thus inconfiderate
" Men, shock-d at the Deformity of Superflition,
" run directly into its oppofite Extreme, Atheifm,
" heedlefly fkipping over true Piety, that is the Gol-
<\ c den Mean between both." So much for this Philo-
fopher of the Gentiles, I fhall now quote a noble Chri-
fian Philofopher, who fays, " Atheifm leaves a Man
JSaeon's Ef— " t0 Senfe, to Philosophy, to natural Pity, to Laws,
fays, jp. 9 . (C TQ e p Uta tion i all which may be Guides , k to an
" outward moral Virtue, tho 9 Religion were not :
*? But Superflition difmounts all thefe, and erecleth
" an abfolute Monarchy in the Minds of. Men.
f 6 Therefore Atheifm did never perturb States, for ic
*< makes Men wary of themelves, as looking no fur-

** ther;

Gh. 8. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. 2j

** ther : And we fee the Times inclining to Atheifm
*" (as the Time of ' Augitftus Cafar) were civil Times.
<c But Superfition hath been the Con fuini on of many
" States, and bringeth in a new Primum Mobile ,that
" ravifheth all the Spheres of Government."

I grant that next to a real Bigot, an Atheifli in Maf-
quarade may do moll mischiefj but then it is by hiding
the Atheif, and perforating the Bigot —, and under
Colour of promoting Religion, advancing Prieftcraft.
And there are no fmall number of thefe Atheifls, if
what the famous Scaliger fays is true, Quicumque Je- Scaligerana
fuita vel Ecclejiaftici Roma in honoribus vhunt, Athei P' I2 **
funt. And Men muft have a great deal of Charity
to think better of any Proteftant, whose pretended
Zeal carries him, contrary to the Principles of his
Religion, into percuting Meafures.

Had the Heathens diftinguifli'd themelves by
Creeds made out of Spite to one another, and mutu-
ally percuted each other about the Worfhip of their
Gods, they would soon have made the Number of
their Votaries as few as the Gods they worhipp'd,
but we don't find (except in Egypt, that Mother-land
of Superftition) they ever quarrell'd about their Gods,
 tho' their Gods sometimes quarrel'd, and fought a-
bout their Votaries : No, it was a Maxim with them,
Deorum injuria, Diis cur a.

By the universal Liberty that was allow'd among
the Ancients, " Matters (as a yoble Author obferves) Letter of En-
were- fo ballanc'd, that Reafon had fair Play *, thuliafm, p.
" Learning and Science flourish'd -, wonderful was 18,al * 28 > 2 9*
" the Harmony and Temper, which arose from thefe
" Contrarieties. Thus Superftition and Enthufiafm
" were mildly treated; and being let alone, they .
" never rag'd to that degree as to occafion Blood-
" shed, Wars, Perfections, and Devaftations *, but
" a new Sort of Policy, has made us leap tjae

" Bounds of natural Humanity, and out of a super-
" natural Charity, has taught us the way of plaguing
< one another naft devoutly. It has rais'd an An-
^ tipathy, that no temporal Intereft ccqld ever do,

G 4 " and

88 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 8*
\( \text{c< and entail'd on us a mutual Hatred to all Eternity.} \)

1b. 388. " And favageZeal, with meek and pious Semblance,
" works dreadful Mafacre ; and for HeavenVfake
" (horrid Pretence!) makes defolate the Earth."

Charaarifl. And as this noble Author obferves, " The Xevs

V0I.3.P.153, cc fy yi <^, ( or t he Jupiter of.Strangers) was among
x ** % " the Ancients, one of the folemn Characters of
" Divinity, the peculiar Attribute of the fupreme
«« Deity ; benign to Mankind, and recommending
16 universal Love, mutual Kindnefs and Benignity
" between the remote\f, and moft unlike of human
" Race. Such was the antient Heathen Charity,
"< and pious Duty towards the whole of Mankind ;
"both thofe of different Nations and different " Worfpip."

But, good God ! how different a Character do
Bigots give us of the Deity, making him an unjun

cruel, and inconfiftent Being ; requiring all Men to
judge for themfelves, and act according to their
Confciences ; and yet authorizing fome among them
to judge for others, and to punim them for not act-
ing, according to the Confciences of thofe Judges,
ths ever fo much againft their own.

These Bigots thought they were authoris'd tp
punifh all thofe that differ with them in their reli-
gious Worfpip, as God's Enemies; but had they con-
lider'd, that God alone could difcern Mens Hearts,,
and alone difcover whether any, by confcientioufly
offering him a wrong Worfpip, could become his
Enemies ; and that infinite Wifdom beft knew how
to proportion the Punifhment to the Fault, as well
as infinite Power how to inflict it ; they would, fare-
ly, have left it to God to judge for himfelf, in a Caufe
which immediately related to himfelf; and where
they were not fo much as Parties concerned, and as
likely to be miftaken as thofe they would punifh.
Can one, without Horror, thijnly of Mens breaking
through all the Rules of doing as they would be done
unto, in order to fet themfelves up for Standards of
Truth for God as well as Man ? Do not thefe im-
pious

Ch. 8. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. 8p

pious Wretches fuppofe, that God is not able to judge
for himfelf ; at lead, not able to execute his own
Judgment ? And that therefore, he has Recourfe,
forfooth, to their fuperior Knowledge or Power ;
and they are to revenge his Injuries, root out his
Enemies, and reflore his loft Honour, tho' with the
Deftru&ion of the better Part of Mankind ? But,

To do the Propagators of thefe blafphemous No-
tions Juflice, they do not throw this Load of Scan-
dal on the Law of Nature ; or fo much as pretend
from thence to authorife their execrable Principles ;
but endeavour to support them by traditional Reli-
gion, efpeially by mifinterpreted Texts from the.
Old Teftament •, and thereby make, not only Na-
tural and Reveal'd Religion, but the Ol'd and New
Teftament (the latter of which requires doing Good
both to Jews and Gentiles) contradict each other.
But to return :

If what the Light of Nature teaches us concern-
ing the divine Perfections, when duly attended to, is not only sufficient to hinder us from falling into Superstition of any Kind whatever •, but, as I have already shown, demonstrates what God, from his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, can, or cannot command; how is it possible that the Law of Nature and Grace can differ? How can it be conceived, that God's Laws, whether internally or externally reveal'd, are not at all times the same, when the Author of them is, and has been, immutably the same for ever?

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Human Happiness being the ultimate Design and End of all Traditional, as well as Original Revelation, they must both prefer the same Means, for the same Ends; and that the ultimate End of all God's Laws, and consequently of all Religion, is human Happiness; yet there are several things to be considered subordinate Ends: And how can original and traditional Religion differ? since it is allowed by all, that however immutable these subordinate Ends are, yet the Means to promote the same Ends are various and mutable.

A. Your allowing these Means to be various and mutable, supposes no such Means as prescribed in the Gospel; but that, agreeably to the Law of Nature, they are to be varied as best suits that End for which they were ordained. To imagine the contrary, is to make things dependent on Circumstances, independent •, things that are proper only under some Circumstances, necessary under all Circumstances; nay, to make Ends mutable, and Means immutable; and that these are to continue the fame, though by Change of Circumstances they become prejudicial; nay, destructive to the End for which
alone they were ordained. The more necessary any End is, there's the more Reason for People to be left at liberty to consider, in the vast Variety of Circumstances, and those too perpetually changing, what Means may be most proper for obtaining that End; since these having no Worth in themselves, can only be valued, according as they more or less conduce to the Purpose they were intended for; and where God does not interpose, it is incumbent on human discretion, chiefly ordained for this End, to make such Alterations as the Reason of things requires.

Did not God always employ the most fit and most suitable Means, he would act contrary to the Rules prescribed him by his own unerring Reason; and so he would, did he not leave Men at liberty to use such Means, as their Reason, given for that Purpose, told them was fittest to be done, in all those Circumstances in which he had placed them; because that would be requiring of them a Conduct contrary to his own → and consequently, a Conduct highly irrational: And therefore to alter one's Conduct, as Circumstances alter, is not only an Act of the greatest Prudence and Judgment, but is consistent with the greatest Steadiness.

As far as divine Wisdom excels human, so far the divine Laws must excel human Laws in Clearness and Perceptivity; as well as other Perfections. "Whatever is confused or perplexed, can never come from the clear Fountain of all Knowledge, nor that which is obscure, from the Father of inexhaustible Light +, and as far as you suppose God's Laws are not plain to any Part of Mankind, so far you derogate from the Perfections of those Laws, and the Wisdom, and the Goodness of the divine Legislature; who, since he has the framing of the Understanding of those to whom he dictates his Laws, can't but adapt one to the other. But how can we say, that infinite Wisdom speaks plainly to Mankind thro' all Generations, except we allow that his Commands extend not beyond moral Things; and that in all Matters of a mutable Nature, which can only be considered as Means, he obliges them to act according as they judge most proper for bringing about those Ends.

Upon
Upon any other Hypothesis, human Laws have vastly the Advantage of the divine; as being published in the Language the Subjects understand, in a plain simple Style, without any allegorical, metaphorical, hyperbolical, or other forc'd Way of expression; and if Time discovers any Inconvenience, or any unforeseen Difficulties want to be clear'd up, the Legislature is ready at hand; or if in the mean time, any Doubts about interpreting the Laws arise, there are Handing Judges (accountable to the Legislature) in whose Determinations People are to acquiesce. But Mankind are not to expect, that the divine Legislator will, from time to time, make any Change in his Laws, and communicate them to all Nations in the Languages they understand; nor can there be any Judges with a Power to oblige People by their Determinations *, because such a Power being without any Appeal, is the same as a Power to make divine Laws; and consequently the only Tribunal God has erected here on Earth (distant from that he has mediately appointed by Men for their mutual Defence) is every Man's own Conscience; which as it can't but tell him, that God is the Author of all things, fo it must inform him, that whatever he finds himself obliged to do by the Circumstances he is in, he is obliged by God himself, who has dispos'd things in that Order, and plac'd him in those Circumstances. It is for want of observing this Rule, that the divine Writings are render'd so obscure; and the Infinity of Sermons, Notes, Comments and Paraphrases, which pretend to speak plainer than God himself, have increased this Obscurity. If whatever tends to the Honour of God, and Good of Man, is evident from the Light of Nature; whence comes all this Uncertainty, Perplexity, Doubts and Difficulties? Is it not chiefly owing to the denying People that Liberty, which God, out of his infinite Goodness, has allowed them by the Law of Nature; and hindring them from judging * for themselves of the Means which

which best tend to promote this End; and imposing on them, by the Terrors of temporal and eternal Punishment, such needless Speculations and useless Observances, as can't be consider'd either as Means or Ends?
B. You know that Divines, tho' they can't deny what you fay to be true in general-, yet they think there's an Exception as to Church-Matters, and that here Men are not permitted to ufe fuch Means as they themſelves think beſt; but fuch only as thoſe, who fet up to be their Spiritual Governors y mall appoint.

A. Nothing can be more abfurd, than to fup-poſe God hath taken this Power from the People, who have an Intereſt to preferv'e Religion in its Purity (every Deviation from it being to their Prejudice) and placed it uncontrollably in the Hands of Men, who, having an Intereſt in corrupting it, do, gene-rally fpeaking, fo manage Matters, as if Religion was the Means, and their Power the End for which it was intituted. We do not find, that the Maho-metan Clergy caufe any Confuſion or Diforder among the Muffelmen; and the Pagan Prieſts are fcarce taken Notice of in Story, fo little Mifchief did they do; while all Church-Hiftory is full of the vileſt, and moll pernicious Things perpetrated by Chriftian Prieſts. TheChriftian Morals, you muſt own, are too pure and plain to caufe this Difference*, what then can it be imputed to, but that independent Power which thoſe Prieſts ufurp'd*, which, tho' they claimed it as derived from Heaven for promoting godly Difcipline, has occaſioned general Diforder and Confuſion? Endleſs have been the Quarrels ambitious Prieſts have had with Princes upon the Account of this Power, to the flopping of Juſtice, and Subverſion of almoſt all Civil Polity: Nor have Eccleſiaſticks been leſs embroil'd among themſelves, each Set ftriving to engrofs a Pow-er which can belong to no Mortal. And the Bifhops, when they had no; others to conteſt with, have

94 Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. g*

have ever contended among themſelves about Supe-riority* the Rights of their Sees> and the Limits of their Jurifdictions; and when their Choice de-pended on the People, they frequently, efpeciaſly in their Contentions about the greater Sees, run things on to Blood and Slaughter: And I appeal to their own Hiftorians, whether the Eccleſiaſticks ever corrupted any Method to obtain this Power; and whenever they got it, whether an infupportable Ty-ranny over Body and Mind, with the utter Ruin of Religion, was not the Confequence? And whether it had not, where exercis'd to the Highb, more fatal Effects than all the Ŝaperſcition of the Gentiles? Look the World round > you mall every where find
Men more or lefs miserable, as they have been more or lefs debarr'd the Right of acting according to the bed of their Understanding in Matters relating to Religion.

While every Church, or Congregation of Chrift- tians, as in the Apoſt.olic Days, choſe and main- tain'd their ownMiniiters, and order'd among them- selves what requir'd a ſpecial Determination, no In- convenient *es happened; but as ſoon as this fi- triple and natural Method was broke, and the Clergy were formed into a cloſely-united Body, with that Sub- ordination and Dependence they had to one ano- ther ^ the Chriftian World was enQav'd, and Reli- gion forc'd to give way to deſtructive Su perdition. Which could never have happen'd, if the Chrift- nans had obſerved theſe general Rules, obligatory by the Light of Nature, as well as the Goſpel \ and which are alike given to every Chriftian, and oblige one as well as another ; fuch as, " Doing all things " for the Honour of God, for Edification, for Or- * c der, for Decency v for fleeing falfc Teachers, Se- " ducers, Deceivers; for avoiding Scandal, and of- " fending weak Brethren, &V." And here fince every one muſt judge for himſelf, and can't make ∼ over this Right to any other, muſt not all Church- Matters be manag'd by. common Con lent I

In

Ch. 9. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 9 5

In a Word, If we confider the infinite Variety of Circumſtances •, the different Manners and Cutfoms that prevail in different Places •, the Prejudices of the weak, ignorant, and superftitious •, and the De- signs of ambitious Men ; there's nothing of a muta- ble Nature, if once efteem'd immutably fixed by God, but muſt fometimes become prejudicial to the End it was intended to promote ; efpecially in a Re- ligion defign'd to extend over the whole World, as well as to laſt to the End of it. There are but two Ways of avoiding this Inconvenience ; either to fup- pofe that the Founder of this Religion will from time to time, himſelf ordain fuch Alterations in Things of a mutable Nature, as thoſe Circumſtances, which are different in different Places, do require ; or elfe, that he has left the Parties concern 'd, to act in all Places according to Difcretion in fuch mutable Matters.

B. You labour this Point ; but there are few of your Sentiment.
A, If you mean Ecclefiafticks, perhaps, you are in the right; tho* I am fure, I have the Church of England on my Side, if judicious Hooker may be allowed to undertand its Confittution, as well as the Nature of Ecclejiaftical Polity, He, in the tenth Section of his Third Book, maintains this Proportion, that " Neither God being the Author of Laws, nor his committing them to Scripture, nor the Continuance of the End for which they were instituted, is Reafon furHcient to prove they are unchangeable : " Where he admirably well diftinguifhes between Things in their own Nature immmutable, and Matters of outward Order and Polity, which hefupposes dailychangeable -, and fays, " The Nature of every Law muft be judged by the End for which it was made ;, and by the Aptnefs of the Thing therein prefcribed to the fame End. - When a Thing does ceafe to be available to the End which gave it Being, the Continuance of it muft appear faperfluous. - That which the No-

* c celmy

96 Chriflianiety as Old as the Creation. Ch. 9.

" ceffity of fome special Time doth caufe to be en-
M joined, binds no longer than that Time ; but does afterwards become free. Laws, tho' both ordained of God himfelf, and the Ends for which they were ordained continuing, may notwith-
iC (landing ceafe, if by Alteration of Time, or u Perfons, they are found inefficient to attain to u that End. In which Refpec1: why may we not <c prefume, that God doth even call for fuch a Change or Alteration, as the very Nature of the Things themfelves doth make neceffary ? -

" God never ordained any Thing which could be better'd, yet many Things he hath, that have '« been chang'd, and that for the better *, that which M fucceedeth as better now, when Change is requir'd C6 had been worfe, when that which is now chang'd <c was instituted. - In this Cafe Men do not pre-
<c fume to change God's Ordinance, but yield there - * unto, requiring itfelf to be chang'd." And heap-
plies this Reafon honefily,. in faying, " The beft *
" Way for us were to hold, even as they do, that in the Scripture there mint needs be found fome <c particular Form of Church- Polity, which God has " inftituted, and which, for that very Caufe be-
" longeth to all Churches, to all Times *, but with « c any fuch partial Eye to refpecl otirelves, and by «' Cunning to make thofe Things feem the truefl, " which are the fittefl to ferve our Purpofe, is a
"c Thing we neither like, nor mean to follow." And let me add, that mod, if not all our Divines from the Reformation’, till the Time of the Laudean Faction, were in the fame Sentiments—, and from the Mutability of fuch Things as are Means to an End, prov’d there could be no particular Form of Church-Polity eftablifh’d by divine Authority: And they argu’d from the Example of good King Hezekiah, "Who, without Regard to the falutiferous Virtue the Brea?i Serpent once had, broke it to pieces whe$ perverted to a superftitious Ufc. And,

All

Ch. g. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. QJ

All, who believe Means in their own Nature, are mutable, muftj if confident with themfelves, a-gree with Mr. Hooker; This is fo very apparent, that nothing but Intereft can make anyone talk other-wife; therefore, I fhall only quote the late Dean of Canterbury, who, in a Sermon preach’d before the Univerfity of Cambridge, and publifhed at their Re-queft, fays, "That the very Temper, and Compo-

ition of the Scripture is fuch, as neceffarily refers cambr. p.i l. us to fome other Rule •, for this is a Syitem of " mix'd, and very different Duties, fome of eternal " and univerfal Obligation; others occafional and " particular, limited to Times and Circumftances; " and when thefe Occafions and Circumftances " ceas’d, the Matter of the Command was loft •, " and the whole Reafon and Force of it funk of

courfe: Now thefe Things being oftentimes de-
" liver'd promifcuoufly, and in general Terms, Men " muft of necefllity have recourfe to fome other Rule* " to diftinguifh and guide them in making the juft " Difference between the one, and the other fort."

And what other Rule is there, by which we can diftinguifh rightly in this important Matter, but what arifes from the Things themfelves; thofe which have an innate Worth and Goodnefs, are of an e6er j

nal and univerfal Obligation •, others, which have no fuch Worth, can be confider'd only as Means oc-
cafionally accommodated to particular Times, Pla-

ces, Perfons, and Circumftances •, which, of courfe* muft ceafe to oblige, when they ceafe to conduce to the End for which they were appointed •, or others become more conducive; And this will more fully appear* if we confider, as the above-mention'd Au-

thor obferves* that " The Circumstances of human 1b, p. 13,' " Life are infinite* and depend on a Multitude of te Accidents not to be forefeen; and confequently " not to be provided againft. Hence Laws muft cc run in general Terms, and fometimes the Intent
** of the Law is belt fulfill'd by running contrary
" to the Letter $ and therefore, Reafon and Ho-
H " nefty,

Chrijlianiy as Old as the Creation. Ch. 9,

" nefty muft guide us to the Fitnefs of the Thing,
" and a great Scope muft be left to Equity and
" Difcretion." And furely, we muft not fuppofe
thatReafoon, Honefty, Equity, and Difcretion will
teach us one thing, and the Traditional Law ano-
ther *, efpécially confidering that in all God's Laws,
? ris the Reafoon of the Law that makes it Law.

B. By the Reafoining of fuch Divines, I can't
perceive the Ufe of any occafional Commands, fince
they fuppofe thefe can't oblige People longer than
they judge it fit to obferve them ; otherwife there
could be no Difference between occafional and etern-
al Precepts *, and what they judge fit and proper
to be done, they are obliged to do without any oc-
cafional Commands; fo that according to them,
whether there are, or are not any occafional Com-
mands, human Difcretion is left at liberty to judge
what is fit, or not fit to be obferv'd ; which, I think,
is fuppofing all fuch Commands needlefs : Yet the
Authors you quote fuppofe, contrary to your Hypo-
ifeifiS) there have been fuch Commands ; particu-
larly in relation to the Jewifh State.

A. The Jews taking the Story to be literally
ture, being upon their coming out of Egypt a free
People, had a Right by the Law of Nature to
chooe whatGovernment and Governor theypleas'd ;
and God would not act fo inconfiftent a Part, as to
deprive them of any of thefe Rights he had given
them by the Law of Nature ; and therefore did not	
take upon him the civil Adminiftration of their
Affairs, till he had obtained their exprefs Content;
fo that here he acted not as Governor of the Uni-
verfe, but by a Power derived from the People by
virtue of the Hcreb Covenant ; and the Prefumption is,
that where there is no fuch Contract, God will not
exercife fuch a Power; efpecially confidering that tho' the Jews rejected God himfelf from reigning
over them', and were for chooing a new King, yet
he bids Samkel thrice in the fame Chapter, to hearken
to the yoke of the People ; but of this, and all other A r-

gtimChts of this nature, more fully hereafter. B.

Ch. 9. Chriflianiy as Old as the Creation. 99
B. The Reasons you have given do not fully satisfy me, but that some Things may be required by God as Governor of the Universe, which are merely positive; nay, that Rules and Ceremonies, Signs, or Symbols might be arbitrarily enjoined, and fo intermixed with Matters of Morality, as to bind the Consciences of all Men at all Times; and therefore, if you please, we will review this Point.

A. With all my Heart; for this alone is the Point that must decide the Question, Whether Natural and Revealed Religion do really differ? As for Natural Religion, that, as you well know, takes in all those Duties which flow from the Reason and Nature of Things, and the Relations we (stand to God and our Fellow-Creatures); and consequently was there an instituted Religion which differs from that of Nature, its Precepts must be arbitrary, as not founded on the Nature and Reason of Things, but depending on mere Will and Pleasure; otherwise it would be the same with Natural Religion: And tho' 'tis difficult to prove a Negative, yet I think, I can fully mew you, by adding other Reasons to those already mention'd, that God, the great Governor of the Universe, can't give Mankind any such Precepts; and consequently, that Natural, and Revealed Religion only differ in the Manner of their being deliver'd.

CHAP. X.

Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 10.

CHAP. X.

God does not act arbitrarily or interpose unnecejdrily; but leaves those Things, that can only be consider'd as Means (and as such are in their own Nature mutable) to human Discretion, to determine as it thinks most conducing to those Things, which are in their own Nature obligatory.

IN order to settle this Point, 'tis necessary to see how far this Natural Law extends, it not only commands that Evil Doers should be punish'd, but that Men, according to the different Circumstances they are under, should take the most proper Methods for doing it, and vary as Exigences require, so it not only requires that Justice should be done Men as to their several Claims, but that the reader!, and most
effectual Way of doing it mould be taken •, and the fame may be faid of all other Inftances of this na-
ture. If God interpofes further, and prefcribes a par-
ticular Way of doing thefe Things, from which Men
at no Time, or upon no account ought to vary; he
not only interpofes uneceffarily, but to the Prejudice
of the End for which he thus interpofes. And as to
Matters relating to the Worhip of God, it is the
Voice of Nature that God fhould be publickly wor-
ship'd i and that Men mould do this in the moft
convenient Way, by appointing amongft themfelves
Time, Place, Perfons, and all other Things which
require fpecialDeterminationi: And, certainly, there's
as much Reafon that Things' of this nature fhould
be left to human Difcretion, as any other whatever;
considering the different Conditions and Circum-
stances which Chrifrians may be under, and the Han-
dle dtfign'ingMen might otherwife take, to impofe
upon

Ch. iOa Chri/lianity as Old as the Creation. 10 l

upon weak Perfons what they pleafe, on pretence
of Divine Right.

Th is being premis'd, the folc Queflion is, Whe-
ther God, who, for many Ages, did not command,
or forbid any thing, but what was moral and im-
moral; nor yet does fo to the greater!; Part of Man-
kind, has, in fome Places and in fome Cafes, broke
into the Rule of his own Conduct, and iffu'd out
certain Commands which have no Foundation in
Reafon; by obliging Men to obferve fuch things,
as would not oblige were they not impos'd; or if
the Impofition was taken off, would immediatel
to their primitive Indifference?

To fuppofe, then, fuch Commands, is i: not to
fuppofe God acts arbitrarily, and commands for
commanding-fake; and that too under the fevered
Penalties? Can fuch Commands be the Effects of
infinite Wifdom and Goodnefs? Or, if there be no
Reafon, why a thing fhou'd be done at all; or if
to be done, why it fhou'd be done rather this Way
than that Way; or why Men mould not vary Means,
as they judge mod conducive to the End, for whose
fake alone they were defign'd: Can there be any
Caufe, why a Being, which never acts uneceffarily,
and whose Commands are all the Effects of infinite
Wifdom, fhou'd interpofe? 'Tis fo far from being
neeceffary for God to interpofe in fuch Cafes as thefe,
that it only ferves for a Handle to human Impofi-
tion; for there's nothing fo indifferent, but may,
if believ'd to have Divinity flamp'd upon it, be
perverted by designg Men to the vileft Purpofes \ and in truth, there's nothing of this nature intro-
duced into Religion, but what, I am afraid, has been fome Time or other fo perverted.

One would think it a thing whoUy indifferent who fprinkl'd an Infant, or from whole Hands we receiv'd the Sacramental Bread and Wine, as long-as the^ Rules of Decency and Order were obferv'd \ yet has there not been a Set of Men, who, on pre-
tence of a Divine Right to do thofe things, hav$ H 3 made

102 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 10.
made the Chrifnan World believe, they have a dis-
cretionary Povver tobeflow, or with- held the Means of Salvation \ and, by virtue of this Claim, have over-aw'd them into flavifh Obedience, and a blind SubmiTion.

There's no Good or Hurt in drawing two Lines crofs one another, and yet what have ndt Priefts made the poor People believe they could do by vir-
tue of it ; as Curing Jjifeafes, driving away Devils, and doing an Infinity of other Miracles ? And in fhort, they have made it one of the chief Engines of their Craft, for the better carrying on of which, they perfuaded the People to adore the Crofs, miraculously found after it had been bury'd about three hundred Years ; and the Wood of it has fince fb wonderfully encreas'd, as to be able to make innumerable CrofTes, whereof each Bit contain'd the Virtue of the whole.

Con f e ss ion of Sins to honeft and judicious Per-
fans might be of Service, by the prudent Advice they gave how to avoid the like Sins for the future ^ but the Pop-ifh Priefts claiming a Power by Divine Right to abolve People upon Confeffion, have been let into the Secrets of all Perfons, and by virtue of it have govcrn'd all Things ; and have made the Sins of the People, not to be pardoned but on their Terms, the Harveft of the Priefts.

Among the Jews, the Anointing with Oil was look'd on as very medicinal, and generally ufed in ' Sicknefs ; they pray'd, and anointed the Sick in. hopes of a Recovery : But tho' the Anointing in colder Climates is thought of no Ufe in Sicknefs, yet the P.apifts have built a moft superftitious Prac-
tice on it, which, for the greater Reverence, they call the Sacrament of Extreme Unftion \ and which their Priefts are not to admimifer as long as there's Hopes of Recovery.
What can be more indifferent, prharmiefs, con-

fide r'd in'themelves, than the Ceremonies of Oiling
Heads of Kings, and laying Hands on the Plead's of
rj or Presbyters % and yet what abfur'd Pre-
tence^

Ch. 10. Chrftia7iity as Old as the Creation.

It was an antient Cuftom among the Hebrews,
when they pray'd for a Bleinnng on any Perfon, to
lay Hands on him : Thus Jacob laid his Hands on
, the Sons ofjofeph, zn&Mofes onjcflu. And among
the primitive Chriftians,whenanyCongregationchofe
their Minifter, they pray'd that he might duly^ ex-
cute that Office, to which they hadordain'd him ;
and in praying, he that was the Mouth of the Con-
gregation (the whole AfTembly not being able con-
veniently to do it) laid his Hands on him.

This gave a Rife to the Clergy to pretend, that
their Laying on of Hands upon a Man, was ncceflary
to qualify him for the Miniftry *, they by that A£t
having given him the Holy Ghoft, and an indelible
Character with certain fpi ritual Powers *, fo that the
People muft either be without Minifters, or take
one they had thus ordain'd, however unqualify 'd
they might think him.

It's a Thing indifferent in itfelf, whether Men
meet to pray in this, or that Place -, but the Chriftians
out of a fuperflitious Reverence to the Reliques of
the Martyrs, ufually praying at their Tombs, came
by degrees, as their Reverence for them increas'd,
to offer their Prayers to them ; which was a great
Change from their praying for them among the o-
ther Dead, as was in the firft Ages a general Prac-
tice i and which, fome of our High-Church Priefts
are zealous for reftoring, and pretend we have bet-
ter Proof for its being a Catholick Doctrine, than
for the Authority of feveral Books of Scripture^
frequent Opportunities to grant, at their own Price, Dispenfation by which Means the Succession and Inheritance act not only of private Estates, but of Principal; ind Kingdoms, in a great Meafure depen: . chem: And as an Appendix to this Spiritual Vif. nation, they hookAi in the Cognizance of all Carnal Caufes, Incontinence in fingle as well as m $ i i I Perfons. Thus you fee, how eafily Man- ki r ^y be abus'd, where 'tis believ'd, that Religion can require any thing inconfient with the Rights and Liberties God has allow'd them by the Law of Nature *, and how dangerous 'tis to truft any Thing with Men, who pretend a Divine Right to whatever they can lay hands on. To give an In- fiance how fervantly this Divine Right was exerted by the Pope, as Head of the Church: " Robert, King of France, having marry'd a Lady of the Houfe of Burgundy, a Match very advantageous to the State, and tho' he had the Consent of his Bifhops, " yet he, and the whole Kingdom were excommu- " nicated by the Pope, becaufe this Lady was in " the fourth Degree of Confanguinity, and the King *' had been God-father to the Child by a former " Htilband; which fo diftreiVd the poor King, that £C all his Servants, except three or four, deiered " him *, and no one would touch the Victuals which " came from his Table, which were, therefore, * c thrown to the Dogs."

I mail give one Inllance more: Men are oblig'd to avoid as much as conveniently they can the infectious Converfation of immoral persons; and it was, no doubt, at firfc a Duty in a special Manner, for Chriftians, compafs'd round with Pagans, to obferve this Rule in relation to their own Body, and agree to fhun any fuch Perfon as one who had his Father's Wife \ and tho' this is no more than what is daily done in private Societies, and was eafily pradis'd amojigft Chriftians when they were but few; yet be- cause the Minifter might. collect the Votes, and de- clare the. Opinion, pf the Affembly, the Clergy by degrees

Ch. 10. Chriftianky as Old as the Creation. jQg
degrees not only excluded the Congregation from this their natural Right; but claim'd, as given them by Heaven, a Power to excommunicate whom they please, even their own Sovereign •, and that too for things relating to their own Interest; And they forbid not only their own Congregations, but all Chriftians, on peril of their Salvation, to avoid all Commerce with the Excommunicated, and ordain'd, that if he did not in forty Days give the Church Satisfaction, the Magijirate was bound to imprifon him and confiﬁcate his Eftate: And the Princes, inftead of refenting these Incroachments on their Power, had fo little Senfe, as to pafs this into a Law; not imagining this Treatment would reach them. But they soon felt, that the Church claim'd the fame Power over them as over other Chriftians,• looking on all to be alike fubject to their fpiritual Power. And accordingly Kings were often excommunicated, their Subjects abfolv'd of their Oaths of Allegiance, and their Dominions given to more orthodox Princes (o be held of the Church—, v/hich, no doubt, was in a flourifhing Condition, when fhe, as often as her Interest requir'd it, abfolv'd Princes of their Oaths to their Subjects, and Subjects of theirs to their Sovereigns i and by virtue of her fpiritual Power, difpo's'd, as (lie thought fir, of Mens Eftates, Ho-nours, and even Lives. What has been, may be I And in all probability would be, were the Clergy as united among themfelves as formerly.

In a word, there's nothing in itfelf fo indifferen, either as to Matter or Manner, but if it be en-graftered into Religion, and monopoliz'd by the Priefts, may endanger the Subftance of it: This has been plainly (hewn by thofe Divines, who, at the Reformation, and fince, have argu'd againft all Impositions; they have prov'd that moft of the Corruptions of Popery began at fome Rites, which feem'd at firft very innocent; but were afterwards abus'd to Superftition and Idolatry, and fwell'd up fo that Bulk as to opprefs, and ftifk true Religion with

jo$ Chriftianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 10.

with their Number and Weight. And, indeed, there's no Sect, but complains how superftitionioufly Rues and Ceremonies are us'd by all, except them-selves *, and fince I am defending the Liberties given by God to Mankind, and which, without Ingrati-tude to the Donor, as well as Injury to ourfelves, we can't give up; I do not doubt but you will hear me \: th Patience, beaurle if I prove my Point, I fhall, ry be hop'd, in fome rreafuVe put an End to
wife endlefs Disputes, which divide, and

t Chriftian World.

W'K A t soever is in rfttif indifferent, wh ether as
• tter or Manner, nv $ • fo to an A : I wife
Being, who judges of Things as Jey are *, and for
the fame Reafon that he commands Things which
are good, and forbids thofe which are evil, he leaves
Mm at Liberty in all things indifferent *, and 'tis
in thefe only, that our Liberty of acting as we pleafe
con frits.

Things, which are of no Value in themfelves,
can be no Motives to an All -wife Being to punifh
mous *, or to clog our Happinefs with any fitch need-
lefs Obfcruoaces : And confequently, Men, as far
as they affTert our future Happinefs, or any Part of
it, to depend on fuch Things, do fo far derogate
from the Wifdom and Goodnefs of God ; and from
thofe Motives we have to love, and honour him.
Ti.e arbitrary Commands of a Tyrant may be o-
be/d out of Fear, but juft and rational Laws alone
can move the Affc6tion of rational Creatures.

Is it reafonable to believe, an All -wife and Gra-
cious Being is fo fond of indifferent Things, that he
fubjects his Children to fuffer even this Life on
their account? And yet you muft own, if he has
made thefe the Subject of his Commands, they ought
to fuffer every thing rather than not obferve them *,
but if God will not have men punifhed in this
World, and much lefs in the next, upon the ac-
count of Things indifferent *, they can never be the
Subject of his Commands.

Tho 5

Cb. 10. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation, xoj

Tho' a judicious Author fuppofoes a Form of di-
vine Worhip, in elfelf indifferent, may be requir'd
by God for the fake of Peace and Unity ; yet at the
fame time he contends, that " God does not expect Chub's Sup.
" we mould comply with that Form, if it brings Mi- P l - t0 J1 ls
"• fery to ourf elves, or Confufion to the Publick ; "!^ ev 2 g^ e *
W becaufe that would be preferring a thing in elfelf 4 " 
" indifferent to the Happinefs of our Lives, and the
" Peace of the Publick *, and that to fuppofo the
" contrary, would be breaking in upon the fpot-
" lefs Character of our heavenly Father, by repre-
fenting him not as a wife and good, but a peevifh
" and ill-natur'd Being ; who takes an unreafon-
" able Refentment at the prudent Conduct of his
" Children." But will not this as ftrongly infer,
that God could not command the observing such Things, which, if observed, would destroy his moral Character •, and which, instead of preserving Peace and Unity; would bring Misery on private Persons, and Confusion on the Publick? Whereas these Blessings of Peace and Unity can never be obtained by a forced Conformity, or by any other Method than allowing People their natural Liberty in all such Matters. And,

If Religion consists in imitating the Perfections of God, what Perfection of God do the Superstitious imitate, when they contend, as pro Aris &? Focis, for Forms, Rites, and Ceremonies?

• If in Heaven there's no room for arbitrary Precepts, to incumber that moral Goodness which is the sole Business of the Blessed above; what could hinder us, did we but make that too our only Concern here, from enjoying a Sort of Heaven on Earth, free from all tyrannical Impositions, and endless Quarrels about indifferent Things?

In a Word, if there's nothing in a Religion which comes from God, but what is most excellent; what room can there be for indifferent Things? Can such Things as have no Worth or Excellency, contribute to the Worth, or Excellency of Religion?

108 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation* Ch. 10.

If they could, the more they abounded, the more excellent would Religion be; which yet is so far from being true, even in the Opinion of those who contend for such Things, that even they, when they are to mew the Excellency of the Chriftian Religion, recommend it for having but few of those Things •, which is supposing it loses of its Excellency in proportion to what it has of this nature; and that they have a higher and more honourable Conception of it, who believe it has no such Mixture to spoil its Beauty, and destroy its Simplicity •, but that, like its Author, 'tis wholly spiritual, and as such, worthy its divine Original.

One would think these Men must appear ridiculous to themselves, who, tho' they recommend the Chriftian Religion, as purely spiritual, in opposition to the carnal Religion of the Jews •, yet at the same Time contend it has some Ordinances as little spiritual as any the Jews had •, and put a greater Stress upon them, than ever the Jews did on any of
theirs.

If God's Works shew infinite Wisdom, there's no reason to imagine but his Laws do the same; but then they must be moral Laws, for those alone can speak his Wisdom as plainly to all Mankind as his Works do: They both alike have the Character of infinite Wisdom impressed on them, and both alike discover their divine Original.

If all God's Laws are of a piece, must they not all be built on the eternal Reason of Things? Nay, if that be sufficient to determine him in one Case, it must be so in all. But on the contrary, if God acts arbitrarily in any one Instance, he must, or at least may, do so in all, since no foreign Cause, nothing but his Nature, could make him act so. But God forbid we should imagine, that any of his Laws have not impressed on them the same Character of the highest Wisdom and Goodness, that is impressed on the whole Frame of Nature, and on every Part of it.

'Tis Ch. 10. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 109

'Tis impossible Men should have any just Idea of the Perfections of God, who think that the Dictates of infinite Wisdom do not carry their own Evidence with them, or are not by their own innate Worth discoverable to all Mankind. Were it not so, how could they be distinguished from the uncertain Opinions of weak and fallible Men; not to say the Whimseys and Reveries of cracked-brain'd Enthusiasts? How mocking is it to hear Divines cry, that, "Certain Things, were they not to be Souths Serm. " ador'd as Mysteries, ought to be exploded as Vol. 3.P.316. " Aburdities!"

If we suppose any arbitrary Commands in the Gospel, we place Christians in a worse Condition than those under no Law but that of Nature, which requires nothing but what is moral, and consequently the greater! Part of Mankind, who are to be judged by the Law they know, and not by the Law they do not know, are, on this Supposition, in a better Condition as to the next World than Christians, because they do not hazard the Favour of God by any Mistakes, or Omniisions in such Matters.

To suppose some Men, who, tho' they exactly, obey the Law of Nature, may yet be punished, even eternally, for not obeying another Law be-
fides, would be to make God to deal infinitely less mercifully with them, than with those that have no other Law: And yet in this miserable Case are all Christians involv'd, if the Gospel requires such Things as the Law of Nature does not *, and that too under the severest Penalties. And I may add, that even as to temporal Happiness, they who think Original and Traditional Revelation don't differ, are in the better State, since they must delight in their Duty, as having nothing requir'd of them, but what they must evidently see tends to their Good, and consequently are free (no small Happiness) from all panicl

... while they, who believe there are Things merely positive in Religion,

... id Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. io.

...ligion, of which Reason affords no Light how they are to be perform'd, or even what they are, must lie under endless Doubts and Fears; and according to the Measure of their Superstitition, be wrought upon by designing Men to hate, damn, and perforce one another about such Observances, as we see is actually done everywhere by the different Sects, who are so absurd as to believe a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, can give his Creatures arbitrary Commands.

... When Men are at a loss to know, from the Nature and Reason of Things, what to believe, and what to practice, and see everywhere endless Divisions, they must be in continual Dread of such an arbitrary Being, as their unmanly and irrational Fears represent God to be. Plutarch makes this Difference between the Atheist and Superstitious; Treatise of « One believes no Deity, the other wishes there

To P m ft 2 ti0n ' " WaS n ° ne ; if he believes > ' tis a g ainft his Will 5 170. E.F. cc miifruil he dares not, or call his Thoughts in " Queftion *, but could he, with Security, at once " throw off that oppreffive Fear, which, like the " Rock of Tantalus ^ impends, and preffes over him, " he would with equal Joy fpurn his enflaving " Thought, and embrace the Atheift's State and cc Opinion, as the happiest Deliverance. Atheifls ii are free of Superftition, but the Superstitious are " in Will and Inclination Atheifls, tho' 5 impotent cc in Thought, and unable to believe of the Divine <c Being as they willingly would. " And I am afraid, this now is the Case with most of these fu-perftitious Perfons, who represent God as a moll cruel Being, damning Men to Eternity, even for millaken Opinions, or about such Things too, as have no Foundation in Reason. And perhaps, the
endeavouring to drown all Thoughts of such a tyrannical Deity, is no filial Occafion of that 'groft Immorality which does every where prevail, and feift ever do io where Sumerilition abounds.

Til

Ch. 10. Cbriftianity as Old as the Creation. - |f|

'Tis Mens not being govern'd by the R f n of Things, which makes them divide abbiit Trifles, and lay the utmoft Stress on fuch Things as .v'fe Men would be afham'd of. 'Tis on the account of thefe, that the different Seels fet the higheft Va-

lue on themelves, and think they are the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, while they condemn all-others for Opinions and Practices not more fenfelefs than thofe themelves look on as Effentials. And were it not in fo ferious a Matter, it would be di* verting to fee how they damn one another, for pla-

cing Religion in whimfical Notions, and fantaftical Rites and Ceremonies, without making the leaft Re-

flection on what they themelves are doing.

What Reafon has a Papift^ for initance, to laugh at an Indian^ who thinks it contributes tc his future Happinefs to die with a Cow's Tail in tiis Hands, while he lays as great a Stress on rubbing a dying Man with Oil ? Has not the Indian as much Right to moralize this Action of his, and fhow its Significancy, as the Papift any of his myftick Rir^s, or Hocus Pocus Tricks ? which have as little Found-
dation in the Nature or Reafon of Things.

Suppose one came from the furthermoft Parts of the Earth, vouching it as a divine Revelation, that the Nails of our Children are, at a certain time, to be par'd by certain Perfons with certain Ceremonies, in order to make them capable or Sal-

vation ; and that fuch as died before their Nails were thus par'd, remain'd for ever in a very wretched State ; would not every one here, with- out examining into this Man's Million, or without regard to thofe fpirtual Things iignirled under paring of Nails, reject this Belief as unworthy of having God for its Author ? And yet, as abfurdf as this may appear to us, the fuperilitious Mabome- Hi ^ s?vef ^ Q tans think they are oblig'd to have their Nails Qn ^ q- ur ^ par'd during their Sicknefs, if they apprehend, it to Liturgy, oV. be mortal.

They
They must be very little acquainted with the Nature of a spiritual Religion, who think it can any ways consist in not going to rest when Men are sleepy •, not eating, when they are hungry ; or ab-staining from, or ufmg certain Meats and Drinks at flated Times •, and in Warnings, Sprinklings* and Lustrations by Blood or Water : And yet, these things were in fo high a Repute with moft of the Pagans > that they thought they would atone for the greatest Immoralities.

Ovid Faft. jft> nimium facile s, qui trifitia crimina ccedis

^ z > 45* Flumined tolli poiffe putetis -agua.

The Taurobolia, or the bedawbing a Man in a Pit, all over with the Blood of a Bull, which fell on him thorough Holes made in the Plank on which the Bead was (lain, was believ'd to warn away all his Sins, and he, happy Man, regenerated to Eter-nity ; provided that once in twenty Years he re-newed this mystical Regeneration : And not only great Perfons, but whole Cities might perform this Peri Stepha- religious Ceremony by Deputation, and receive the nonde Roma- Benefit. A short Account of this, you meet with no, p. 135, in Fontenelkh Hiflory of Oracles, taken from Pru-

" Sinner j

Ch. 10. Chrijillianity as Old as the Creation. i 13

" Sinner ; and in one Inftance he fhall be juft, pru-W dent, and innocent ; with one Laver all his ** Wickednefs fhall be wafh'd away."
In a Word, while Priests of what Denomination foever pretend Authority to absolve Sins, and the People are so void of Sense as to rely on their Absolution; natural Religion, which puts the whole stress on internal Penitence and true Virtue in the Soul, will be despised; as allowing no Succeedaneum, no commuting, or compounding with Heaven. And, indeed, all such commuting, or compounding Powers, where they are supposed to be lodged, serve as a Bank of Credit for the Transgressors, and are a mighty Incitement to all manner of Villany: And in former Days, the great Men, after having oppressed and plundered People, thought to compound with Heaven, by letting the Clergy share in the Spoil; and 'tis on this Notion, for many Abbeys and Monasteries have been founded; and the Superstitious, as long as they are persuaded there is any Virtue in Externals, will, as we see by constant Experience, chiefly depend on such things. And I may add,

This Doctrine, that one Man may not only merit for himself by doing more than God requires of him; but that the Merit of such Actions may be transferred to another, who has done less than God requires of him, has been a great Incitement to Wickedness; and those who have acted a most immoral Part during their whole Lives, have believed they might comfortably rely on it; nothing being thought too hard for Merit and Mediation.

There are none, I think, now so absurd, as in Words to maintain, that there is the least Variableness in God, much less that he is an arbitrary Being, commanding things for commanding, fake if yet are not they, who assert there are merely positive things in the Christian Religion, guilty of this Absurdity; in supposing that God, who had the Goodness for a long time, not to confine Mankind to any

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any indifferent Things, yet at length changed his Mind, and repented of his great Goodness, and arbitrarily depriving, they will not say all Mankind, but no small Number of this Liberty, and required of them the Belief of certain useless Speculations, and the Practice of certain indifferent Things on the severest Penalties? And when they lament that the Christian World, even from the earliest Days, has been in perpetual Broils about such Things, do they not suppose that God can give arbitrary Commands, and that those Commands are involv'd in great

.. r 14 Chriitianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 10.
Obfcurity? Whereas, if merely positive Things were required, those, not being like Matters of Morality, discoverable by their own Light, would be made as plain as infinite Wisdom could render them; and to prevent their being perverted to serve ill Purposes, we should have been punctually told when, how, and by whom, those arbitrary Things should be apply'd, as well as that they were to be obligatory for ever.

B. If God has reveal'd any thing in a way liable to be mistaken, he can't be displeas'd with sincere People for misliking it.

A. That's very true, but certainly, the End of God's giving any Precepts, was not to deliver them so obscurely that People might be faultless if they mislook; but make 'em so plain that they could not well mistake: And this is agreeable to infinite Wisdom directed by infinite Goodness, which, certainly, will give us equal Degrees of Evidence for religious Truths, which so much concern us, as it has done for Truths of less importance.

For my Part, I cannot help being of the Sentiments of a learned Divine, who after having prov'd at large, that morality is capable of Demonstration, of DiXit ' excludes w i rr %'ng, " I shall only here repeat, Par. z. B l. " that ^ rin being a reasonable Agent, Reason. is the - m. *' Law and Rule of his Actions; there's no Truth'

" in the Mat hernat icks moro. clear, and incontrovertible 1 - chain This. Now, 'tis as easy for him, when he

Ch. ib. Chrijiogramy as Old as the Creation. 115

" examines his Actions by this Rule, to see whe-
" ther they agree together, as to know when two
" Lines are compar'd, whether they are of the

cc fame, or a different Length. Why should

" Demonstration then be confm'd only to Numbers
cc and Figures? - Nay, if we argue from the
." Importance of Morality, it will be found much
" more agreeable to the Goodness of God, who
" gave us our intellectual Faculties, that the Truths
" which are of the greater!: Concern to us, mould,
" if we make a due life of tho' Faculties, admit
" of the. greater! Evidence." I think, I need on-
ly add, that was there any thing but Morality ne-
necelfary to conilute true Religion •, we might be
certain that the Goodnefs of God would give us a
Demonfrration for it, equal to that he has given us
for Morality. But,

If there are new things which are not moral in
Religion, does not that fuppofe a Change of Mind in
God •, and then, where will you top? For if Change-
ablenefs was not a Perfection, it would not be in
him ; and if all his Perfections are infinite, muft not
this be fo too? And is not it as reafonable to fuppofe,
he may command fome indifferent things To-day,
and others To-morrow ; or fome in this Part of the
World, and fome in another -, as at firft to com-
moral, and then fuperadd indifferent things ?
If indifferent things can contribute to the Perfection
of Revelation, there may be endeefs Revelations ;
and the laft always more perfect, as having new in-
different things. It was not about things of a mo-
ral Nature, that there were fuch Divifions in the
primitive Times, and that Montanifm fpread hMf
over a great Part of the Chriftian World \ the Fol- Ecc. Hift. 1.5.
loweres of Montanus^ns Eufeibius v/rites, boating that c - H-
he was the Paraclete, and that Prificilla and Maxi-
milla his Companions, were his ProphetefTes ? And
Tertidlian, as is own'd by the Tranfiator of his Apo-
logy, fays, « That the Law, and the Prophets were i'? * P thom:
" to be look'd on as the Infancy ; and the Gofpel, Apo i. p , M9

I 2 as

This I Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 10.
as it were, the Youth ; but that there was no com-
' olete Perfection to be found, but in the Inftruc-
" tion of the Holy Ghost, who fpake by Mont a-
" 1ttuJ* But to make fome Apology for his lapsed
Father, he fays, " The Arch-Heretick Moyitanns
" fupported the Character of a moft-holy, morti-
cied, and extraordinary Perfon for a confiderable
' time ; the World rung with the Vifions and Pro-
phies of him, and his two Damfels ;. and the
• je Face of Severity and Saintfhip confecrated their
81 Reveries, and made real PolTeffion pafs for In-

M f^iration. The Churches of Phrygia^ and

afterwards other Churches, divided upon the ao
' count of rhefe new Revelations ; and even the very
*B Bishop of Rome himfelf for fome time efipous'd
& the Vanity, and made much of the Impoftor."
And had he continued to do fo, it might, perhaps*
have obtained ; fmce we find the Chriftians in the
primitive Times came intirely into a more grofs Im-
poffure, and had Faith for the moil palpable For-
gery of the Sybilline Oracles being writ by real Pro-
phetes under divine Inspirations. And the whole
Christian World for more than the two firft Centu-
ries believ'd the Millenarian Herefy, as it is now
call'd •, for which, indeed, they pretended other
Proofs than the divine Authority of the Sybils. And
there has scarce been an Age since, but where fome
inch Attempt has been made, and that of Popery *,
which is the groftest Attempt on the Credulity of
Mankind fucceeded •, tho' the Monks in the twelfth
Century were not fatisfy'd even with that •, and
therefore, endeavour'd to introduce a new Gofpel,
t^rdeChrif. call'd Evangeliiim aternum y or the Gofpel of the Holy
EccWf.Suet. Ghoft \ and affirm'd, that this Gofpel of the Spirit
^ m l one ;" excelled that of Chrilt's, as much as the Light of
i' the Sun does that of the Moon.

In fhort, to this Belief, that there may be things
in Religion not found on Nature and Reafon, and
that thefe may be refer v'd for this, or that Period of
Time, are owing all the "Vifions and Reveries among

Ch. i o. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 1 1 7

the Papifts, and other En thufiaftick Chriftians •> and
upon this abilird Notion is founded the mod fpread-
ing Religion of Mahomet, who pretended to be the
Paraclete prom is' d by Jefus to compleat and per feci
all things: And,

In a word-, to this Belief are owing all the falfe
Revelations that ever were in the World ; and ex-
cept we allow there are certain Tefts flowing from
the Nature of things, whereby the meanefit Capa-
cities may diftinguifh Truth from Falfihood, we fhall
for ever be liable to be impos'd on by Madmen, as
well as Impoftors.

If God can command fome things arbitrarily,
we can't be certain, but that he may command all
things fo ; for thofe fome Commands fhould relate
to things in their own nature good, yet how can we
know that an arbitrary Being commands them for
this Reafon ; and, confequently, fince an arbitrary
Will may change each Moment, we can never be
certain of the Will of fuch a Being. And,

To fuppofe thatGod by the Law of Nature leaves
Men at liberty in all indifferent things, and yet, by
a positive Law, reftrains this Liberty in certain Parts
and Ages of the World ; is to fuppofe God deter-
mines one way by immediate, and another way by
mediate Revelation ; both Laws too fubfifting at
the fame time.
B. We say that the Law of Nature, however immutable as to Good and Evil, has enjoined nothing in relation to indifferent things, so that there's a large Field, in which all Legislators, human as well as divine, may exert their Power.

A. It's true, the Law of Nature leaves Men at liberty to act as they please in all indifferent Matters; and if any traditional Law abridges this Liberty, so far 'tis contrary to that of Nature, and invades those Rights which Nature and its Author has given Mankind.

Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch, i o.

Human Legislators are so far from having a Right to deprive their Subjects of this Liberty, that their main End in submitting to Government is, to be protected in acting as they think fit in all fuch Cases, where no one is injur'd; and herein the whole of human Liberty consists, the contrary being a State of meer Vaffilage, and Men are more or less miserable, according as they are more or less deprived of this Liberty, especially in Matters of mere Religion, wherein they ought to be most free.

To suppose God has in these latter Days, as they are called in Scripture, deprived any part of Mankind of that Liberty which before was granted to all, would be to make him act unreasonably — 9 since all those Reasons which obliged him to command good, or forbid evil things, must wholly cease in relation to a Subject, which by being indifferent partakes of neither *, and was there any reason to deprive Men of their Liberty in indifferent things, they would then cease to be indifferent. On the contrary, the same Reasons which oblige him to interpose in things, whose Nature is either good or evil, forbids fcc in indifferent things; since Mens Happiness depends on their Liberty in all such things. Whatever is unreasonable for God to do, is contrary to the eternal Law of his Nature; and consequently, to deprive Men in any of these Cases, is to make the Dictates of his Nature, and his revealed Will to clash.

I 1\7 first, the Law of Nature either is, or is not, a perfect Law; if the first, 'tis not capable of Additions; if the last, does it not argue want of Wisdom in the Legiflator, in first enacting such an in-
perfect Law, and then in letting it continue thus im-
perfect from Age to Age —, and at last thinking to
make it absolutely perfect by adding some merely
positive and arbitrary Precepts. To what End does
God continually impress on Christians as well as
others this Law of Nature; since that was needless;
had they another more perfect, and more plainly re-
vealed? j.

Ch. 10. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 119

If Men have been at all times oblig'd to avoid
Superstition, and embrace True Religion, there must
have been, at all times, sufficient Marks of Distin-
tion, which could not arise from their having dif-
terent Objects, since God is the Object of both, but
from the having different Notions of him and his
Conduct: Nay, allowing that the Light of Nature
was sufficient to teach Men, that True Religion con-
frs in entertaining such Notions of God as are
worthy of him, and Superstition in such as are un-
worthy of him; yet that alone would not enable Men,
when they came to Particulars, to distinguish one from
the other: And, therefore, the same Light of Nature
must teach them what Notions are worthy, and what
unworthy of having God for their Author. But how
can there be such Marks flowing from the Nature
of Religion and Superstition, if what is Superstition
by the Light of Nature, can, notwithstanding these
Marks, be made a part of Religion by Revelation?

If he, who resembles God most, is like to under-
stand him best, is it not " because, as Bishop Til-
Berm. Vol. 5
lot then observes, he finds those Perfections in some —P— 4 2 —
" measure in himself, which he contemplates in the
" divine Nature; and nothing gives a Man fore
" a Notion of things as Practise and Experience 
C4 every good Man is in some degree Partaker of
" the divine Nature, and feels that in himself, which
" he conceives to be in God — so that this Man does
" experience what others do but talk of — he sees the
M Image of God in himself, and is able to discourse.
" of him from an inward sense and feeling of his
u Excellency." But this would not be just Argu-
ing, if God was an arbitrary Being, and could com-
mand his Creatures things which carried no Per-
fection or Goodness with them.

In a word,— if the Eistence of Religion confiits in
believing and practising such things, as have a real ' 
Worth and Excellency in them, tending to the Ho-
nour of God, and the Good of Men; the Eftence of
Superstition, which is its Oppofite, muft confiit in
imagining to propitiate an all-wise and gracious Being by such things as have no worth or excellency in them; such as may as well not be done, as done; or as well done this, as that way. Superstition is. The Abridg. defin'd by Dr. H. More (and all our Divines speak of his Morals, to the fame Purpose) to be that Impiety, by which or Account of Man considers God, to be so light or passionat, as Virtue. 1. 2. With trivial things, either to be appeased, or else mov'd P'ly' to Wrath. Can any thing be more trivial, than useless Speculations, and unnecessary Observations?

How numerous foever Christrians may be, tho' they are but few in comparison of the rest of Man-kind, yet the Church of Christ, by the Confeffion of all Parties, is a very small Body of Men > each, Seel, tho' they complain of one another's Uncharitable benefts, yet they excluding all other Seels, either as Schifmaticks or Hereticks, confine Salvation to their own Church. Dr. Scott says, "While Men behold the State of Religion thus miferably broken and divided, and the Professors of it crumbling into so many Seels and Parties, and each Party spitting Fire and Damnation at its Adversary; fo that, if all say true, or, indeed, any two of them in five hundred Seels, which there are in the World,* (and for aught I know there may be five thou'and) it is five hundred to one, but that every one is damn'd because every one damn's all but itself; and itself is damn'd by four hundred and ninety-nine:" How, I say, can these Differences be avoided, as long as Men take into their Notion of Religion, nay, make unnecessary things necessary Parts of it? And if many of our Divines have got rid of these absurd Notions, is it not because they are, what in Contempt they are call'd Rationales?

Epiftle Ded. The pious Bishop Taylor says, "He could not p. H b r t - y f cc ex P e & 5 but that God would some way or other opueymg. u p'njfh Chrifrians, by reafon of their pertinacious difputing of things unnecessary, undeterminable, H and unprofitable -, and tor fchir hating and per-

" fecuting

Ch. 10. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 12 i cc fecuting their Brethren (which would be as dear to them as their own Lives) for not confenting
iC to one another's Follies and fenfelefs Vanities.

But, is there any certain way of judging what are neceffary or unprofitable Things, but by the Rules here laid down, of judging of Things, from their Nature and Tendency? Without observing this Rule, there's nothing fo trifling, or fenfelefs, but People may be perfuaded to place Religion in, and be in continual Broils about it. If a Dispute between two Preachers, whether the firff. Words in the Lord's Prayer mould be translatéd Father our, or Our Father, could caufe fuch Difturbances, as it lately did at Hamburgh —, what is there fo indifferent, if once believ'd to belong to Religion, but may have pernicious Effects? And there are a Number of Inltances in all Ages, where Things as trifling have occafion'd ftrange Diforders.

And the primitive Times were not free from them; the memorable Mr. Hales gives this Account of the then Quarrel about the Time of keeping Eafter: " It being, fays he, upon Error taken for TYaft of " neceffary, that an Eafter mult be kept; and upon Schi&i.

" worfe than Error, if I may fo fpeak, (for it was " no lefs than a Point of Judaifm fore'd upon the " Church) thought further neceffary, that the " Ground for the Time of our keeping that Peaft, " muft be the Rule left by Mofes to the Jews, " there arose a flout Queftion, Whether we were " to celebrate it with the Jews on the fourteenth " Moon, or the Sunday following? This Matter, cc tho' mod unneafiary, mod vain, yet caus'd as " c great a Combuffion as ever was in the Church; " the Weft feparating from the Eaft for many Years " together. In, this fantafical Hurry, I can't fee 4C but all the World were Schijmaticks, neither can " any thing excufe them from that Imputation, 4C excepting only this, that we charitably fuppofe " that all Parties, out of Conference did what they M did. A thing which befel them, thro' the Ignor-

M ranee

12Z Chriftianity as Old as the Creation.' Ch. 10.

" ranee of their Guides *, and becaufe thro' Sloth " and blind Obedience Men examined not the Things " they were taught *, but like Beads of Burden pa-
" tiently couch'd down, and indifferently under-
Y went whatever their Superiors laid upon tReing* jBurnc? ~ c cTm. w And can we, fays Dr. Burnet , think without AnnVr6ii. . u Aftonifhment, that fuch Matters, as giving the " Sacrament in leavened or unleavened Bread *, or " an Explication of the Proceffion of the Holy " Ghoft, whether it was from the Father and the
Son, or from the Father by the Son; could have rent the Greek and Latin Churches fo violently one from another, that the Latins rather than 'aflift the other, look'd on till they were defroyed by the Ottoman Family?"

And other Instances he gives of fatal Disturbances from Disputes about Trifles, as the removing the Pictures of certain Bishops out of a Church occasion'd Image-worship; for those who oppos'd their Removal, went so far as to maintain, that Pictures ought not only to be fet up, but worship'd, which caus'd not only great Disorders in the East but made Italy to revolt at the Pope's Inflation. This Contet too begat another, whether the Sacrament was only the Image, or the very Substance of Christ.

I might add, that the Dispute between the Lutherans and Calvinists about the Sacrament, tho' it has created fuch fierce Animofities, is merely verbal since both fides are against any Change in the Elements, and both fides maintain a real Prefence of the Body of Christ.

"I need not have gone to distant Times and Places" for Instances, our own late Divisions and Perfections about fuch trifling Things, as Rites and Ceremonies, nay, Habits and Postures, would in all likelihood have ended" ir" the utter Ruin both of Church and State; had not the blessed Revolution interros'd.

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B.

Ch. ii. Chriftianity as-Old as the Creation. 123

B. I would not have you treat what you call Postures fo irreverently; ought not People to kneel at their Devotion.

A, The whole Chriftian World for many Ages thought not; and the Anti-Nicene Fathers, as well DailU of the as the Council of Nice, forbad kneeling on all Sun- Fa S hcrs, /, l ;?*, days, and all other Days between Eaftcr and Whit- 's' 'p' '33 fund ay.

In a Word, if thofe Sentiments muff, be true, which tend mod to make Men love and honour God, by giving the brighter! and noblefl Ideas of his Wifdom a'v:i Goodnecfs; and which free him from the Imputation of Chang: and Inconftancy, and from
impofter.g from time to time arbitrary Commands;
and from Partiality and Respect of Persons; what
I have laid down must be true—, and the contrary,
not only false, but impious. But however, since
this is a Point of the utmost Consequence, I shall
proceed to other Arguments, and shew how incon-
sistent it is with the Good of Mankind, to suppose
any merely positive Things to be part of the Ingre-
dients which constitute true Religion.

CHAP. XL

The supposing Things merely positive to be made
the Ingredients of Religion, is inconsistent
with the Good of Mankind, as well as the Ho-
nour of God.

THE Happines of human Society, and of
every particular Member, confiding in the
<due Observation and Practice of Morality.; what-
ever diverts, or discourages that, must be highly
injurious: Now 'tis certain, that the Mind may be
over-loaded as well as the. tody % and the more it
is taken up with the Observation of Things, which
are; not of a moral Nature, the Ids k will be able to
attend

to thofe that are; which requiring the Ap-
plication of the whole Man, can never be rightly perform'd, while the Mind, by laying flrefs on other
Things, is diverted from attending on them; espe-
cially if it be consider'd, that Superftkion, if once
furTer'd to mix w r ith Religion, will always be gaining
Ground. If Reafon is to be heard, no unneeceffary
Things will be admitted; but if it be not, where
Jfhall we flop? If People are once brought to be-
lieve fuch Things are good for any thing, they will
be apt to believe they are good for all Things; at
leaft, Pretences will never be wanting for a thoufand
Things of this nature—, and there's nothing of this
kind that Men will not come into, if they are made
to believe they carry any Merit with them: Thefe
they will be punctual in observing, in hopes to
atone for indulging themselves in their darling Vi-
ces; which they, not knowing how to leave, arid
yet willing to secure their future Happinefs, hope
by the help of fuch Expedients, to compound with
Heaven; and then vainly imagine, they cannot
have too many Things of this nature; or fhou too
great a Zeal for the Practice of them, when aflur'd
by their Priests (who, as they fondly imagine, 
know the whole Counfel of God) that they are ac-
ceptable to the Deity •, and tend to make him pro-
pitious to the religious Observers of them.

The Banditti, and Bravoes moll religiously ob-
ferve the Orders of their Church, about not eating 
Flejhn, &c. and Instances of this nature might be 
produced from the most immoral in all Churches; 
who, not satisfy'd with praclifing fuch things them-
selves, think it highly meritorious to compel others 
to do the lame. And, indeed, the Substance of 
Religion has been destroy'd in moft Places to make 
room for Superftition, Immorality, and Perfec-
tion •, which lad, when Men want Reafon to fup-
vort their Opinions, always fupplies its Place. And 
are there not even now, Numbers in the belt Re-
formed Churches, of the fame Sentiments with thofe 

Dr.

Ch. 1 1. Chriftiitianity as Old as the Creation. 125

Dr. Scott complains of? "Who, be fays, perfuade Chrift. Lite.
" themelfes, that God is wonderfully concern'd vol - 1 - P- 2
" about fmall things, about trifling Opinions and c * 6, p ' 3?6 ' 
4t indifferent Actions, and the Kites and Modes,
" and Appendages of Religion ; and under this

" Perfuafion they hope to atone for all the Immo-
** ralities of their Lives, by the Forms and Out-
" fides of Religion ; by un commanded Severities,
" and affected Singularities ; by contending for
" Opinions, and (lidding for Parties ; and being
" pragmatically zealous about the Borders and
" Fringes of Religion.'" And,

Pm afraid 'tis but too true, as is obferv'd in the 
Letters concerning Infpiration ; that u Men have Eng. Tranfr.
" thought it an Honour to be ftil'd riliat which they p- 1Q S.
" call zealous Orthodox, to be firmly link'd to a
" certain Party, to load others with Calumnies,
" and to damn by an abfolute Authority the reft of
" Mankind ; but have taken no care to demonfrate
** the Sincerity and Fervour of their Piety, by an
ct exact Observation of the Gofpel-morals :, Which
" has come ' to pafs by reafon that Orthodoxy
*" agrees very well with our Pafiions ; whereas the
" severe Morals of the Gofpel are incompatible
" with our way of living." And one would be
apt to think, that Zeal for fpeculative Opinions,
and Zeal for Morality were fcarce confiftent, friou'd
he form his Judgment from what he fees moftprac-
tis'd. » Moral Goodnefs, fays Dr. Scott, is the

Chrif. Life.
» / - - -> - - -

• " great Stamp and Imprefs that renders Men cur-
rent in the Etteem of God - t whereas on the ' 1 " p ' 53 ' ' 
" contrary, the common Brand by which Hypo-
" crites and falfe Pretenders to Religion are ftig-
"' matiz'd, is their being zealous for the Pofitives,
" and cold and indifferent as to the Morals of Re-
"ligion." 

" And, in general, we find mere moral Prin-
ciples of fttcfi weight, that in our Dealings with ingVirtueand
Men, we are feldom fatisfy'd by the falleft'At- Mc * 1 ' reaf * 
furance given us of their Zeal in Religion, 'till' 1 ' I,ps *

" we

cc

cc

To. 12. p
*73

126 ChrifHamty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 r.

" we hear fomerhing further of their Character. If
cc we are told a Man is religious we ilill afk, What
" are his Morals ? But if we hear at firft chat he
cc has honeft moral Principles, and is a Man of na-
tural Juftice and good Temper, we feldom think
" of the other Quettion, Whether he be religious
" and devout ? 

It is a general Obfervation in Hiftory, that
where any tiling has had the appearance only of
Piety, and might be observed without any Virtue
in the Soul, it easily found Entertainment among
Hift. 5. 13.  — superstitious Nations. Hence "lacitus fays, " Men
" extremely liable to Superftition, are at the same
Antius,? Aiy. " time as violently averse to Religion." Le Ckrc
Eng. Tram. not only makes the same Remark, but fays," Thofe
&Bibl.Univ. ft who had a confuted Notion of Chrifian Piety,
" believ'd it could not maintain itself without the
" help of outward Objects ; and I know not what
4 * heathenifh Pomp, which at J aft extinguifh'd the
u Spirit of the Gofpel, and fubftituted Paganifm
** in its room." 

Whatever Appearance it might have of Piety,
what Virtue did it require in the Practice, to make
War with the Saracens for the Holy Land •, (tho*
considering the Impieties committed there, it might
be call'd Unholy;) yet fo highly meritorious was this
Project for several Ages thought to be, that vaft
Shoals of Bigots for its fake have frequently gone
from the Weft to fight Men in the Eaft, who never
did them any Harm ; and thefe Bigots, prefuming
On the Merits of this sacred Expedition, were moft
eormoufly flagitious.

B. If this was Superftition, it — was built on a
Notion which had long before prevail'd, of be-
lieving it a piece of Piety to vifit Jerufalem, and
the holy Places there. The great St. Jerome fays,
Certe adorajje ubi fefetertunt Pedes Domini, Pars Fidei
£9.144. id eft, &c. " That i: was undoubtedly a part of
DeJtder.To. <c pajj£ to go, and worfhip in thofe Places where
3- P- "9 • • «c the Feet of our Saviour had oke flood'; l anS to
" have

Ch. 1 1. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. i?rj
" have a Sight of the Tracks, which at this Day
" continue freft, both of his Nativity, Crofs, and
" Paffion. "

A. I believe St.' Jerome, when he fays, We ought Sulp. Sever.
to worship where the Feet of our Lord stood, chiefly Sacred Hift.

intended his last Footsteps when he mounted up to Heaven, the Print of which, says Sulpicius Severus, Elysuv. 1645, remain to this Day. Quocunque applicabantur, intro-lens human a fnfcipere terra refpueret, exclujjis in or a

Heaven, the Print of which, says Sulpicius Severus, Elysuv. 1645, remain to this Day. Quocunque applicabantur, intro-lens human a fnfcipere terra refpueret, exclujjis in or a

Heaven, the Print of which, says Sulpicius Severus, Elysuv. 1645, remain to this Day. Quocunque applicabantur, intro-lens human a fnfcipere terra refpueret, exclujjis in or a

appontentia fape marmcribus. - Et cum quo ti die

consequentium Fides certatim Domino calcata diripiat,
damnum tamen arena npn fentiat : & eadem adhuc fui
fpeciem, velut imprcfisfignata veftigiis, terra cuftodit.
And Paulinus says the same.

A ftrict Obfervance of fuch things as require no
Virtue in the Practife, and may with great eafe be
punctually obferv'd, makes the Superftitious liable
to be every where cheated by your Tar tuffs, or
Mackw - ths -, while Men who put their whole ilrefs
on Morality, are reprefented not only as Enemies
to Religion, but even as Encouragers of Immora-
ity, and mere Libertines, becaufe they are for Li-
berty in Thinking; tho' this can't fail to make Men
fee the Polly of Licentioufnefs in Acting.

And, indeed, we fhall generally find thofe Ec-
clefafticks, who inveigh moft againft Fr^-Thinking,
are the real Encouragers of Immorality j by fcreen-
ing, not. only the mod Immoral of their own Order
on pretence of preferving the Honour of the Church,
tho' to the Dimonour of Religion •, but alfo by lay-
ing the mod Moral, if they differ from them in
speculative Points, under conflant Sufferings, to
enforce them to play the Hypocrites with God and
Man: And who is it that the corrupt Part of the
Clergy fhew more Inveteracy againft, than the very
belt Men of their own Order, for not approving
thefe Methods?

• It's worth while to remark, how differently Men
are treated for Civil and Ecclefaftical Offences:
• In Civil Cafes, as. a Right Reverend and Excel-

** lent

128 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. t r.

Diffic & Dif- " lent Author obferves, the Offender, if his Crime
of U fmd e Tn enS " be not Ca P itil] > faiTers a temporary PumfHment,
the Scriptures, " proportioned to the Fault he has committed;
p. 23, 24. M and when he has undergone that, nothing fur-
" ther is requir'd of him, except in fome Cafes to
find Security for his good Behaviour for the future. But in Cases of Heresy, there is no regard to the Degree of the Offence, in the Punishment inflicted, nor is there any End of it: 'Tis not enough to have suffered the severest Punishment, for the small Offence, 'tis not enough to give Security of not offending for the future.

The innocent Offender must declare (what 'tis oftentimes impossible he would declare) that he has chang'd his Sentiments, and is become orthodox; and this, tho' perhaps no Methods of Conviction have been used, except that of Punishment be one. This is the miserable Condition of a Convict-Heretic: The Punishment which fell on him for expressing Thoughts heretical, he must continue to endure for barely thinking, which is a thing not in his own Power, but depends on the Evidence that appears to him: He must for ever, (cruel Justice!) for ever suffer for his private thoughts (tho' they go not beyond his own Heart) if the Punishment which some Overt-Act has once drawn upon him. To punish toties quoties, as often as those Overt-Acts are repeated, will not satisfy the Holy Office. If an Offender can't be convicted of Heresy, he may however be convicted of writing, or speaking against the established Doctrine of the Church; and that will draw on him all the same Consequences, that
lb. p. 22. " Herefy would do. — Weil does this Author ad-
44 vife, Whatever you do, be Orthodox : Orthodoxy
44 will cover a Multitude of Sins, but a Cloud of
" Virtues cannot cover the want of the minutefr.
ib. p 29. , M Particle of Orthodoxy. It may, I doubt not,
<* be dtmovft rated with the greateff. Evidence, that
« Mi Chriftian Churches have iuifer'd more by their
" Zeal

Ch. 1 1. Chrifiianity as Old as the Creation. T29

<<* Zeal for Orthodoxy* and by the violent Methods
h taken to promote it ; than from the utmoft Ef-
-" forts of their great eft Enemies. Bat for all that,
<< the World will ftill think the fame Methods ne-
** cefTary."

* A Man, who has, or pretends to have a blind
Zeal for thofe things, which difcriminate his Sccl,
tho' he be ever fo immoral, too often finds Coun-
tenance and Credit from them *, and tho' thought a
Devil by others, paries for a Saint with his own
Party : So that the Superstitious lie under no Temp-
tations to be vicious, and the Vicious to act fuper-
ftitiotifly. Nay,

" The way that Men are apt to take to pacify ^ ot J*p
God, is, as Archbifhop fiSotfoh obferves, by p^™^ & To!


** were Sacrifices among the Jews and Heathens. —
" The Jews pitch'd upon thofe which were mod
" pompous and folemn \ the richeft, and die mod
" cofly ; fo they might hut keep their Sins, they
** were well enough content to offer up any thing
" cKc to God ; they thought nothing too good for
" him, provided he would not oblige them to be-
" come better.

" And thus it is among ourfelvcs, when we ap-
" prehend God is difpleas'd with us. We
* c are content to do any thing, but to learn Right-
** teoufnefs.

" As to the Church of Rome* He fays*

" They (as they pretend) are the moil fkillful Peo-
_iC pie in the World to pacify God. I do not

" wrong them by reprefentingthem enquiring after
** this manner : Shall I go before a Crucifex, and

" bow myfelf to it, as to the High God ? To

** which of the Saints and Angels mail I go to me-
" diate for me, and intercede on my Behalf ?
" Will the Lord be pleas'd with Thoufands of
" Pater-nofters, or with Ten Thoufands of Aver
" Maries ? Shall the Holt travel in Proceflion, or
" myfelf undertake a tedious Pilgrimage? Qv mall

K I

130 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 1.

« I lift myfelf a Soldier for the Holy War ? Shall
" I give my Eftate to a Convent ? Or chaftife, and
" punifh my Body for the Sin of my Soul ?"

The Heathen Priefts, knowing what would ren-
der them mod acceptable to the People, made the
chief Part of their Religion to confift in gaudy Shews,
pompous Ceremonies; and fuch other Tricks as
ferv'd to amufe, and divert them, who, provided
they entertain'd fuch Notions as created a Reverence
for their Priefts, and believ'd they could difcover
to them the Will of their Gods ; might be as leud,
and wicked as their Gods themfelves : " Are the
** Gods angry ? Muft we repent of our Crimes, and
" re-enter into the Paths of natural Juftice to di-
* " vert their Thunder ? Not at all ; only take a
" Calf of fuch a Colour, calv'd at fuch a time, and
" let his Throat be. cut by a religious Butcher, in
" fuch a Drefs, with a confecrated Knife ; and the
" Gods, as you will find by the Entrails, will be
" ftrait appeas'd."

The Mahometans make the going a Pilgrimage
to Mecca, the higheft Act of Religion ; and there,
out of deep Devotion, play many Monkey-Tricks ;
and then, they return cleanfed from all Impurity.
As to the Jewi/h Priefts, and the Doctors, who
depended on them, we learn from our Saviour,
how they made the moral Law void by their vain
Traditions ; and that the Temple then, as the
Church in After-times, was made the grand Pre
tence. And what vile things has not the abus'd
Name of the Church patronized ? Nay, even in the
beft con fi it u ted Church, have we not lately had
Numbers of Men fond of the Name of High-Churchy
whose Religion chiefly confisted in drinking for the
Church •, curbmg, fwearmg, and lying for the Church;
raifing Riots, Tumults, and Sedition, in favour of
a Popifh Pretender^ and all for the Security of the
Protejiant Church of England -, and in having a
profound Veneration for black Gowns, no matter
what the Wearers are \
and a great Contempt for

Men

Ch . ii. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 1 3 1

Men in black Cloaks, how -deferving foever; and
in firmly believing, that thofe who go to Places
with Steeples can never be in the wrong ; and that
thofe who go to Places without them, can never be
in the right; without knowing what either hold, -or
fo much as what is the true Meaning of even the
word Church?

What Advantage have not the Popifh Priefts
gain'd by their Arts of reconciling the Practice of
Vice with the Profpect of Heaven. The Jefuits^ tho'
the youngcfl Order, yet flourifh moil, being the moil
expert in this Artifice ; as may be f^n in Mr. Paf-
caFs Provincial Letters. Bat all the Popifh Priefts
" agree, in defending their Superftition by Fire and
Faggot ; while their Churches are open Sanctuaries
for the moft flagitious ; which fnews how fenfible
they are, that Superftition and Immorality fupport
each other. And perhaps, 'tis but reafonable, that
the Places where they learn vile things, fhould pro-
tect them when they have committed the vilest.
'Tis by thefe means that Holy Church gets a ter-
rible Party, who can't refufe to maim or murder, as
their fpiritual Protectors direct, for fear of being
deliver'd up to civil Juftice \ and not only your mean
Rogues, but even the greatefl, have been frequent-
ly fcreen'd this way.

The fuppofing indifferent things equally com*
manded with Matters of Morality, tends to make
Men believe they are alike necefTary : Nay, the
former will, by degrees, get the better with the Su-
perftitious -, and acquire iuch a Veneration by Age,
as to make Men have recurfe to them upon all oc-
casions, tho' ever fo unfeafonable. If People, can
be fo far impos'd on, as to admit fuch things into
their Religion, they will as eafily be perfuaded to
put a greater Strefs on things, tho' of fome Uie in
Religion, than their Nature will bear; to the confounding things of the greatest moment' with those of the final left: And if this is reckon'd Superftition, much more ought the other to be thought fo.

K 2 The

132 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 11.

The not distinguishing Means from Ends, has been the Occafion of endlefs Superftition •, and there have been numbers, in all Ages, especialiy of the female Sex, who have thought themselves very religious, if they, tho' to the neglect of their Family-Concerns, went from Church to Chappel, from Chappel to Church, and were punctual in obferving all Church-Ceremonies, without regarding the End for which alone they could be inftituted; fo that in-ftead of being humble, affable, and good, they have prov'd big with the worft fort of Pride, fpirtual Pride; cenfuring and defpifing their Neighbours, tho' ever fo good, if they were not as punctual as themselves in obferving thofe things; and the Con- ceit they had of their own Godlinefs, has made them as troubelfome at home as abroad, as bad Wives as Neighbours.

Upon the whole, nothing can be of worfe con- fequence, than thus to depreciate Morality, by mixing things of an indifferent nature with it •, becaufe, as Experience (hews, Men are more or lefs virtuous, according to the Value they put on Virtue; and can a Man, who acts contrary to Reafon, not be an Enemy to a Religion founded on Reafon? The precepts of Natural Religion, and the Rules of right Reafon, can't but make ftrong Impreflions on rational Creatures; what is hVe on the Minds of Men, and wrought in as it were with their very Corifdtution, can'teafily be broke thorough •, human Nature is apt to ftart, and recoil at any fuch At- tempt: And yet feme have found a moift effectual way to break through it, by teaching Men, that the moft moral Actions, without a right Notion, for- foot, in certain things of another nature, are to be i look'd on, as splendida Peccata y and partaking of the Nature of Sin.

It is the chief Bufinefs of Preachers, to fhew . the Reafonablenefs of the Doctrines they teach, as -the moft effectual "way of operating on rational Creatures \ and all "the Laws of natural Religion
Ch. 1 1. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 133

being built on their own Reasonableness, they, who attend to the Dictates of their Reason, can scarce fail to pay a ready and cheerful Obedience to all its Laws; but when Men take things merely on Authority, and would have taken the contrary on the same Authority; Reason is discarded, and rational Motives cease to operate: Nor can Men any longer perform moral Duties with a free and cheerful Mind; but slavishly obey, out of fear, the suppos'd arbitrary Commands of a Being too mighty to be contended with and that only with a View to atone for Immoralities.

As long as Men believe the Good of the Society is the supreme Law, they will think it their Duty to be govern'd by that Law; and believing God requires nothing of them than what is for the Good of Mankind, will place the whole of their Religion in benevolent Actions, and to the utmost of their Abilities copy after the divine Original; but if they are made to believe there are things which have no relation to this Good, necessary to Salvation; they must suppose it their Duty, to use such means as will most effectually serve this Purpose; and that God, in requiring the End, requires all those Means as will be secure and propagate it. And,

'Tis to this Principle we owe the most cruel Perfections, Inquisitions, Cruises, and Maccabees; and that Princes have endeavour'd, not only to destroy their Subjects, but to disinherit their own Irrite, to make room for suppositious Children. And,

'Tis to this Principle we also owe innumerable Tumults, Seditions, and Rebellions, even against the belt of Princes; as well as endless Feuds and Animosities in private Families, and among the neareft Relations: They who are govern'd by this Principle can't be good Men, good Subjects, good Citizens, or good Neighbours; no Ties of Friend-ship or Gratitude, no Vows or Oaths can bind them, when the Inreft of such things, as they think, they

. K 3 are

1 34 Chrijlianiity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 1.
are obliged to promote, on pain of God's Difpleasure, requires the contrary Conduct.

The Jews, as they were most superstitious, fo were they most cruel, and as the Papists have, begun all other Christians, introduced into Religion things which are far from contributing to the Good of Mankind, so they have exercised a matchless Cruelty for the Support of them: And no wonder, since their Priests gain by the Superstition of the People, and, consequently, inspire them with a proportionate Hatred against all who will not comply with it. And,

Among Protestants, of what Denomination soever, they who lay the greatest stress on useless Superstitions, Rites, Modes and Ceremonies, are for the most part ill-natur'd Persons, ready to come into any persecuting Measures for their sake. But nothing has done so much mischief as that most monstrous Opinion of Imperium in Imperio. Those, who pretended to a spiritual Empire, claim'd, as well they might, a divine Right to judge of the Extent of that Empire, and to do all they judged necessary for its Support; and consequently that they had a Right, since temporal things must give Place to spiritual, to depose the Governors of the State, whenever they judged it necessary for the Safety of the Church. *Tis from hence there have been so many Tumults, Seditions, Insurrections, Rebellions, Civil Wars, Murders and Maslacres upon the Pretence of Religion and which at last ended in the inflaving of the Christian World to the Pope, as Head of the Church; whose Power of deposing heretical Princes was for many Ages universally allow'd, no Nation, Burvets Exp. no University declaring against it, nor fo much as one of the Arc. 19. Ji v i n c 7 Civilian, orCajuit. Nor were things mended, fb'Vrt 21 when > D 7 reason. of the great Schisms about the p. zoo. Popedom, Councils pretended to govern the Church:

They then*carry'd their Power to such a height, as fb Aft - diapos 7 d Princes to enter into Agreements with the p. 3 *-; Popes-, to whom they yielded a great deal, to be protected

Ch. 1 I. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 135

tected in what they had refer'd to themselves. They, therefore, who maintain, that People may forfeit their Properties by Schism, Hereby, Infidelity, Sec, play the Hypocrites, when they pretend the Power of Princes is more sacred than the Properties of the People, for whose sake they have all their Power.
And therefore we may justly conclude, that they who are for soliciting Kings and Magi fixates to affift the Church in punishing Mifbelievers, are equally Enemies to the Power of Kings, as well as to the Rights of the People; and they have never fail'd to shew it, whenever they have found it their Interest. And tho' at first those Princes were idoliz'd, who were the Instruments of their Cruelty; yet when by their means, the People were entirely at the Devotion of the Clergy, they too were soon forc'd to submit; and had just cause to curse their own and Predecessors Bigotry, which enabled the Ecclesiastics to insult them as they pleas'd. And what Disturbances have not your Beckett, Lauds, &c. created here, when they got into Power, and became then as insolent as before they were submissive? Father Paul, no Stranger to our Constitution, in one of his Letters, writ in the Reign of King James I. says thus: "As Eng. Trag(L for the English, I am in fear •, the great Power the P'f- p. 51. Bishops have, tho' under a King, makes me very jealous; for they'd have an easy Prince, or an Archbishop of a high Spirit, the H'nly Power must sink by the Bishop's aspiring to an absolute Dominion. 5'

I believe you will allow, that in the late Times Men were as much in earnest about Religion as ever; and yet by their mixing several things, not of a moral Nature, with it, and thinking all Means proper to promote them lawful Imposture and Zeal, Bigotry and Hypocrisy were strangely blended together. And as we are assured by an eminent Historian, it was the Opinion of Cromwell that "the moral Bp. Burnet's Laws were only binding in ordinary Cases •, "but that upon extraordinary ones these might be t 'J,e Reiorat. K 4 super- P. 4 6. -, -9

"ij6 Chriflianty as Old as the Creation. Ch. i r.

" superfeded •, he, and that Set of Men, juftifying their ill Actions from the Practice of Ehud and 44 Jael, Samœfon and David.

Here, indeed, they were no Hypocrites •, but frankly confefs'd what at the Bottom influences all thofe, who, tho' they have not the Grace to own it, make things, not of a moral Nature, neceflary Ingredients of Religion •, and thereby give too juft Occa- tion for this Remark of Archbifhop Tillot fin's, Scrm. Vol. 3 " That it will be hard to determine, how many p. 26, 27. Sc " Degrees of Innocence and Good-Nature, or of To 1. p.zos, " Coldnefs and Indifference in Religion, are nece- 20 9- rt fary to over-ballance the Fury of a blind Zeal;

" fince several Zealots had been excellent Men, if
"their Religion had not hinder'd them -, if the Doc-
trines and Principles of their Church had net
fpo?l*'d their natural Disposition. 'What can be
a greater Satyr on any Religion, than that it is
able to spoil the best Disposition; and that, if it
does not make Men arrant Devils, *tis only becaufe
Nature is too hard for Principles £

B. These foe are uncommon Principles.
A. Not fo uncommon as you may imagine,
ince all Religion inclines Men to imitate what they
worship; and they who believe that God will damn
Men for things not Moral, mud believe, that in or-
der to prevent damnable Opinions from spreading,
and to fhw themselves holy, as> their heavenly Fa-
ther is holy, they cant't mew too much Enmity to
thofe, againft whom God declares an eternal Enmi-
ty; or plague them enough, in this Life, upon whom
in the Life to come God will pour down the Plagues
of eternal Vengeance. Hence it is, that Animofity,
Enmity, and Hatred, have over-run the Chriftian
World *, and Men, for the fake of thefe Notions,
have exercis'd the utmost Cruelties on one another y
xhx moll curfing and damning Churches having al-
vays prov'd the moll ferfeculmg. The Papifts, tho*
thinks
Ch. II. Chriftianlty as Old as the Creation. 137

think it meritorious to murder them *, and Proteftants
had no iboner renounced thole perfeuting Princi-
ples of Popery* but they too fhamefully pracits'd the
fame themfelves, for the fupport of fuch trifling No-
tions as the Publick had not the leaft Intereit in.
And before the happy Revolution, the Spirit of Per-
fecution was fo outragious, that Proteftants ruin'd
Proteftants upon the account of Rites, Ceremonies,
Habits, &c. to the great Joy of the common Ene-
my. And,

Tho' there may be, even now, fome who will
not forgive their being debarr'd the Exercife of their
former Tyranny, and would be glad, at any rate,
to deftruy that hated Liberty we are now blefs'd
with; yet I may venture to lay, that all who have
fojufl an Opinion of Religion, as to think it re-
quires nothing but what is for the Good of Man-
kind, are to a Man zealous for the prefent Govern-
ment, eftablifh'd on the Principles of civil and re-
ligious Liberty.

To prefervc which, the Legiflature has not only
excluded all Papifts> as Men of perfcetuing Principales, from the Crown; but, by affording Protec-

tion to Differents, has (^t the differing Churches in South and North Britain on a level, well knowing,

that neither civil or ecclefiasticall Liberty can be pre-
perv'd on any other foot. Had they gone a ftep far-
ther, and excluded, on the frtricleft Tells, Men of

persecuting Principles from inferior Pofts, as well as

the persecuting Papifts from the higheft, they had
acted up to thofe Principles of Proteftantifm upon

which the Revolution is founded. And all, who
are in earneft about Religion, wou'd have been
highly pleas'd to have feen it an eftablihVd Maxim,

that no Man ought to juffer in his Per/on, his Pro-

perty, or Reputation* for his Opinion in Matters of
mere Religion.

They, who think Force lawful, for the fupport
of fuch Opinion!] as can't be .supported by Reafon,
(as what Church » when it has Power, does not?)

can't

138 chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 1.

canH but think Fraud fo too *, espeically when 'tis
ufed not only for Mens eternal but temporal Good,
and to prevent Inch Severities, as otherwife would
be thought wholesome and neceflary. How can Men
of thefe Principles think any Untruth not lawful,
when 'tis neceflary to guard fundamental Truths ?
Nay, mud they not think it much more their Du-
ty to deceive Men, for the lake of their eternal
Good, than to deceive Children or fick People for
an infinitely lefs Good; espeically when the tempo-
ral Interelt of efrfe Deceivers is join'd With the fpiri-
tual Inteleft of the Deceives who, happy Men, have
the good luck to be cheated into Paradife \ and by
the Stratagem of a pious Fraud to obtain an hea-
venly Crown ? If it be lawful to deceive melancho-
ly Perfons, who defign to poifon themfelves, and
put a Remedy in the place of the Poifon, can any
think fuch an Artifice unlawfull, when he believes
'tis to hinder Millions from imbibing fuch Notions,
as are rank Poifon to their immortal Souls ?

'T 1 s with an ill Grace that thofe Proteftants^ who
are for refraining the Liberty of the Prefs, or fuf-
fering nothing to be printed, but what has undergone
their Spunges, rail at the Papifts for their Index Ex-
purgatorius : Thefe Men may, indeed, plead Autho-

ry ; fince, as Daille obferves, " This Opinion has
" always been in the World; that to fettle a certain
ic and affur'd Estimation upon that which is good
" and true, (that is to fay, upon what we account
iC to be fuch ;) it is neceſsary to remove out of the " way whatfoever may be an Hindrance to it; Nei-
" ther ought we to wonder, that even thofe of the " honed, innocent, primitive Times made ufe of u thefe Deceits, feeing for a good End they made <c no Scruple to forge whole Books.

They, indeed (and fuch there are, to the Ho-
nour of the prefent Time, not a few) who think Sincerity will carry Men to PIsavcn, lie tinder no Temptation to uk pious Frauds 5 but for Men of other

Ch. 1 1. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. \rfo

other Principles, tho' they go under the Name of Fathers and Saints, there's no depending on them; since a Defire to deceive People into their Opinions, will hold in proportion to the Zeal they have for propagating thofe Opinions.

If thofe Men, in whose Hands the facred Books, from time to time have been chiefly depofited, did allow that every Man was to judge for himfelf of their Meaning, in order to make him acceptable to God; there could be no danger of their being de-
fignedly corrupted: But if they believ'd, that a cer-
tain Set of Opinions was neceſsary to Salvation, then they mud have thought themelves, in Charity, oblig'd to take the mod proper Methods to bring Men to embrace them j and confequently muft have believ'd it their Duty to subftitute fome Words of their own, which would befetexprefs thofe Opinions, on which Mens Salvation depended, in the room of others, which were apt to lead them into fatal Er-
ors; fince by thus changing of Sounds, they might fave Millions of Souls, who they were confident would Qtherwife everlaftingly perim. Muſt not the fame Principle that oblig'd them to impofe their own Words, inftead of the Words of God, in their Creeds and Articles, on pain of Damnation, equally oblige them to act the fame parr, in relation to the Scripture? And if Men have ftuck fo clofe to this Principle, that they have (whenever they had a con-
venient Opportunity) left out, added to, or alter'd all other Books of Religion whatever, which have fallen into their Hands; there can be no reafon to think, they wou'd not do the fame with the Bible, where the Motives were fo much ftronger? " 'Tis Eafeb. EcedeH " no wonder, fays that primitive Father Dicnyjius, Hilt. 1. 4. c. " Bifhop of Corinth, that fome attempt to adulterate 2 3- in fine - ' c the holy Writings of our Lord's fince they have " baſely lalfify'd fjoeh as are of an inferior Autho-
" my." And it muſt be either to put a flop to,
or prevent this Practice, that the Keve la: ton con-
cludes with 2 Curie on all who fhould make any Al-
teration

1/p Chriftiamty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 1.

tercition in that Book. And 'tis morally impossi- 
ble, but they who thought it their Duty to commit the 
moft barbarous Acts of Cruelty for propagating of 
Opinions, mould not think it lawful to ufe De-
ceit for the fame End ; which they can never ima-
gine to be an Evil, while they fuppofe it fo ufeful 
for the faving of Mens Souls, without giving up all 
the other indirect Methods they took to hinder Men 
from feeing what may be faid for or againft any 
Opinions.

' Nor is there any one thing in which all Parties 
agree, but in taking it for granted, that their Ad-
verlaries will fcruple no Means to gain Credit to 
their own Opinions, or to difcredit thofe of their 
Adverfaries \\ and in order to it, mifreprefent their 
Perfons as well as Opinions, and make Men Saints 
or Devils, as it ferves their Caufe ; which, as you 
will find in Church- Hiftory, has afforded a Num-
ber of Miracles for the Orthodox, and as many Judg-
ments on the Heterodox : And if there be Miracles 
on both fides, ours Go be fure are divine, and yours 
diabolical.

" ■

If ever the Words of David, that All Men are
Liars, were literally true, it has been in this Cafe ;
and all Hiftory fhews the Juftnefs of my Lord Bacon's

/zq- 2 Remark : Max/ me habenda funt pro fufpettis, qu*e 
pendent quomodocungqite a Religione ; ut prodigia Livii,
Th e Arabian Writers are full of Miracles done
by Mahomet, which they impofe on People, by tel-
M*Um. Life ling them, that " Mahomet's Enemies would not
in Eng. before << invent them ; and his Friends are forbid telling

Relianfs Ma- £ jj es f him on pain of Damnation.

1 p ' 3 2, B. You may make as bold as you will with
Mahometans ; but can you charge Protestant Wri-
ters, much less the Holy Fathers, with any such
"Practices ?

A. I hope, 'tis no Crime to take notice, that

brfe of the ten RCajhis the celebrated Chillingworth

p r &* ves * or h^ s turning ?ap.ifi, is, " Becaufe the Pro-
" tcftarir Caue is now, and hath been from .the
ft Begin-

Cb. I r. Chrijianity as Old as the Creation, 14 j

<c Beginning, maintain'd with grofs Falffications
" and Calumnies, whereof the prime Controvery-
" Writers are notoriously, and in a high Degree,
" guilty." And upon his Return to the Church,
he fays, Ilicas intra muros peccatur & extra ; which
is in plain Englifh, Priefts of all Denominations will
lie alike. And I may add, that it is fo fully prov'4
in the Hiftorical Effay of the Thirty -nine Artides , that
that Claufe in the twentieth Article, that the Church
has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies ^ and Autho-
rity in Coniroverfies of Faith , had neither the Sanction
of Parliament or Convocation ; that no one has of-
fer'd the leaft Reply, tho' for the Honour of thofe
good Church-men who firft forg'd it, and thofe who
fince defended it, we might expect all that could be
(aid, tho' the Claufe had not given them a Power
which can only belong to Parliaments, of decreeing
Rites and Ceremonies ; and another Power, which
can belong to no Mortal ; Authority in Controverfies
of Faith. What Credit ought to be given to the Re-
premutation of the prefent State of Religion^ with re-
gard to the late exceffme Groiith of Infidelity \ Herefy The Nation
.and Profanenees, as it pafs'd the lower Houfe of Con- vindicated
vocation ; where are almoft as many notorious Falfe--'^
hoods, as there are Paragraphs *, not to fay any Wog/f^^f^ of a certain Pafforal Letter. And if we look into prefentatwn.
Church-Story, we mail find it to have been the con-
ftant Practice of a certain Set of Men, not only to
impute to their Adverfaries Opinions which they
difown ? d ; but to repreffent thole Opinions as ready
to prevail, was it not for their Interpofition : By
which means they hoped not only to be highly re-
vere oe'd for their great Zeal, but to have new Pow-
ers granted them to opprefs Mankind. Thus the
Consequence of belying the Followers of Wickliff,
was the Statute de Heretico ccmburendo^ granted at
the Petition of the Clergy j and the belying the
Albigenes, Waldenfes &c. rais'd a Cruiado againft
thofe poor People, As

io6.

142 Chrijlianity as Old as>the Creation. Ch. u.

L. i.e. 6. Sec As for the holy Fathers, They, as Bailie has a
p. 159, csV. w ho j Chapter to prove, did not think themselves in
their Controyerfial Writings (and moft of theirs were
fuch) obiig'd to fpeak the Truth ; but that every
thing was lawful which ferv'd to gain the Victory.
They thought they might, by way of Oeconomy or
Difpenfation, fay one thing and mean the contrary :
To. 2. p. 105, " Origcn, Methodizes, Eufebius, Apollinaris, (fays St.
" Jerome) have writ largely againft Celfus and Por-
" phyry : Do but obferv'e, fays he, the Manner of
" their Arguing, and what illippery Problems they
" us'd. They alltedg'd againft the Gentiles, not what
** they believ'd, but what they thought necefTary ;
cc Non quod fentiunt, fed quod neceffe eft, diciint. And
" adds, I forbear mentioning the Latin Writers, as
" Tertudlian, Cyprian, Minutius, Vittorius, Laftan-
cc tius, and Hilary, left I fhould feem rather to ac-
" cufe others, than defend my felf : " And yet he
goes on charging not only St. Paul, but even Jefus
Chrift himfelf with the fame Practice. And there was
nothing fo facred that could ecape being chang'd,
either in whole, or in part ; even the Canons of the
famous Council of Nice, as well as the Canons of o-
ther Councils, have been falfify'd ; and thofe forg'd
Canons of Nice, the Popes, for many Ages, imposM
on the Chriftian World as genuine ; and the ancient
Liturgies, tho* Things of daily ufe, underwent divers
Alterations : Nay, even the Creeds themfelves, tho*
thought to be the facred Bepofztum of the Faith, have
Bennefs Di- had the fame Fate. u 'Tis well known (fays an emi-
re ;uis ^ r " ncnt Divine) that the Apoftles Creed has receiv'd
soArg&fes, " var ^ ous Additions to the original Form ; that the
p. 66. " Niccne Creed was enlarg'd by the Conftantinopoli-

*** tan Fathers, and has also, with refpect to the Fi-
** Jioquc, been interpolated by the Latin Church;
** that 'tis probable, the Latin Church has inter-
"polated the Athanafian Creed too, with respect to
< the Filioque: "Nay, the Athanafian Creed itself,
Art. s.p.106. as Bishop Burnet has shewn, was a Forgery of the
eighth Century. Nor did they confine their Forge-
ries
Ch. 11. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 143
ries to Church Matters, but practis'd on the impe-
"rial Laws, and inserted in the Theodorian Code, a SelMs Differ.
Rofcpt of Conflicmtine, relating to the Power of ?J Pieta, c. 5,
Bishops, long before. p...?d. -
The farther feac] c go., the greater was their
Recourfe to piou. "; ..ld. Scalger, speaking of the
primitive Chriftians, fays, Omnia, quaputabant Chrif Scaligerana,
tianifmo condu re, nribliis interferuerunt. And as he Art - S1loe *
uppofes, nothing certain of the Church till the Times
of Pliny, \o he fays; speaking of the fecond Century,
Adto v.rumb Dei inefficax eye cerfuerunt, ut regnum Epift. ad Ca-
Chriftifme mendacio promoveri pcffe diffderunt, ut feubon,p.303.
qui utinam Mi primi mentiri ccepifent. And Cafaubon
lays, Illud me vehehent er movii, quod videam primis^erdt. 1.
Ecelefue temporibus quam plurhnos ^ lit iff c, qui f acinus ad A PP endl *
Palmarium judicabant, ccelefiem veritatem figmentis P ' ^'
fuis ire adjufant \ quo facilius nova ilia dotirina Gen-
tiumfapientibus admitteretur. And the learned Blon- Epift. ad C.
del fays, " That the fecond Century of Chriftiani- A "g","** "
" ty, whether you confider the immoderate Impot-
dence of Impoftors, or the deplorable Credulity 1701.
" of Believers, was the mod miferable Time, and
" exceeded all others in holy Cheats ; and that, to
** the Difgrace of Chriftianity, there was a greater
" Averfion to Lying, more Fidelity, and a greater
" Simplicity not to depart from the Truth, to be
cc found in prophane Authors, than the Chriftian
" Writers."
Our moft learned Bifliop Stillingfieet fays, Iren. p. 29k
cc That Antiquity is moft defective where it is
" molll usefel --, namely, in the Times immediately
cc after the Apoftles: And that the Fathers were Orig. Sacr.
" often deceiv'd with pious Frauds, but then it was p. 29.
" when they made for the Chriftians." And the
pious Bifhop Fell does not fpeak quite fo tenderly
in faying, Tanta fuit primi s feculis fingendi licentia, In prsimiffa
tamprona in credendofacilitas, ut rcrumged arum fides monit - c " n -
exinde graviter labor averit \ nee orbis tantium terra- c^ U e poi l
rum, fed & Dei Ecclefia de temporibus fuis myflicis . • u> ^'!
merit altera fur.
How
How unhappy were we of the Laity, had we not
the Reason and Nature of things (which no Priests
can alter) to depend on; but were entirely oblig'd
to take our religious Sentiments from Men, who as
far as we have any Account of things, have, even
from the earlier! Times, not scrupl'd to forge, not
only whole Passages, but whole Books; and left no-
thing entire on which they could lay their foul Hands:
Which, as that great and honed Critick Bailie ob-
DeafaPa- ferves, " has render'd the Writings and venerable
trum, c. 4. in " Monuments of Antiquity fo imbroil'd, and per-
fincc. 120 <c p> ex \j, that it w i H be the harden: matter in the
" World for any Man to make out any clear or
" perfect Difcovery of thofe things, which fo many
" feveral Artistfs have endeavoured to conceal from
" as." As to this impofing Temper of the Ecclefsia-
ilicks, I shall only fay, that it is plain fromHilory,
that the ambitious, domineering part of the Clergy,
the Impofers of Creeds, Canons and C 'oufti tut ions have
prov'd the common Plagues of Mankind -, and the
true Authors and Fomenters of the moil general and
moil fatal Calamities, which have befallen the Chris-
tian World. What the Confequence.was of impofing
Creeds, may be learnt from an eminent Father, who
OourihVd when this Trade of Creed-making was at
Hi), ad Con- its highth. " It is, fays St. Hilary, a thing equally
( Unt. p. zi -. « deplorable and dangerous, that there are at pre-
" fent as many Creeds, as there are Opinions among
" Men. -- We make Creeds arbitrarily, and explain
44 them as arbitrarily. We can't be ignorant,
" that fmce the Council of Nice," (there, it feems
the fatal Mitchief began) " we have done nothing
c * but made Creeds. -- We make Creeds every
* c Year, nay, every Moon; we repent of what we
ifc have done -, we defend thofe that repent; we ana-
4i thematize thofe we have defended •, we condemn
" the Doctrine of others in ourfelves, or our own
14 in that of others • and reciprocally tearing one
" another in pieces, we have been the Caufe of one
** another's Ruin,

Thus

Bafil Edit. al.

p.2II, 21
Thus you see how Fraud and Force are unavoidable, when 'tis believ'd Things, having no Foundation in Nature or Reason, are necessary Parts of Religion; and Ecclesiastical History contains a continued Scene of Villany, for the Support of these Notions, and that the more good Sense, Piety, and Virtue any Man was endow'd with, the more, if he did not come into these Notions, was he hated, and persecuted as a most dangerous Enemy. But,

Before I leave this melancholy Subject, I must observe, these Men have done their best to justify a Remark of Uriel Acofta, who, in his Exemplar V4t£. P. 35 r. fub Hnman<z, says, "That when Men depart ever so far from Natural Religion, it is the Occasion of great Strifes and Divisions, but if they recede much from it, who can declare the Calamities which ensue?" And can Men more depart from it, than by imposing upon their Brethren, either by Fraud or Force, Things no ways tending to the Good of Mankind?

Tho' we cry up the great Advantage we have above all other Animals, in being capable of Religion, yet those Animals, we despise for want of it, herd most sociably together, except such carnivorous Creatures which Necessity separates. The Ants, notwithstanding they have Stings, are crowded in vast Numbers in the same Hillock; and, having all Things in common, seem to have no other Contention among them, but who shall be most active in carrying on the common Interest of their small Republic. And much the same may be laid of Bees, and other Animals 5 yet Men, tho' they can't subsist but in Society, and have Hands, Speech, and Reason to qualify them for the Blessing of it above all other Animals *, nay, what is more, have Religion, desir'd to unite them in the firm Bonds of Love and Friendship, and to engage them to vie with one another in all good Offices ; and the good-natured Laity too have, at a vast Expence, hir'd Persons to inculcate those generous Notions; yet alas!

L* in

146 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

in fpite of all these Helps and Motives, Religion has been made by these very Persons, a Pretence to render Men unsociable, fierce and cruel ; and to act every thing destructive to their common Welfare: And the greater the Number of these Religions, and the more Expence People have been at
in maintaining them, the more of these Mischiefs have they most ungratefully occasion'd to their generous Benefactors.

B. Granting that a Deluge of everything that's ill has overflow'd Christendom and does still in most Places; and that Religion has been made a handle for such Barbarities, as Human Nature, left to itself, would illustrate at, yet how is this to be remedied?

A. Education is justly esteem'd a second Nature, and its Force is strong, that few can wholly make off its Prejudices, even in Things unreasonable and unnatural, and must it not have the greatest Efficacy in Things agreeable to Reason, and fit for human Nature? Let those therefore who have the Education of Youth, recommend Morality as the End of all Religion, and let every thing, not tending to promote the Honour of God, and the Good of Man, be accounted Superstition; let the Youth be taught to join the Ideas of Virtue with the Ideas of Beauty, Pleasure, and Happiness; and the Ideas of Vice with those of Deformity, Grief, and Misery; there would then be little room for so odious a Thing as Vice to take Possession of Peoples Minds, and jumble out Virtue so firmly rooted. For these Ideas, thus early associated, would, by degrees, become inseparable; especially if Men, as they grew up, were frequently shown the necessary Connexion between these Ideas, and how essential Virtue is to the Felicity of Nations, Families, and private Persons; and on the contrary, how miserable Vice must render Men in every Station of Life.

'Tv-as after this Manner that the Heroes of Old, and their Benefactors to Mankind, were educated; and

and the Discourses of the Philosopher, who had the instructing them, were full of the intrinsic Love-Jinefs of Virtue, and the Deformity of Vice; and taught them to direct all the Actions to the common Good, as to a common Centre, and that their future as well as present Happiness depended on it. But afterwards the Education of Youth being committed to Men of another Stamp, devoted to the Interest of their own Order, they, instead of in
fusing these noble Sentiments into them, persuaded them that their separate Interest, with the things on which it depended, which they call'd the Good of the
Churchy was to be their chief Aim: and to little Regard have some Men had to the common Good, that they have industriously dressed up Vice in such lovely, and Virtue in such odious Colours, as to maintain, that bating the Consequences of a future State, they would act like Fools, who did not indulge themselves in a vicious Course: And, I believe, Men of such Principles can't boast of much more Virtue, than a late Prelate of uncommon Parts and Learning, who from the Pulpit endeavour'd to prove, that /; this J&rbuynh Life the virtuous Man is most referable; and who, aneraI j*?**

by all his Actions, especially by his late monitory Sennet.

B. I grant you, 'tis of the utmoft Consequence to the Commonwealth, that Youth should be rightly instructed in all such Principles as promote the common Good; but can you imagine Pagan Philosophers could infuse more generous Sentiments into them, than Christian Clergymen?

A. I do not think so, when they are such Clergymen as those who at present have the instructing our Youth; otherwise I can't help giving into the Sentiments of a noble Author, who, speaking of the Education of Youth, when instructed by Philosophers, fays, "It tended to make them as useful Preface to the fociety they liv'd in as poftityle. There /\ to the Society they liv'd in as poftityle. There f\"
"Manner of Education produc'd Men of another Stamp than appears now upon the Theatre of the World, such as we are scarce worthy to mention, and mufn never think to imitate, till the like Manner of Influktion grows again into Reputation, which, in enflav'd Countries 'tis never Kke to do, as long as the Ecclefiafticks, who have an oppofite Intereft, keep not only the E-ducations of Youth, but the Confciences of old Men in their Hands.

B. This, I confefs, is the right way to prevent "Immorality; but if every thing, as you contend, ought to be look'd on as fuperftitious, which is not of a moral nature, Superflition has fpread itfelf over the Face of the Earth, and prevailed more or lefs in all Times and Places.

A. This is no more than what has been own'd Cicero \ 2 de 10ng ^o b ? a ^ S ood J ud S e ' who % s > Su P er ~ Div\mt.c' 7 2.M w M a P er genles y opprejfu omnium fere Animos, atqie hominum occupavit Imbecillitatem. And the Univcrfality . of Superflition is in effect ownM by every Seel, in affirming that Superflition is crept into all other Setts, and that 'tis the chief Bufmefs of their refpective Teachers to promote it: And is it poflible to be otherwife, as long as Men are taught to build their Religion on a narrower Foundation, than that on which the univerfal Being has univerfally laid it?

'Tis the Obfervation of Naturalifts, that there is no Species of Creatures, but what have fome innate Weaknesfs, which makes them an eafy Prey to other Animals, that know how to make the Advantage of it: Now the peculiar Foible of Man-kind is Superftition, which at all times has made them liable to be praclis'd on, not by Creatures of different Species, but by thofe of their own; who, by a confident Pretence of knowing more than their
Neighbours, have first circumvented the Many, the Credulous and Unwary •, and afterwards forc'd the Free-thin king few into an outward Compliance:

And as far as we have an Account of Things, we shall find that most of the prevailing Superstitions have been erected on this Foundation, and to it owe their whole Support. And whoever knows any thing of France and Italy, not to mention other Countries, can't but know that the better Sort are sensible of the prevailing Absurdities, but, over-awed by the Priests and Mob, are forc'd to submit.

And,

The more Superstition the People have, the easier they may be impos'd on by designing Ecclesiasticks \ and the less Religion the Clergy have, the more unanimous they will be in carrying on their common Interest; and when the Clergy are without Religion, and the People abound in Superstition, the Church, you may be sure, is in a flourishing Condition; but in great Danger, when Men place their Religion in Morality \ for then all indifferent Things are look'd on as they are in their own Nature, indifferent then the People have no superflitious Veneration for the Persons of Men, and the Clergy are esteem'd only in Proportion to the Good they do; and every Evil they commit is reckon'd a Branch of their Effort, they being maintained by the People chiefly to set them good Examples: But this Method of gaining all that Reverence and Authority they pretend to, has, it seems, been thought too laborious and fervile. They have (I mean, where Popery prevails) as Masters of the Religious Ceremonies, most effectually gain'd their End, by introducing such Things into Religion, as promoted a superstitious Veneration to them, and made People believe, that the chief Means to obtain their eternal Happiness, were of a different nature from those, which caus'd their temporal Happiness; and only to be dispens'd by them, in order to get the sole Management of Spirituals to themselves -, and consequently, (since there can't be at the same time two supreme Powers) of Temporals also: And so well have they succeeded, that, in most Places, the temporal Interest of the Clergy pass'd for the spiritual of the Laity.

There are two Ways which never fail to make such Venation prevail •, Mysteries to amuse the Enthulliasts, especially the Pretenders to deep Learning, and all that admire what they do not understand •,
and gay, ucify Shew, and pompous Ceremonies, to be
witch the Vulgar: And the Popijh Church, whose
Conduct fliows how well they understand their In-
tereft, may vie with the old Egyptian Church for
Myfteries-, and Pagan Rome mult yield to Chrijlian
Rome in fuch Shews, Rites, and Ceremonies, as
dazzle the Eyes of the People, and infenfibly gain
their Hearts *, and the more there are of these in
-any Church, the more the Clergy, the holy Di-
fpenfers of them, are reverenced, not to fay ador'd,
by the unthinking Multitude, as they are in the
To. 2. p. 36c. Church of Rome. " That Church has, as Arch -
" bifhop Tiliotfon obferves, weaken'd the Force of
" Chriftianity upon the Hearts and Lives of Men,
" by amufing them with external Rites \ which
< c they have multiply'd to that exeftive degree, as
« c to make the Yoke of Chrift: really heavier than
" that

Ch, 1 l. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 15 l
" that of MofeS) and the Chriftian Religion a more
" external and carnal Commandment chan that of the
" Law, and have diverted the Minds of Men from
tc the main Defign of Chriftianity. They have
" had no Leifure to think of being good Men,
" and to mind the great and fubftantial Duties of
« the Chriftian Life. The Simplicity of the Chri-
" ftian JVorfloip they have incumber'd with fo many
" frivolous Rites and Obfcrvances" as not only ren-
■ der it more burthenfome, but leis apt to make
" Men inwardly and fubfi ant i ally good, than Ju-
" daifmitfddf."

This great Man obferves, that " Thofe Things Serm. Vol. 4.
" which are agreeable to our Nature, our Reafon, p-37-6To.2.
" and our Intereft, are the great Things which our p' 34 " K
Ci Religion requires of us. And that Mankind
" might have no Pretence left to excufe them from
16 thefe, the Chriftian Religion has fet us free from
thofe many outward pofitive Obfervances, that
the Jezvijh Religion was incumber'd withal -, that
" we might be wholly intent on thefe great Duties,
" and mind nothing in Comparifon of the real and " subftantial Virtues of a good Life." If fo, can we ftippofe the Chriftian Religion has fuper-added any outward pofitive Things of its own, to hinder us from being wholly intent on thefe Duties ?

The Popifh Priefts are fo far from giving the People any juft Idea of God, that they repreffent him as an arbitrary and tyrannical Being, impo- fing, on the higheft Pain, the Practice of ridiculous Ceremonies, and the Belief of abllird Doctrines ; as a fantafical Being, angry without a Caufe, and pleas'd without Reafon ; as a vain-glorious Being, fond of having his Minifters and Favourites, that is, themfelves, live in Pomp, Splendor, and Luxury, to the miferable OpprefTion of the People. But 'tis no wonder, that they are made to believe, that God requires the obferving indifferent Things on the fee- yerefl Penalties fince their Priefts claim the fame

L 4 Power,

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152 Chrijllanity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 11.

Powefiyin making fuch Things neceflary to the com- municating in their holy Church, out of which, they affirm, Salvation is not to be had. . I wifh I could fay, the Popifh Priefts only were guilty of this horrid Impiety \ and that fome others had not been as zealous for impofing fuch Things, by ma- king them necefiary Terms of Communion, and damning thofe that durft not comply with them, and who feem to be of the Spirit with the famous Life of #/«• Bihop Gunning, who, when the Presbyterians urg'd y that. Lights, Holy Wa er, and fuch like, might as well be impos'd as the Crofs and Surplice, reply'd, The more the better. But if External Rites> as Archbihip billet fon obferves, have eat out the Heart of Religion in the Church of Rome, by Parity of Reafon, Religion fhould feem to have made the deepefl Impreffion on the Quakers, who are the moil averfe to Things of this nature *, and are therefore hated by the Formalijls of all Churches.

B. Sensible Things make a deeper Impreffion on the Minds of the common People than Words; and therefore, the ufing fymbolical Reprefentations being for the Advantage of Religion, why may they not be ordain'd of God ?
A. If you must have Recourse to Words, to explain the Signification, of such Symbols, are they not arbitrary Marks, whose Meaning cannot be known, but from Words 5 and, not being capable of expressing Things more fully than Words, wholly needless as to that Purpofe I Nay, Words themselves being but arbitrary Signs, to multiply such Signs needlessly would be very absurd.

As to fenfible Things making a deeper Impreflion on the common People, that, I presume, is a juft Reafon againft their Ufe in Religion, because the Vulgar, who generally look no farther than Externals, do not ufe them barely, as they do Words, to express their Meaning, but conceive in them I know not what internal Holinefs, and think fuch fymbolical Reprefentations as necefiary as the Things represented by them, nay, by degrees, forgetting the Reafon of their Inflitution, come to idolize them, as the Ifraelites did the brazen Serpent : And this the People have always done in all Religions whatever, where thefe fymbolical Reprefentations have been ufed.

The chief Caufe of the Egyptians falling into greater Idolatries than other lefs knowing Nations, was, no doubt, owing to the Ufe of Hieroglyphicks in their religious Worhip : An Ox, that laborious and ufeful Animal, was at firft only a fymbolical Reprefentation ; the Meaning of which, the People in time forgetting, fell to down-right adoring the Bead ; and, perhaps, it was for the fame Reafon that Leeks and Onions, and other Garden-fluff came likewise to be worfhipped. But without looking into the Pagan World, and fhewing by what Degrees they came to worfhip thofe fenfible Reprefentations, Statues and Images ; whoever reflects on the Ufe the Papifts have made of fuch things, mult see how fatal it is to bring th.m into Religion : The Images and Pictures of Saints, and CrofTes were firft introduced, on pretence, that being fenfible Representations, they might ferve to excite People's Devotion \ but that End wasfoon forgotten, and the superftitious Vulgar worfhip'd the very Images, Pictures, and CrofTes. I need not tell you what "ranfubftantiation, Confubftantiation, Real Preference, and other Abfurditics of that nature are owing to ; and what Mifchiefs they have occasion'd : But fupposing fuch fymbolical Reprefentations might be occasionally used •, is it not, for
the Reasons already given, incumbent on the Parties concern'd, to appoint, alter, and vary them as Occasion requires?

B. If God has delegated to the Clergy a Power to consecrate Persons and Things -, can any, whether Prince or People, dispense with this Power, and substitute Things unconsecrated?

Ch. Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 11.

A. As God alone is absolutely holy, so Men may be faid to be more or less holy, according as they imitate him; and as this Holiness conflits in a good and pious Disposition of Mind; so Mens Actions are no otherwise holy, but as they flow from, and are Signs of this holy Disposition. Inanimate things can only be faid to have a relative Holiness, as made ufe of in Actions, by which Men express that holy Disposition of Mind, and can laft no longer than they are thus employ'd. What Holiness, either real or relative, would the Ark now have? tho' it once had fuch a le'u Holiness, that more x Sam. 6. 19. than fifty thoufand Reapers were deftroy'd for peeping into it. Nay, Perfons who want all real Holiness, may yet have a relative Holiness, as Mi-nifters employ'd by the Congregation about holy tilings; but this can be no more than a derivative Holiness, and can laft no longer than the holy Action they are about; and belongs equally to thofe from whom 'tis deriv'd. Thus all the relative Holiness which concerns publick Worhip, whether as to Persons, Places, or Things, mud be deriv'd from the Congregation; and nothing fare can be more ab-iurd, than to imagine the Clergy, by any Form of Words, can beftow any permanent Holiness, whether real or relative, on Timber, Stone, &c. And therefore the Method us'd by Archbifhop Laud, in consecrating a Church, was generally cry'd out on as profane, and tending to juftify thofe Confecra-tions ufed in the Greek and Lathi Churches, whereby they cheat the People of immenfe Sums. But 'tis no wonder, if they who claim this Power in relation to inanimate things, should pretend to convey to Men, tho' ever fo wicked, a real inherent, nay, delible holy Character; tho' wherein that coniiifs, they themelves can't tell. But,

What the Priests aim at, by this Cant, is to make People believe their Prayers are of greater Efficacy than thofe of the unfanctify'd Laity; very well knowing, that if the People were fo weak as to
Ch. i r. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. ' i$i$

to believe it, they would be thought necelTary on all / occasions •, efpecially to Perfons on their Death-beds. ! What Advantages they have made by being then thought thus neceffary, no one can be ignorant of. I do not wonder, that fo loofe an H.iranguer as St. Cbryfcftom fhould fay, The Prayers of the People, which are weak in them] elves, laying hold on the more prevailing Prayers of the Priefts, may, by them, be conveyed to Heaven. Bat I admire, that the judicious Bifhop Potter, the King's ProfefTor of Divinity at of Church* Oxford, mould maintain th* e fame Pofition, and think Government, to fupport it by this Father's Authority : But this is P- 2 S°*
modeft in companion of what Hickes, Brett, and others ofthatftamp, afign to Priefls ; in fuppofing they have fach tranfeendent Privileges by virtue of their indexible Character, that they can blefs or curie authoritatively --, nay, that their very Prayers to God himfelf are authoritative Prayers.

B. Tho' fpme have had too little Regard for Na-
tural Religion, as being too ftubborn to yield to any felfifli Views ; yet that will not juflify you for levelling your Arguments againft the Divine Omni-
potency. Are we not God's Creatures ; and may not our Creator give us what arbitrary Commands he pleafes ?

A. Not to repeat what I have faid already, I fhall only afk you, Why may not God deceive us ? Tell us one thing, and act the contrary ? Is not his Power abfolute ? and his Will who can refift ? Would you not reply, that God, as he is infinitely good and happy, can have no Motive to deceive us ? And that he could do whatever he thought fit for the Good of his Creatures, without having recourfe to fuch mean Shifts ? And will not this reafon equally hinder him from burdening us with arbitrary Com-
mands ? Is not one as much as the other, inconfiitent with hisWifdomandGoodnens, by which his Power is always directed ? And of the two it fhould feem lefs abfurdf, that God might deceive for their Good, than impofe arbitrary things on them for their

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Hurt •, by annexing feverc Penalties on Non-ob-
fervance.

B. May not God give us arbitrary Commands
to try our Obedience?

A Man, who knows not the Hearts of others, nor foresees how they will act, may think it prudent to try People in things of little or no moment, before he tries them in greater; but God, who foreknows what Men will do on all occasions, can need no such Trial. If earthly Kings, who may be deceived and for the most part are so, would be justly esteem'd Tyrants, if they require things of their Subjects merely to try their Obedience; how can we think this of the Omnicient, infinitely Glorious King of Kings? Tho' was a Trial necessary, moral and immoral things would be the most proper Subjects for it, because we can't practise one, or refrain from the other, without subduing our Lusts and Passions: but what speculative Articles will not an ill Man profess? Or what indifferent things will he not practise, to be indulg'd in any one darling Vice.

And now don't you think we may justly conclude, that whatsoever God requires us to believe, or practise, is purely for our Good; and consequently, that no Belief, or Practise which does not contribute to that Good, can come from God; and therefore, as long as we adhere to what Reason reveals to us concerning the Goodness of God, by admitting every thing into Religion which makes for the Good of Man, and nothing that does not, we can't mistake our Duty either to God or Man. And therefore I shall conclude this Head with Characterif. a Quotation from an Author: "To believe, Vol. 2. p. 15. "that every thing is govern'd, order'd, or regulated for the best by a designing Principle, or Mind, necessarily good and permanent, is to be a perfect Theist."

'< To believe no one supreme designing Principle, 44 or Mind, but rather two or three % or more, (tho' in

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 157

in their Nature good) is to be a Poly theist. "To believe the governing Mind, or Minds, not «* absolutely and necessarily good, nor confin'd to *« what is best, but capable of acting according to " mere Will or Fancy, is to be a Daemon ist."
That they, who, to magnify Revelation, weaken the Force of the Religion of Reason and Nature, strike at all Religion; and that there can be two independent Rules for the Government of human Actions.

5. In my Opinion you lay too great a Stress on fallible Reason, and too little on infallible Revelation; and therefore I must needs say, your arguing wholly from Reason would make some of less Candour than my self, take you for an errant Free-thinker.

A. Whatever is true by Reason, can never be false by Revelation; and if God can't be deceived himself, or be willing to deceive Men, the Light he hath given to distinguish between religious Truth and Falsity, cannot, if duly attended to, deceive them in things of so great Moment.

They who do not allow Reason to judge in Matters of Opinion or Speculation, are guilty of as great Absurdity as the Papists, who will not allow the Senses to be Judges in the Case of Transubstantiation, tho' a Matter directly under their Cognizance; nay, the Absurdity, I think, is greater in the first Case, because Reason is to judge whether our Senses are deceit'd: And if no Texts ought to be admitted as a Proof in a Matter contrary to Sense, they ought certainly as little to be admitted in any Point contrary to Reason.

In a word, to suppose anything in Revelation inconsistent with Reason and at the same time, pretend

pretend it to be the Will of God, is not only to destroy that Proof, on which we conclude it to be the Will of God, but even the Proof of the Being of a God, fince if our Reasoning Faculties duly attended to deceive us, we can't be sure of the Truth of any one Proposition; but every thing would be alike uncertain, and we mould for ever fluctuate in a State of universal Scepticism: Which shews how absurdly they act, who, on pretence of magnifying Reason, endeavour to weaken the Force of Reason, (tho' to be sure they always except their own,) and thereby foolishly sap the Foundation, to support the Superstructure; but as long as Reason is against Men, they will be against Reason. We must not, therefore, be surpriz'd, to see some endeavour to reason Men out of their Reason; tho' the very Attempt to destroy Reason by Reason, is a Demonstration Men have nothing but
Reafon to truft to.

And to fuppofe any thing can be true by Reve- lation, which is falfe by Reafon, is not to support that thing, but to undermine Revelation; becaufe nothing unreafonable, nay, what is not highly rea- fonable, can come from a God of unlimited, uni- verfal, and eternal Reafon. As evident as this Truth is, yet that fhall not hinder me from examining in a proper Place, whatever you can urge from Reve- lation. And give me leave to add, that I fhall not be furpris'd, if for fo laudable an Attempt, as re- conciling Reafon and Revelation, which have been fo long fet at variance, I mould be cenfur'd as a Free- thinker; a Title, that, however invidious it may feem, I am far from being afham'd of; fince one may as well fuppofe a Man can reafon without thinking at all, as reafon well without thinking freely. But,

The irreconcileable Enemies of Reafon feeing it too grofs, in this reafoning Age, to attack Reafon openly, do it covertly under the Name of Free- thinking \ not defpairing, but that the time may come

Ch. 12. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. i$g

come again, when the Laity mall ftirle every Thought rifing in their Minds, tho' with ever fa much Appearance of Truth, as a Suggeftion of Sa- tan, if it clafnes with the real, or pretended Opi- nions of their Priefts.

B. Tho' you talk fo much about Reafon, you have not defin'd what you mean by that Word.

A. When we attribute any Operation to it, as diftinguifhing between Truth and Falifood, &c. we mean by it the rational Faculties *, but when we ascribe no fuch Operation to it, as when we give a Reafon for a thing, &c. we then underftand by it, any Medium, by which our rational Faculties judge of the Agreement, or Difagreement of the Terms of any Propofition *, and if an Author writes intelligibly, we may eafily difcern in which of thefe two Senfes he takes the Word. But to go to the Bottom of this Matter;

It will be requifite to give a more diftinct Account of Reafon in both thefe Senfes. By the ra- tional Faculties then, we mean the natural Ability a Man has to apprehend, judge, and infer: The im- mediate Objects of which Faculties are, not the things
themelves, but the Ideas the Mind conceives of them. While our Ideas remain single, they fail under the Apprehension, and are expressed by simple Terms; when join'd, under the Judgment, and expressed by Propositions, when so join'd as to need the Intervention of some other Idea to compare 'em with, in order to form a Judgment, they become by that Intervention, the Subject of Inference, or Argumentation, and this is term'd, Syllogism or Argument.

It must be observ'd too, that all the Ideas we have, or can have, are either by Sensation or Reflexion, by the first, we have our Ideas of what parties or exist without; by the second, of what parties, or exist within the Mind: And in the View, or Contemplation of these, consists all our Knowledge; that being nothing but the Perception of the Agreement, or Disagreement, of the Ideas. And any two of these,

160. Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch* 12* these, when join'd together, so as to be affirm'd or deny'd of each other, make what we call a Proposition; when consider'd apart, what we call the Terms of that Proposition; the Agreement, or Disagreement, of which Terms being expressed by the rightly affirming, or denying 'em of each other, is what we call Truth; the Perception of their Agreement or Disagreement, is what we term Knowledge: This Knowledge accrues either immediately on the bare Intuition of these two Ideas, or Terms so join'd, and is therefore ftyi'd Intuitive Knowledge; or self-evident Truth: Or by the Intervention of some other Idea, or Ideas, as a common Measure for the other two, and is therefore call'd the Medium, by which Reason judges of their Agreement or Disagreement; and this is call'd Demonstrative Knowledge, which is never to be had without the help of the other. For,

If there were not some Propositions which need not to be prov'd, it would be in vain for Men to argue with one another; because they then could bring no Proofs but what needed to be prov'd.>

Those Propositions which need no Proof, we call self-evident, because by comparing the Ideas, signify'd by the Terms of such Propositions, we immediately discern their Agreement, or Disagreement: This is, as I said before, what we call Intuitive Knowledge; and is the Knowledge of God himself, who sees all things by Intuition; and may, I think, be call'd divine Inspiration; as being im-
mediately from God, and not acquir'd by any hu-
man Deduction, or drawing of Consequences: This,
certainly, is that divine, that uniform Light, which
shines in the Minds of all Men, and enables them
to discern whatever they do discern; since without
it there could be no Demonstration, no Know-
ledge, but invincible Obscurity* and universal Un-
certainty.

Where a Proposition can't be made evident,
- by-comparing the two Ideas or Terms of it with
each

Ch> 12* Chrijiianity as Old as the Creatiou 16 i
each other, it is render'd fo by intermediate Ideas
or Terms; whereby the Agreement, or Disagreem-
ment of the Ideas under Examination, or the Truth
of that Proposition is perceiv'd; and when there is
an intuitive Perception of the Agreement, or Dis-
agreement of the intermediate Ideas in each Step of
the Progression, then, and not till then, it becomes
demonstrative Knowledge; otherwise it can rise no
higher than Probability, which confisits not in a cer-
tain, but a likely Connexion between the Terms of a
Proposition, and the intermediate Proofs of it: So
that every Proposition that's only probable, must
have a proportionable Degree of Uncertainty, other-
wise it would amount to Demonstration; and confe-
quently, Probability, as well as Certainty, is founded
on the Relation it has to self-evident Truths; becaufe
where no Relation to them of any Sort can be disco-
ver'd, there is no room for Certainty, or Probability.

Hence we fee that all wrong Reasoning is the
Effect of Rashnes, and confisits either in taking Pro-
positions to have a certain Connexion with self-evi-
dent Truths, when they have but a probable one;
or imagining there's a probable Connexion, when
there's no Connexion at all; or else miftaking the
Degrees of Probability.

B. The Quakers are very pofitive, that there is
in all Mankind, a Principle of Action different
from Reafon, (and which is not Infpiration) by which all
are to be govern'd in Matters of Religion, as they
are by Reafon in other Matters *, and which they
commonly call the Light within.

A. Was there any fuch Principle, Men defti-
tute of all Reafon were as capable of knowing all
Matters of Religion, as if they had been ever fo
rational. s Tis ftrange, that all Mankind fhould
have a Principle of acting, of which they never
were fenfible; nor can thefe modern Difcoveries tell them what it is, or how it operates; nor do they themfelves everufe it in any of their Debates about Religion-, but argue like other Men from Princi-
pies

162 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

pies that are in common to all Mankind, and prove Proportions that are not felf-evident by thofe that are fo; and confute falfe and bad Reafons (of which they can only judge by Reafon) by true and good Reafons; which fuppofes that Reafon, however fal-
ible it may be, is all rational Creatures have to truill to •, and that 'tis the higheft Commendation of Religion 5 that it is a reasonable Service. And fince this is an Age, where Words without Meaning, or Difficcctions without Difference, will not pafs cur-
rent i why mould they, who otherwife appear to have good Senfe, thus impofe on themselves, and be expos'd to others, for fuch fenfelefs Notions, as can only ferve to prejudice People againft their other ra-
tional Principles? But 'tis the Fate of moft Seels to be fondeft of their ugliefl Brats. But not to deviate,

Were it not for thofe felf-evident Notions, which are the Foundation of all our Reafon ings, there could be no intellectual Communication be-
tween God and Man; nor, as we are fram'd, can God afcertain us of any Truth, but by mewing its Agreement with thofe felf-evident Notions, which are the Tefls by which we are to judge of every nining, even the Being of a God, and Natural Re-
ligion; which, tho' not knowable by Intuition, are to be demonfrated by fuch Proofs, which have, mediately or immediately, a nece-fly Connexion with our felf-evident Notions. And therefore to weaken the Force of Demonfration, is to iliike at all Religion, and even the Being of God; and not to give Probability its due Weight, is to ftrike at the Authority of that Revelation you contend for •, becaufe, that God reveal'd his Will by Vifions, Br 'earns; Trances, or any other Way befides the Light of Nature, can only come under the Head of Probability. And,

If it be but probable, that God made any ex-
ternal Revelation at all, it can be but probable, tho' perhaps, not in the fame Degree of Probability, that he made this, or that Revelation: And this

Evidence
Evidence all pretend to, since, perhaps, there never was a Time or Place, where some external Revelation was not believ'd, and its Votaries equally confident, that Theirs was a true Revelation: And, indeed, the prodigious Numbers of Revelations, which from time to time have been in the World, new how easily Mankind may in this Point be imposed on. And as there can be no Demonstration of the Revelation itself, so—neither can there be any of its Conveyance to posterity \ much less that this, or that, has been conveyed entire to distant times and Places \ especially, if the Revelation be of any Bulk; and which may have gone through the Hands of Men, who, nor only in the dark Ages of the Church, but even in the Beginning, if we judge by the Number of corrupted Passages—, and even forg'd Books, were capable of any pious Fraud. Nay, the very Nature of Probability is such, that were it only left to Time itself, even that wou'd wear it quite out; at least if it be true what Mathematicians pretend to demonstrate, viz. That the Probability of Facts depending on human Testimony, must gradually lessen in proportion to the Distance of the Time when they were done. And we have a Reverend Divine, who Craigh Prin— has publish'd, as he thinks, a Demonstration of ci P^ Mathe— This, with relation to Facts recorded in Scripture; Sgi^chriS— and has gone so far as to fix the precise Time, when anse, p. 23—all Probability of the Truth of the History of Christ, & d. Edit. will be entirely spent, and exhausted. Londini 16 99—

Archbishop Laud says, that " the Affent ZWagainft " we yield to this main Point of Divinity, that the f ^P- 110 ' " Scripture is the Word of God, is grounded on cc no compelling or demonstrative Ratiocination, " but relies on the Strength of Faith more than " any one Principle whatever." And by theConfession of the best Protestant Writers, the internal Excellency of the Christ ian Doctrines is the main Proof of their coming from God —, and therefore, Mr. Chillingworth says, " For my Part, I profefs, Relig.Plot-ft, " if the Doctrine of the Scripture was not as good, Part. 1. c.z, M 2 " andP− 53—

164 Christlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

" and as fit to come from God, the Fountain of " Goodness, as the Miracles, by which it was con— cc ntm'd, were great •, I would want one main Pil— u lar of my Faith: And for want of it, I fear, " would be much stagger'd in it.
Thts, I think, may be sufficient to shew, what a P Polly they are guilty of, who, in order to advance the Credit of Revelation, endeavour to weaken the Force of Reason.

B. I don't think we ought to have the same Regard for Reason as Men had formerly; when That was the sole Rule God had given them for the Government of their Actions; since now we Christians have two supreme, independent Rules, Reason and Revelation, and both require an absolute Obedience.

A. I can't see how that is possible, for you are to be govern'd by the latter. That supposes you must take every thing on Trust; or merely because it's said by those, for whose Dictates you are to have an implicit Faith: For to examine into the Truth of what they say, is renouncing their Authority, as on the contrary, if Men are to be govern'd by their Reason, they are not to admit any thing farther than as they see it reasonable. To suppose both confluent, is to suppose it confident to take, and not to take, things on trust.

To receive Religion on the account of Authority supposes, that if the Authority promulgated a different Religion, we must be oblig'd to receive it; and indeed, it's an odd Jumble, to prove the Truth of a Book by the Truth of the Doctrines it contains, and at the same time conclude those Doctrines to be true, because contain'd in that Book; and yet this is a Jumble every one makes, who contends for Men's being absolutely govern'd both by Reason and Authority.

What can be a fuller Evidence of the Sovereignty of Reason, than that all Men, when there is any thing in their traditional Religion, which in its literal Sense can't be defended by Reason, have recourse

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 16$ recourse to any Method of Interpretation, tho' ever fo fore'd, in order to make it appear reasonable.

And do not all Parties, when pres'd, as they are all in their turns, fay with Tertullian: " We ought " to interpret Scripture, not by the Sound of " Words, but by the Nature of Things? " Malo Adv - Prax.
But sometimes the Letter of the Scripture is such an Authority, as can't be parted with without Sacrilege; and sometimes 'tis a Letter which killeth.

In a Word, when Men, in defending their own, or attacking other traditionary Religions, have recourse to the Nature or Reason of Things; does not That shew, they believe the Truth of all traditionary Religions is to be try'd by it*, as being That, which must tell them what is true or false in Religion? And were there not some Truths relating to Religion of themselves so evident, as that all must agree in them, nothing relating to Religion could be prove'd, every thing would want a farther Proof; and if there are such evident Truths, must not all others be try'd by their Agreement with them? And are not these the Tests, by which we are to distinguish the only true Religion from the many false ones? And do not all Parties alike own, there are such Tests drawn from the nature of Things, each crying their Religion contains every thing worthy, and nothing unworthy of having God for its Author; thereby confessing that Reason enables them to tell what is worthy of having God for its Author. And if Reason tells them this, does it not tell them every thing that God can be supposed to require?

In short, nothing can be more certain, than that there are some things in their own Nature good, some evil j and others neither good nor evil k, and for the same reason God commands the Good, and forbids the Evil, he leaves Men at liberty in Things indifferent; it being inconsistent with his Wisdom to reward the observance of such things, and with his Good-

I 66 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 2.

Goodness to punish for not observing them. And as he could have no End in creating Mankind, but their common Good k, so they answer the End of their Creation, who do all the Good they can; And to enable Men to do this, God has given them Reason to distinguish Good from Evil, useful from useless Things: Or, in other Words, has made them moral Agents, capable of discerning the Relations they stand in to God and one another \ and the Duties resulting from these Relations, so necessary to their common Good: And consequently, Religion,
thus founded on these immutable Relations, must at all Times, and in all Places, be alike immutable; since external Revelation, not being able to make, any Change in these Relations, and the Duties that necessarily result from them, can only recommend, and inculcate these Duties, except we suppose, that God at last acted the Tyrant, and imposed such Commands, as the Relations we stand in to him, and one another, no ways require.

To imagine any external Revelation not to depend on the Reason of Things, is to make Things give Place to Words; and implies, that from the Time this Rule commenced, we are forbid to act as moral Agents in judging what is Good or Evil; Fit or Unfit—, and that we are to make no other Use of our Reason, than to see what is the literal Meaning of Texts; and to admit that only to be the Will of God, tho' ever so inconsistent with the Light of Nature, and the eternal Reason of Things. Is not this to infer, there's nothing Good or Evil in itself, but that all depends on the Will of an arbitrary Being; which, tho' it may change every Moment, is to be unalterably found in such a Book? And,

All Divines, I think, now agree in owning, that there's a Law of Reason, antecedent to any external Revelation, that God can't dispense, either with his Creatures or himself, for not observing—which, tho' it may change every Moment, is to be unalterably found in such a Book?

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 167

If we can't believe otherwise than as things appear to our Understandings, to suppose God requires us to give up our Understandings (a Matter we can't know but by using our Understanding) to any Authority whatever, is to suppose he requires Impossibilities. And our self-evident Notions being the Foundation of all Certainty, we can only judge of things, as they are found to be more or less agreeable to them 5 to deny This on any Pretence whatever, can serve only to introduce an universal Scepticism. And therefore Bishop Taylor very juicily observes, "'Tis Reason that is the Judge; Pulem. Dipco. " and Fathers, Councils, Tradition and Scripture P- 5°7' " the Evidence." And if Reason be the Judge,
can it form a right Judgment, without examining into every thing which offers itself for Evidence? And would it not examine in vain, if it had not certain tests, by which it could try all Evidences relating to religious Matters.

B. Tho' Reaon may be the Judge *, yet the Scripture, we fay, is the Rule, by which Reaon must judge of the Truth of things.

A. If it be fuch a Rule, must not have all the Qualifications neceffary to make it fo? But if Reaon must tell us what thofe Qualifications are, and whether they are to be found in Scripture *, and if one of thofe Qualifications is, that the Scripture must be agreeable to the Nature of things *, does not that fuppofe the Nature of things to be the fanding Rule, by which we mufl judge of the Truth of all thofe Doctrines contain'd in the Scriptures? So that the Scripture can only be a fecondary Rule, as far as it is found agreeable to the Nature of things \ or to thofe felf-evident Notions, which are the Foundation of all Knowledge and Certainty.

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168 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. \z,

In fhort, no Man can any more difcern the Objects of his own Underflanding, and their Relations, by the Faculties of another, than he can fee with another Man's Eyes *, or that one Ship can be guided by the Helm of another: And therefore, he, who demands a Man's Affent to anything, without conveying into his Mind fuch Reafons as may produce a Senfe of the Truth of it; erects a Tyranny over his Underflanding, and demands an imposfible Tribute. No Opinion, tho' ever fo certain to one Man, can be inius'd into another as certain, by any Method, but by opening his Underflanding, fo that he may find the Reafonablenefs of it in his own Mind \ and confequently, the only Criterion^ by which he tries his own Reafonings, mufl be the internal Evidence he has already of certain Truths, and the Agreeablenefs of his Inferences to them. And,

To fuppofe a Creature to have Reaon to direct him, and that he is not to be directed by it, is a Contradiction; and if we are religious as we are ra- tional, can Religion oblige us not to be govern'd by Reaon, tho' but for a Moment? Nay, what is the Religion of all rational Beings, but what the Scripture terms it, a reafonable Service? Or, their Reaon employ 'd on fuch Subjects, as conduce
to the Dignity of the rational Nature? So that Religion and Reason were not only given for the same End, the Good of Mankind; but they are, as far as such Subjects extend, the same, and commence together. And if God can no otherwise apply to Men, but by applying to their Reason, (which he is continually doing by the Light of Nature) does he not by that bid them use their Reason? And can God at the same time forbid it, by requiring an implicit Faith in any Person whatever.

If you allow, that Men by their Reasoning Faculties are made like unto God, and frame'd after his Image, and that Reason is the most excellent Gift

.Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. x60

Gift God can bellow-, do they not destroy this Likeness, deface this Image, and give up the Dignity of human Nature, when they give up their Reason to any Person whatever?

Can we lay too great a Stress on Reason, when we consider, 'tis only by virtue of it God can hold Communication with Man? Nor can otherwise, if I may so speak, witnes for himself, or alter the Wisdom and Goodness of his Conduct; than by submitting his Ways to Mens cool Deliberation, and Uriel Examination? since 'tis from the Marks we discern in the Laws of the Universe, and its Government, that we can demonstrate it to be governed by a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness: He, whose Reason does not enable him to do this, can neither discern the Wisdom, Goodness, or even the Being of a God.

They only answer the End for which their Reason was given them, who judge of the Will of God, by the Reasonable and Goodness of Doctrines; and think his Laws, like his Works, carry in them the Marks of Divinity; and they likewise do the greatest Honour to the Scripture, who suppose it deals with Men as with rational Creatures; and therefore admit not of any of its Doctrines without a fabric Examination; And those who take a contrary Method, would, if they liv'd in Turky^ embrace Mahomet anifm^ and believe in the Alcoran.

And indeed, a blind Submission is so far from doing credit to true Religion, that it puts all Religion on the same foot: for without judging of a
Religion by its internal Marks, there's nothing but Miracles to plead •, and Miracles true or falfe, if they are believ'd (and where are they not ?) will have the fame Effect: Nay, if Miracles can be perform'd by evil, as well as by good Beings, the worft Religion may have the moft Miracles, as needing them moil. And it was a proverbial Saying among t1]e Philofophers of Greece^ Gscuudx poopot*

Miracles

iyo Chrijtianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12,

Miracles for Fools , and Re a/on s for Wife Men. The Boeotians were remarkable for their Stupidity, and the Number of their Oracles •, and if they look no further than the Chriftian World, you will find, that* Ignorance, and the Belief of daily Miracles go hand in hand, and that there is nothing too abfu

' See his Alna- the People's Belief. And if the moft learned Huetius tanae Qurefti- gives us a true Account of Things, there are no Mi- ones de Con- ^jfc recorded in the Bible, but many of the like

cordantia hdei , r , . ' TT . n J .

& rationis. nature are to be found in Pagan Hiltories.

' Wou'd not Chriftians themfelves think it a fu-ficient Proof of a Religion's not coming from God, if it wanted any of thofe internal Marks, by which the Truth of Religion is to be try'd, without in- quiring into its Miracles, or any other its external Proofs ? and confequently, wherever thefe internal Marks are found, are not external Marks needlefs ? But,

How can we maintain, that the Scripture Carries with it all thofe internal Marks of Truth, which are infeparable from God's Laws •, and at the fame time affirm, it requires an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience to all its Dictates? If it does fo y how could we have examin'd whether it had thofe internal Marks? Or can we lay, we can't know with- out the Scripture, what are the internal Marks of Truth -, and at the fame time fuppofe, we muft by our Reafon know what are thofe Marks, before we can tell whether they are to be found in the Scripture ?

If our Nature is a rational Nature, and our Re- ligion a reaonable Service, there mult be fuch a ne- ceffary and clofe Connexion between them, as to leave no room for any thing that is arbitrary to in- tervene : And confequently, the Religion of all ra- tional Beings mull confift in ufing fuch a Conduct
to God, and their Fellow-Creatures, as Reason, whatever Circumstance they are in, does direct.

Gal. i. 8. We find St. Paul himself saying, that To* We, (the Apostles) or an Angel from Heaven ', p'each any other

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 171

other Gospel, let him be accursed: And is not this laying the whole stress on its internal Marks? Since there's nothing in the nature of such Things as have not those Marks, to hinder them from being chang'd every Moment.

And as to those who defraud Reason, in order to exalt Revelation, I would ask them, what greater Proof the Scripture can give us of the Rectitude of human Understanding in religious Matters, than calling it the Inspiration of the Almighty; or than j b. 32. 3. God's frequently appealing to it, for the Justification of his own Conduct?

In the Prophet Isaiah, God representing his own Conduct towards his People, under the Parable of a Vineyard, expressly says, O ye Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and Men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my Vineyard. And in Ezekiel, God, after a long Vindication of his Carriage towards his People, appeals to them, saying, Hear now, O Houfe of Kind, Ezek. 18. 21 is not my Ways equal? Are not your Ways unequal? And in the Prophet Micah, he says, He will plead with them \ Mic. 6. 2, 3 asks what he has done, and bids them testify against him. And in the Prophet Isaiah, after the Lord had said, Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppreffed judge the Father lefts, plead for the Widow -, he adds, Come now, let us reason together; thou 9 your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow, Does not God here appeal to their Reason for the Sufficiency of moral Things, to wash away their Sins, the' of the deepest Dye? And could God and Man reason together, except there were some Notions in common to both; some Foundation for such Reasoning? Otherwise could Job say, I desire Job. 13. 3. to reason with God? And certainly, the next thing to reasoning with God, is reasoning with one another about God and Religion; that being the chief End* for which our Reason was given us. Thus Paul reas- Acts 18. 4, told in the Synagogue every Sabbath, And again, He
172 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

17-2. He reafctfd with them out of the Scriptures. And as He- *$• be reafon 9 d of Right eoufnels, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled: Which, certainly, he had never done, had Paul talk'd about Types, Allegories, Rites and Ceremonies, &c.

B. You argue as if we had no certain way of knowing the Will of G<ed y except from the Light of Nature, and that eternal Rule of Reason, by which you suppose, God governs all his own Actions, and expects Men should govern all theirs; but may not God take what Methods he pleafes to communicate his Mind?

A. This all traditional Religions with equal Confidence aflert-, and they would have equal Right to plead it, if Reason did not afford Men certain Criteria to know God's Will by, which way foever reveal'd.

If God created Mankind to make them happy here, or hereafter, the Rules he gave them, muft be fufficient to anfwer that benevolent Purpofe of infinite Wisdom •, and consequently, had Mankind ob-ferv'd them, there could have been no Occafion for an external Revelation; and its great Ufe now is, to make Men obferve thefe neglected Rules, which God, of his infinite Wisdom and Goodnefs, defign'd for their prefent, and future Happinefs.

B. Do not our Divines fay, Mankind were for many Ages in a deplorable State, for want of an external Revelation?

A. If God does every thing that's fit for him to do, could Men be in fuch a State, becaufe God did not do a thing, which was not fit for him to do, viz. make a Revelation, before it was fit for him to make it? Or can the greater! Part of Mankind be now in that deplorable Condition, for want of a Revelation, which God, out of his infinite Wisdom, has not as yet thought (it to communicate to them; at leaft with that Evidence, as is necefiary to make them believe it?

Must

Ch. 12. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation.

Must not thefe Gentlemen fuppofe, that either
God, in creating Mankind, did not defign their future Happinefs, tho' he gave them immortal Souls capable of it •, or elfe, that tho* he defign'd it, he prefcrib'd them fuch Means, or gave them fuch Rules, as either were not fufficient at firft ; or in Procefs of Time became wifufficient for that End ? But that after Men had been, for many Ages, in this miferable Condition, God thought fit to mend the eternal, univerfal Law of Nature, by adding certain Obfervances to it, not founded on the Rea- fon of Things •, and that thole, out of his partial Goodnefs, he communicated only to fome •, leaving the greatest Part in their former dark and deplora- ble State ? But,

Is it not incumbent on thofe, who make any ex- ternal Revelation fo neceflary to the Happinefs of all Mankind, to fhew, how it is confluent with the Notion of God's being univerfally benevolent, not to have reveal'd it to all his Children, when all had equal need of it ? Was it not as eafy for him to have communicated it to all Nations, as in any one Na- tion, or Perfon r Or in all Languages, as to any one ? Nay, was it not as eafy for him to have made all Men, for the fake of this noble End, fpeak in one and the lame Language \ as it was at firft, to multiply Languages, to prevent their building a Tower up to Heaven ? Nay, I fee not how God can have any need at all of Language, to let Man- kind know his Will •, fince he has at all times com- municated his Mind to them without it ?

B. These, I confefs, are considerable Difficul- ties ; but as to the laft Difficulty, did not God give Laws to the Jews, of which other Nations knew nothing ?

A. Nor were they concern'd to know, or when known, oblig'd to obferve them ; nor did they bind the Jews themfelves, but for a time •, and e- ven then, they were, for the mod part, impractica- ble out of the Land of Canaan ; where God, as I told

<74 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

shall fully fliew hereafter, adled not as Govemour of the Unverfe, but as King of the Jews, by ver- tue of the f&ri^ Covenant •, which he obtain'd at his own Requef1. Bat when God acts as Govemour of the Univerfe, his Laws are all alike defign'd for all under his Government •, that is, ail Mankind : And confequently, what equally concerns all, mufl be equally knowable by all. And if the Univer-
fality of a Law, be the only certain Mark of its coming from the Governer of Mankind; how—
can we be certain, That, which wants this Mark, comes from him? And if Religion belongs to us, as we are Men; must we not, as Men, be capable of knowing it? And if all Mankind are Creatures of the same Creator, and Fellow-Creatures with one another, must not all their religious Duties, as they are Creatures of the same God, and Fellow-Creatures with one another, be the same? And let me add, that

If Men are religious, as they are rational, must they not be capable, when they come to the Use of their Reason, of knowing a Religion founded on Reason? Or must they be oblig'd to leave their Country, and endlessy rove up and down, in search of which Opinions as have no Foundation in Reason? Or, if they are forc'd to stay at home, be ever examining into all the arbitrary Precepts, which are to be met with in any of the traditional Religions they can come at? And must they do so, must they nor, since Reason could not direct them in Things not depending on Reason, perpetually remain in a State of Uncertainty?

I might go farther, and ask you, whether it is consistent with that Impartiality, which is essential to the Deity, not to make thole he design'd should know his Will by Revelation, capable of knowing that Revelation, and consequently his Will, contrariwise in it, at one time as well as another? Which could not be, if that which was plain at first, became obscure by reason of the Change of Languages,

Ch. 12. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 17^

Languages, Cuftoms, the Diftance of Time and Place, the Errors of Transcribers and Translators, and an hundred other Things too long to mention. Can these Difficulties be avoided, without supposing, that Religion, which way fore'er reveal'd, carries such internal Marks of Truth, as at all Times and Places, plainly mews itself, even to the meanest Capacity, to be the Will of a Being of universal and impartial Benevolence.

B. The greater Stress you lay on Reason, the more you extol Revelation; which being design'd to exalt and perfect our rational Nature, must be itself highly reaonable.

A. I grant you this is the Defign of Religion, but have not the Ecclesiafticks in moil Places en-
tirely defeated this Design, and in far debas'd Hu-
man Nature, as to render it unfociable, fierce, and
cruel? Have they not made external Revelation
the Pretence of filling the Christian World with
Animosity, Hatred, Persecution, Ruin, and De-
struction, in order to get an absolute Dominion
over the Consciences, Properties and Persons of the
Laity? But, passing this over, if the Perfection of
any Nature, whether Human, Angelical, or Divine,
confists in being govern'd by the Law of its Na-
ture; and ours, in acting that Part for which we
were created; by observing all those Duties, which
are founded on the Relation we stand in to God and
one another—, can Revelation any otherwise help to
perfect human Nature, but as it induces Men to
live up to this Law of their Nature? And if this
Law is the Test of the Perfection of any written
Law—, must not that be the most perfect Law, by
which the Perfection of all others is to be try'd?
And,

If nothing but Reasoning can improve Reason,
and no Book can improve my Reason in any Point,
but as it gives me convincing Proofs of its Reason-
blenefs; a Revelation that will not suffer us to
judge of its Dictates by our Reason, is so far from
improving,

176 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch* 12-
improving Reason, that it forbids the Use of it;
and reasoning Faculties unexercis'd, will have as
little Force, as unexercis'd Limbs—, he that is al-
ways carry'd, will at length become unable to go:
Liberty of And if the Holy Ghost, as Bishop Taylor says, works
Prophecy, ^ heightning and improving our natural Faculties; it
can only be by ufg fuch Means as will improve
them, in proposing Reasons and Arguments to con-
vince our Understanding; which can only be im-
prov'd, by studying the Nature and Reason of
Rcclef. 7. 25. Things: I apply 9 d my Heart (says the wiftrt of Men)
to know, and to fear ch, and to feek out Wifdom, and the
Reason of Things.

So that the Holy Ghost can't deal with Men as
rational Creatures, but by proposing Arguments to
convince their Understandings, and influence their
Wills, in the same manner as if propos'd by other
Agents; for to go beyond this, woul'd be making
Impreftions on Men, as a Seal does on Wax—, to the
confounding of their Reason, and their Liberty in
choofing—, and the Man would then be merely pa-
five, and the Action would be the Action of another
Being acting upon him; for which he could be no
way accountable: But if the Holy Ghoft does not a& thus, and Revelation itfelf be not arbitrary; muft it not be founded on the Reafon of Things? And confequently, be a Republication, or Reftoration of the Religion of Nature? And fince that takes in every thing thus founded, all the Help any Au-

thority whatever can afford a reasonable Being, is the offering him Arguments, of which his own Reafon muft judge: And when he perceives their Agreement with his felf-evident Notions, 'tis then., and only then, he can be fure of their Truth. And tho' Men could not miftake, as we fee they daily do, a natural for a supernatural Suggestion, yet whether that Suggestion comes from a good or evil Being, (continually tempting People) can only be yudg'd by the nature of the Things fuggefted. For 'tis in vain to have recourie to -Miracles, if evil as well

Ch. 12. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 1 77

well as good Beings had the Power of doing them. And fome are fo heterodox as to imagine, one Reafon why evil Beings are permitted to do Miracles, is, left from the Report of Miracles (which is alike fpread every where, and for every Religion) Men might be tempted not to rely on the Reafon and Nature of Things, and fo run into endless Superftitions. And,

God, in the Old Teitament, is faid to furTer Deut. 13.1.3 Miracles to be done by falfe Prophets, in order to prove his People, and in the New, fuch Mi-

racles, as would, if it were pqfjihle^ deceive the very Mat. 24. 24. Eletl.

In fhort* Revelation either bids, or forbids Men to uie their Reafon, in judging of all religious Mat-
ers ; if the former, then it only declares that to be our Duty, which was fo independent of, and ante-
cedent to Revelation ■ if the latter, then it does not deal with Men as with rational Creatures ■ but de-
prives them of that ineftimable Bleiling.

B. Who* I pray, maintains* that Revelation forbids us the Ufe of our Reafon, in judging the Truth of any religious Matters?

Ak Is not every one of this Opinion, that fays* we are not to read the Scripture with Freedom of affenting, or iffenting, juft as we judge it agrees, or difagrees with the Light of Nature, and the Reafon of Things ? And this* one wou'd think, none cou'd deny was abfolutely neceffary, in read-
ing a Book, where 'tis own'd that the Letter killeth. 
Nay, do not all in effect own as much, who will 
not allow the Scripture any Meaning, how plain 
foever, but what is agreeable to their Reafon? 
Which fhews, that in their Opinion, Reafon was 
rather given to supply the Defects of Revelation, 
than Revelation the Defects of Reafon. Is there a 
Divine, who* tho' he pretends ever fo high a Ve-
neration for the Scripture, but will own there are 
many Places where 'tis neceffary to recede from

N the

1^8 Chriftianty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

the Letter, and find out a Senfe agreeable to his 
Reafon; which supposes it is that, and not the Au-
thority of the Book, for that's the fame in both 
cafes, which makes him approve the literal Senfe 
in one Cafe, and condemn it in another. And were 
Men not governed by their Reafon, but by fome 
external Revelation* they had nothing more to do, 
but to take the Words of that Revelation, in its 
literal, obvious, and plain Meaning, how abfurd 
foever it might appear to their carnal Reafon.

B. We may take the Words of fallible Men in 
the plain, literal Senfe; but if any thing is faid by 
infallible Men, which in the obvious meaning of 
the Words is inconfiftent with Reafon, we muft 
have recourfe to an allegorical Senfe; or if that will 
not do, we muft put no meaning at all on the Words: 
Thus we support the Dignity of both Revelation 
and Reafon.

A, Is not this owning you take not your Reli-
gion from thofe infallible Men, but you endeavour 
to impofe that Religion your Reafon tells you is 
true, upon their Words; by allowing them no o-
ther Meaning, how plain foever, but what you an-
tecedently know by the Light of Nature to be the 
Will of God? And,

There's no Book r but you may own its In-
fallibility, and yet be entirely governed by your 
Jleafon, if you, as often as you find any thing not 
agreeable to your Reafon, torture it, to make it 
fppeak what is fo. Would you think a Mahometan 
was governed by his Alchoran? who, upon all Oc-
casions, mould thus depart from the literal Senfe *, 
nay, , would you not tell him, that his infpirM Book 
fell infinitely fhort of Cicero's uninfpir'd Writings - T 
where there is no fuch Occafion to recede from the 
Letter?
The Moammarites, a famous Sect among the Mahometans, and the Myfticks, very numerous in

that attend all traditional Facts, maintain, " That Mafom. Life

" Gad can never discover himfelf with Certainty 2 " ^- b ^ re

% any other way, than by fpeaking to the Rea-

" fon and Underftanding of Men: For if we de-

" pend, fay they, on Oral Tradition, we lay our-

" felves open to the greateft Falfties and Impofi-

16 tions; there being nothing fo liable to infinite

" Changes and Alterations; numberlefs Miflakes,

" Additions and Subtractions, according as Mens

cc Opinions vary by the Change of Times and Cir-

&\ cumftances: Nor are Books more exempt from

" fuch Doubtful nefs and Uncertainty; fince we

W find fo much Diferagreement among Books wrote

" by different Men, in different Parts and diffe-

" rent Ages; and even among the different Books

" of the fame Men. But fuppofe, continue they:

" we fhould resolve our whole Faith into the fole

" Text of the Alchoran, the Difficulty and Uncer-

" tainty will ftill remain; if we confider, how

< c many Metaphors, Allegories, and other Figures

" of Speech; how many obfcure, ambiguous, in-

" tricate and myfterious Faff ages are to be met with

" in this infallible Book; and how different are the

" Opinions, Expolitions and Interpretations of the
f* moft fubtle Doctors, and learned Commentators
" on every one of them. The only lure way,
" then, add they, to come to the certain Know-
" ledge of the Truth, is to confult God himfelf,
" c wait his Infpirations, live juft and honeft Lives,
"< be kind and beneficent to all our Fellow-Crea-
<c tures, and pity fuch as differ from us in their
" Opinions about the Authority, Integrity, and
" Meaning of the Alchoran."

The Mahometans, though they own the Law
of Chrift, yet they make it of no Ufe, becaufe
they fuppofe the Law of Mahomet is more per-
fect; and 'tis that they muff ftick to: And do
not fome Men, by arguing much after the fame
manner in relation to the Gofpel, render
the Law

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p. 226.

1 80 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

of Nature ufelefs ? But if we are frill moral Agents,
and as fuch are capable of judging between Reli-
gion and Superllition •, can we think otherwife of
the Gofpel than that it is defign'd, not to free
us from the eternal Law of Nature, but from
thofe Abfurditities, which the Folly or Knavery of
Men have introduced in oppofition to it ? Hence
it is, that the Scripture fpeaks in general Terms,
without defining thofe things which it commands,
or forbids •, becaufe it fuppofes Men moral Agents,
capable by their Reafon to difcern Good from
Evil, Virtue from Vice, Religion from Superfti-
tion.
Pofthumous If Mr. Locke reafons juftly, " No Miftion can
" thing derogating from the Honour of the one,
" only, true, invifible God - 7 or inconffient with
" Natural Religion and the Rules of Morality :
" becaufe God having discover'd to Men the Unity
" and Majefty of his eternal Godhead, and the
"Truths of Natural Religion and Morality by
the Light of Reason, he cannot be supposed
to back the contrary by Revelation; for that
would be to destroy the Evidence and Use of
Reason, without which, Men cannot be able
\ to distinguish divine Revelation from diabolical
"Imposture."

Does not this suppose, First, that no Mission
can be divine, or its Revelation true, that admits
of more than one, only, true, invisible God?
Secondly, That Men, by their Reason, must know,
wherein the Honour of this one, only, true, in-
visible God consists, otherwise they might (for
ought they know) be obliged by Revelation to
admit what is derogatory to his Honour? Thirdly,
They must know by the Light of Reason, what
are the Truths of Natural Religion and Rules of
Morality; because otherwise they might be obliged
to admit things inconsistent with them: And that
to

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 181;

to suppose the contrary, would be to destroy the
Use and Evidence of Reason, without which,
Men would not be able to distinguish divine Re-
velation from diabolical Impostures, which im-
plies, that in things tending to the Honour of
God, and the Good of Mankind, the dernier
Recourse is to Reason; whose Dictates, as they need
no Miracles for their Support, all Doctrines in-
consistent with them, tho' they plead endless Mi-
racles, must, be looked upon as diabolical Impof-
tures. And,

When the Apostle says, Whatsoever things are Vh\, 4. 8.
true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things
are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever
things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Re-
port, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise,
think on these things: Is not this referring us to the
Light of Nature, to know what these things are,
which persuade themselves to be the Will of God by
their internal Excellency?

B. Our Divines, tho' they own Reason may do
tolerably well in things between Man and Man, yet in Matters relating to God, Reason, they
say, must submit to Faith; and that the chief
End of Revelation is to give Men, especially
the common People, just Conceptions, and right
Notions of the Nature and Perfections of God;
which they could never have from the dim
Light of Nature, without the Help of Revelation.

A. Tho they argue thus, yet at the same time they find themselves oblig’d to own, that the Scripture, when taken literally, gives the Vulgar fallacious and unworthy Notions of the Divine Nature; by imputing, almost every where, to God, not only human Parts, but human Weaknesses and Imperfections •, and even the worst of human Passions. To this, indeed, they have two An-

N 3 fvers,

1$2 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation, Ch, 12,

fvers, which feem inconfiftent: Firft, That 'tis necfary to accommodate things in fome meafeure to the grofs Conceptions of the Vulgar. The other

is, That Reafon has given all Men fuch juft Con-

ceptions of the divine Nature, that there is no dan-

ger that even the common People mould take thefe Expreflions literally.

B. Tho' Reafon, on which you lay fuch

ftrefs, may demonftrate, that there are not more

Gods than one •, yet Reafon can never tell us, that there's more than one that is God: though Reafon tells us, that there are not Three Gods, yet Reafon could never tell us, that, tho' in the Idea of a divine Perfom, the Idea of God be in-

cluded, each Perfom being by himfelf God; yet that the multiplying of divine Perfons, was not the multiplying of Gods? And though Reafon de-

clare, there's a Difference between Three and One; yet Reafon will never difcover, that there's? no more in Three Perfons, than in One -•, all

Three together being the fame Numerical God, as each is by himfelf. Reafon will never be able to find out a Middle between a Numerical, and a Specifick Unity; between one in Number, and one in Kind; and yet without it, how can we fuppofe the fame God to be felf-exiftent, and not felf-exiftent, &c. Reafon can as little difcover a Medium between a Nominal, and a real Difference; and yet without it how can we avoid Sabellianism on the one hand, or Polyt

heism on the other? There's nothing Reafon can tell us more plainly, than that God and a Man are two diftinft, intelli-

gen Perfons •, but can Reafon tell us they may be-

come one intelligen. Perfom, even while their per-

fonna Natures and Properties remain infinitely dif-

tinct and different? Thus you fee, how Reafon muft subnit to Faith.

A,
A. I, for my part, not understanding these Orthodox Paradoxes, can only at present say, I do not disbelieve them *, but must add, that as I am a rational Creature, and God requires of me a reasonable Service, I ought not, nay, I cannot, have any Faith, which will not bear the Test of Reason —, and therefore, notwithstanding your Maxim of Reason's submitting to Faith, I will venture to affirm, if a Book assert (supposing the Words of it are taken in their plain, literal Sense) immoral, or impious Doctrines and there are not in that Book certain Marks to tell us, where they are to be taken literally, and where figuratively; or, what is the figurative Sense; that Men in these Points are as much to be determined by their Reason, as if there was no such Book.

B. This, sure, can't be the Case, with relation to the Scriptures.

A. I shall only tell you what the most celebrated Fathers say on this Head. Athanafius says, (a) "Should we understand a great Part of the sacred Writ literally, we should fall into the most enormous Blasphemies." St. Cyril says (b) much the same. St. Gregory the First says (c) "The Scripture is not only dead, but deadly; for it is written, The Letter kills, but the Spirit quickeneth and this is what the whole divine Letter does. 55 And in another Place (d) he compares them to Beasts who regard the Letter. And St. Jerome says, (e) If we ad-

* to the most enormous Blasphemies." St. Cyril says (b) much the same. St. Gregory the First says (c) "The Scripture is not only dead, but deadly; for it is written, The Letter kills, but the Spirit quickeneth and this is what the whole divine Letter does. 55 And in another Place (d) he compares them to Beasts who regard the Letter. And St. Jerome says, (e) If we ad-

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fa) Quaestiones ad Antiochum, Tom. 2. p. 357. D.


(d) Prolog, in Cant. Cantic. fol. 256. col. 1. B.

(e) In Gal. 0.5. p. 84. B.
84. Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12, "the Occasion of many Evils." And Gregory Nyjfcn (f) makes the like Reflection.

B. I durft not have made fo bold with the Scriptures as thefe Fathers; but content my felf in faying with the excellent Bifhop of Litchfield, that "God, was he to fppeak with Men, "myft not only fppeak their very Language, "but according to the Conceptions of thofe he "fppeaks to: To rectify their Sentiments in Na-"tural, Hiftorical, or Chronological Matters *, to "mend their Logick, or Rhetorick when 'tis de-:
"fective, but has no ill Influence on Piety, is oi the Bufinefs of Revelation. ■ • Need-

"leflly to contradict innocent vulgar Notions, is "the fure way to lofe the Peoples Affections, "and to forego a prudential Way of gaining "them."

A. With Submiflion to this learned Author, is there no Difference between God's not rectify- ing Mens Sentiments in thofe Matters, and ufing him elfeif fuch Sentiments as needs be rectify'd \ or between God's not mending Mens Logick, or Rhetorick, where 'tis defective, and ufing fuch himelf ; or between God's not contradicting, vulgar Notions, and confirming them ; by fppeak- ing according to them ? Or, can the God of Truth ftand in need of" Error to fupport his Truth *, his eternal Truth ? Or, can infinite W r if- dom depair of gaining, or keeping Peoples Af- fections, without having, recurfe to fuch mean Arts ? No wonder, if Men ufe pious Frauds, when they think God himelfeif lies recurfe to them. In this Cafe, muff, not Men by their Reafon judge, when God makes ufe of defective Logick, or Rhetorick —, and fppeaks in Natural, Hiftorical, and

(f) De vita Moyfis. To. i. p. 255. D. fcd.

Ch. 1 2. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. j g « and Chronological Matters, not according to the Truth of things, but according to the Concep- tions of thofe of the Vulgar, to whom he directs his Speech ? Nor can I think of any Falfehood,
fuppos'd to be authorized by the God of Truth, 
but may be made ufe of to fome ill Purpofe --, in 
Divinity as well as Mathematicks it's a certain Max- 
im, Uno abfurdο datamille fequeniu.

St. Auftln argues after another Manner, in lay-
ing, " Should Unbelievers knew us to be miilaken Gen. ad. Li.: 
" in fuch things as concern the natural World, and l « 1 - c - 1 9- 
c: alledge our Books for fuch vain Opinions ; how 
" (hall they believe the fame Books,when they fpeak 
" of the Refurreclion of the Dead, and the World 
" to come ? 

Dr. Pridexux, fpaking of the Marks of Im- 
pcfture, fays, " If there be bi>: one known Letter to the 
" Truth in the whole Scheme of Nature, with Deiifs, p. 139 
" which it interferes, this mud make the Difco- Edit -7- Svo - 
" very \ and there's no Man that forgeth an 
" Impcfiure* but makes himfelf liable to be this 
" way convicted of it." The Doctor, fure, would 
not have averted this fo roundly, had he not 
compar'd the Philosophical, and Scriptural Scheme 
of Nature, and perceiv'd their exact Agreement. 
But,

Not only Dr. Burnet, in defence of his Ar- 
cbaolo'gia, but all, who maintain, that thq Sun is 
immovable, and that 'tis the Earth which moves ; 
sufficiently fhew, that the Scriptural and Philo-
fophical \ Account of natural things feldorn agree :
However, to give one Inftance, there's fcarce 
a Country-man fo ignorant, as not to know, that 
if the Seed thrown into the Earth is kill'd by 
Drought, or dies by any other Accident, it never 
rifes *, but St. Paul ( without regard to that Judg-
ment, which our Saviour denounces againft a 
Man who calls his Brother Foot,) lays, Thou Fool, iCor. 15. 36.

that

that which thou fowefi is not auickned, except it die :

John 12. 24. And our Saviour himfelf fays, Verily, verily, I fay 
tint you, except a Corn of Wheat fall into the Ground, 
and die, it abideth alone \ but if it die, it bringeth 
The Works forth much Fruit. And the Greek Church, to this
of Gregory of jj aV) ma k e u f e f boil'd Corn at their Commemo-
S*I?k ration of their Dead > to fi g nif y the M urre % ion "f
the Body.

To convince you how entirely we are to depend
on Reafon in Matters of Religion, I will only
afk you, why you fuppofe it fo abfurd in the
Papifts to fay, that Men bred up in their Church,
are obliged entirely to depend on its Infalli-
Bility •, and that they, who have not had the
Happinefs to be thus educated, ought, indeed,*
to ufe their Reafon to bring them into their
Church −, but that then they are no longer to be
governed by it, but with the reft of the Mem-
bers, equally to rely on the Churches infallible
Decisions.

B. Because this fuppofed Infallibility puts
it in the Power of the Church, to make their
Votaries believe Virtue to be Vice; and Vice,
Virtue; or any other Abfurdfity whatever; fince
they have no way to know, whether it does not
require fuch things, but by examining, by their
Reafon, all her Doctrines: And if Reafon be suf-
cient to difcover the Being and Will of God, and
that their Church holds no Doctrines difagreeable
to his Will, (for this they muft own Reafon capable
of diſcovering, before it could bring Men into
their Church) they, in fpite of their Pretences
to Infallibility, put the whole ftrefs on Reafon.
And if afterwards, they teach Men to renounce
that Reafon, by which before they would have
them wholly govern'd; it can be for no other
Caufe, but to prevent their difcovering in that
Church fuch Errors, as they could not well know
before;

Ch, 12, Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 187

before; and which, if known, wou'd have hin-
der'd them from coming into it.

A. The Pafifts, you know, reply, that if this
Reafoning is good, it ftries at all implicit Faith
in St. Peter, as well as his Succeffors; and equally
concludes againft Mens giving up their Realbn to
any Perfons in former ages, as well as the pre-
fent −, fince it is by that alone they are able to judge,
whether their Doctrines are consistent with the Light of Nature, and free from Superstition, and contain nothing in them unworthy of a divine Original: Before examining what Men teach, there's no reason to have an implicit Faith in one Set of Men more than another; and Examination destroys all implicit Faith, and all Authority whatever; since if they then embrace the Opinions of others, whether Apostles or not, 'tis because they appear agreeable to their Reason. If you say the Apostles would by Reason bring Men into their Religion, and after that, have them wholly govern'd by their Authority, may not the Papists retort on you your own Answer? and cry, "That if Reason is Sufficient to discover the i Being and Will of God, and that the Apostles taught no Doctrines, but what are agreeable to his Will; (for this, say they, you must allow Reazon capable of discovering, otherwise it could never lead Men to believe what the V Apostles taught;) you alike put the whole Strains on Reason. And you must own, either that Men are Entirely to be govern'd by Reason, and then you destroy all Authority whatever; or else not to be govern'd by it, and then you can't, by Reason, shew the Absurdity of; < that implicit Faith the Catholick Church requires."

B. You know, that in answer to all Objec-
tips of this nature, we say, as Bishop Burnet does,

1 8 8 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 2.

docs, in the Expofition of the Articles of our Expof. of the Church; "That if we observe the Style and Me-
19th Article. <t j 10 j Q f t ^ e Scriptures, we shall find in them p'!" all over a constant Appeal to Mens Reason, and

"5 to their intellectual Faculties. If the mere Dictates of the Church, or of infallible Men, had been the Resolution and Foundation of Faith, there had been no need of such a long Thread u of Reasoning and Discourse, as both our Savi-
" our us'd when on Earth, and the Apostles us'd in their Writings. We see the way of Au-
'< thority is not taken, but Explanations are offer'd, a Proofs, and Illustrations are brought, to con-
4t vince the Mind, which shews that God, in " the cleared: Manifestation of his Will, would cc deal with us as with rational Creatures, who cc are not to believe, but on Perfuasion -, and to " use our Reason in order to the attaining that
"Perfuafion."

A. This is all I contend for, and had not
what the Bifhop fays, (tho' it amounts to giving
up all implicit Faith) been agreeable to the whole
Tenor of the Scriptures, and the Doctrines of
our Church; fome of thofe, who have fo nicely
exam'd into ail Parts of his Exposition of the
Articles, wou'd never have let this PafTage efcape
Without Remarks. And therefore, fince 'tis in
Defence of the Protestant Religion^ and the whole
Current of Scripture, I mail add, to what this ex-
cellent Father of the Church has faid •, That when
any Perfon has recourfe to Arguments and Rea-
fonings, he does, in thofe Inftances difclaim all
Authority, and appeals to the Reafon of thofe
he means to perfuade; and, in order to it, would
have them judge of the Force of his Arguments,
by thofe common, and felf-evident Notions, upon
which the Validity of all Proofs depend; and
Men, in examining what' he lays by that Reafon
to

Ch. 12. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. i 89
to which he appeals, wholly arifwer the End for
which he argues with them; tho' upon Exa-
mination, they are not convinc'd by his Reafons,
To require more, would be to require Impoi-
fibilites —, fince it is not in Mens power, after they
have confider'd things as well as they are able,
to believe otherwife than they do. And had
the Apoftles faid to thofe they defign'd to con-
vert, " It will be an Affront to our Infallibility,
not to have an implicit Faith in us; not to
" take on content whatever we fay; you are,
" therefore, no longer to act as moral Agents,
" or to have recourfe to the effential Difference
" of Good and Evil; to the Light and Law of
cc Nature, or to the eternal Reafon of things,
" to judge of the Truth of what we declare.
" No, this is the Faith, and thus you mull
" believe, or perifh everlaftingly:" Had the
Apoftles, I fay, talk'd after this manner, do
you think they could have gain'd one reafonable
Convert? No, they knew full well, that this
was not the way to deal with rational Creatures —,
they, on the contrary, as I mail fully mew her —
after, every where fpeak to this effect: " We 1 Thef. 5. 21
" define you would, with the utmoft Freedom,
" examine our Doctrines; fince if they are, as
" we affirm, true; they will not only bear the
" Teft of Reafon, but the more they are try'd,
" the brighter they will appear: This will be eno* A&s 17. u,
"bling your felves, and doing juftice to your own
"Understandings, as well as to our Doctrines. J>
If Men have any Authority, 'tis then only, when
they renounce all peremptory Authority; and
in (lead of claiming Dominion over Mens Faith y
defire they wou'd prove every thing by thole
Tefts God had given them, in order to difcern
Good from Evil ♦, Truth from Falfehood •, Religion
from Superstition, Thus the Apoftle leeks to
maintain

I no Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 2*
maintain his Credit and Authority with the Thelf-
falonians; Prove all Things, fays he, hold f aft that
which is Good,

B. Do not you, by laying fuch a Strefs on Rea-
fon, in effect fet afide Revelation?

A. No, if Revelation be a reaonable Revela-
tion, the greater Strefs we lay upon Reafon, the
more we eftablifh Revelation.

B. But not on the Foot of its own Authority,
but only as you judge it agreeable to Reafon a and
therefore I queftion, whether any of our eminent
Divines talk thus in Commendation of Reafon, to
the Bifparagement of Authority.

A. If Reafon is all we rational Creatures have
to truft to, being That alone which diftinguifhes
us from Brutes, incapable of Religion; Divines,
even thofe of the moil narrow Principles, how-
ever they may muffle a while, muft make Reafon
their dernier Refort: But however, fince Reafon
alone will not fatisfy you, but you muft have
Authority even againfb Authority, I (hall mention
what fome of our moft eminent Divines fay, when
they are defending Revelation againft the Attacks
of 'infidels; or writing againft the Papifts, or Men
'poppijhly affected.

Dr. J. Clarke, Dean of Sarum, in defending
Chriftianity againft the Attacks of Infidels, who
charge it with requiring an implicit Faith, thinks
thisluch -a Scandal to Chrifiianity, that a good
Part of his Boylean Lectures are to clear it from
CHR.of Moral that Charge; " We find, fays he, no Command

Evil. p. 88. " in Scripture to lay afide our Reafon or Under-
"{landing, but directly the contrary is there af-
"firmed of the Chriftian Religion —,viz. that it tc is our reafonable Service: And therefore the vC Method in which Chrift and his Apoftles taught *< this Service, was agreeable to Reafon, viz. by

Ma.u.15. " exhorting Men to attend ferioujly, to weigh dir " ligently

Ch. 12. Chrijllanity as Old as the Creation. 191

" ligently, their Doctrines and Precepts, &c. and Orig. of Mot- then asks, " Are thefe, and fuch- like Expref lions Evil P- 8 9- 44 calculated to enflave Mens Underlandings, and *' to induce a blind and implicit Obedience ? *' Such Methods may ferve the Purpofe of Super- M ftition, but true Religion can gain nothing by m them.

Dr. Whitchcot does this Juflice to external Vol. of Serm. Revelation, as to fay, " The Scripture's Way of P- 11 7- 44 dealing with Men in Matters of Religion, is 44 always by Evidence of Reafon and Argument ; and very judicioujly adds, " I reckon, That which " has not Reafon in it, or for it, is Man's Su- 44 perdition, and not Religion of God's making." What an Infinity of Difputes would this Rule have cut off ? What, I pray was the grand Occa- tion of fo many monftrous Herefies, even in the pri- mitive Times, but their believing the Scripture's Way of dealing with Men, was not by Evidence of Reafon ? and if any now think otherwife, are they not in danger of making no better Diftinction between Religion and Superftition, than a modern Hobbes. Philofopher, who thus concifely diftinguifhes them ; Tales publickly allow' d, Religion *, difallow'd, Super- ft it ton.

Bp. Hoadley, the ftrenuous Affterter of our reli- Anfw. to the gious, as well as civil Rishts, fays, " Authority Re P^m en - f 44 is the greateft, and molt irreconcilable tLnemy r t ^ e / ocwer 44 to Truth and Argument, that this World ever Houfe of Co*, 44 furnifh'd out; all the Sop hifry ; all the Colour wr - P- 3 l *- 44 of Plaufibilityt all the Artifice and Cunning of 3 l 3*3<4»3 «S- 44 the fubtlefleft Bifputer in the World, may be 44 laid open, and turn'd to the Advantage of that 44 very Truth, which they defign'd to hide, or to 44 deprrefs : But againft Authority there is no de- 44 fence." And after having fhewn, that it was Authority that cruuVd the noble Sentiments of So- crates % and others; and that it was by Authority y \ that
that the Jezvis and Heathens combated the Truth
of the Gospel; he lays, "When Christians were
increased to a Majority, and came to think the
fame Method to be the only proper one, for the
Advantage of their Cause, which had been the
Enemy and Destroyer of it *, then, it was, the
Authority of Christians, which, by degrees, not
only laid waste the Honour of Chriftianity, but
well nigh extinguished it among Men.

It was Authority which would have prevented
all Reformation, where it is; and which has put
a Barrier again ft it, wherever it is not. How
indeed, can it be expected, that the fame Thing,
which has in all Ages, and in all Countries,
been hurtful to Truth, and True Religion, a-
mongst Men, mould in any Age, or any Coun-
try, become a Friend and Guardian of them ? M
And to obviate an Objection easily foreseen, he
fays, 44 It was Authority, which hinder'd the Voice
of the Son of God himself from being heard \
and which alone stood in opposition to his
powerful Arguments, and his divine Doctrine" Which supposes there's no Christian Doctrine, but
what has powerful Arguments to support it; or in
other Words, has Divinity stamp'd on it, fhewing
itself by its innate Excellency to be the Will of
God --, fince to put its Credit on mere Authority, is
to put its Credit on that, which has been, and al-
ways will be, an Enemy to Truth: Nay, he fup-
pofes, that were it possible, that Authority and
Truth could confift together, and the latter be re-
cipt v'd for the fake of the former, it could not avail.
His Words Lie, "Where Truth happens to be re-
ceiv'd for the fake of Authority --, there is juft fo
muditfiminifhVi from the Love of Truth, and
the Glory of Reason, and the Acceptablenefs of
c Men to God; as there is attributed to A.'ttbcrlify."

Arch-

Ch. 12. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 1 9 3

Archbishop Tillotfon fays, "All our Rea- Serm - Vol -3
fonings about divine Revelation are necessarily gather'd by our natural Notions about Religion, and therefore, he, who sincerely defires to do the Will of God, is not apt to be imposed on by vain, and confident Pretences of divine Revelation; but if any Doctrine be propos'd to him, which is pretended to come from God, he measures it by those sure, and steady Notions, which he has of the divine Nature and Perfections; and by these he will easily discern, whether it be worthy of God or not, and likely to proceed from him. He will consider the Nature and Tendency of it, or whether it be a Doctrine according to Godlinefs, such as is agreeable to the divine Nature and Perfections, and tends to make us like unto God; if it be not, tho' an Angel should bring it, he would not receive it. And if no Miracles, no, not the Preaching of an Angel, ought to make us receive any Doctrine that does not carry those internal Marks; no Miracles, certainly, ought to make us reject any Doctrine that has these internal Marks. And much to the same Purpose, our judicious Doctor Claget says, "When Men pretend to work Miracles, and talk of immediate Revelations, of knowing the Truth by high-flown Pre- tences. From hence it has come to pass, that Superftition and Idolatry, Enthusiams and Impositions have so much prevailed in the World. It is somewhat strange, that we should believe Men the more, for that very Reason upon which we should believe them the less,"

94 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

Enthusiasm of I shall give you the Sentiments of one judicious Church of re, since they contain a Summary of propos'd to 3 be what I have been saying, his Words are: "It S tilths fleets. " could not be avoidable, but that this natural Reverence for divine Revelations, and Prone- of believing them, would produce some ill Effects, prejudicial to the Reason and Interest of Mankind, a fatal Credulity would creep into the World, and posses the Minds of the more ignorant Persons, and induce them blindly to believe every bold Pretender to Revelation. After a laborious and fruitful Search of future Happiness, Men were apt to embrace any System of
Religion presented to them, if it flatter'd their Hopes of future Felicity, they were loth to discover the Error and Illusion of any pleasing Revelation; they wish'd it might be true, and at first, what they wish'd, they at last believ'd to be true. — Many fear'd they would be injurious to the divine Majesty, and incur the Guilt of Abel, if they would scrupulously examine what pretended to carry the Stamp of his Authority, and to have been reveal'd by him. To entertain the Scruples in this Case, was thought no lefs than Sacrilege, and every Doubt was esteem'd an Affront to God, to which may be added, That they would contract no small Merit, and ever lay an Obligation on God, if they immediately sign'd up their Judgment to his suppos'd Revelation, and blindly receiv'd it without any Doubt or Hesitation.

This, in all Ages, open'd a wide Gap, and prepar'd a Way for Error and Superstition; while the Whimies of every foolifh Enthusiast* and the Follies of every bold impostor were post'd under the venerable Name of divine Oracles, Hence all the Absurdities of the Pagan Religion found Belief, and Entertained in the World, and the most extravagant impostors never wanted Profelytes. Hence the most pernicious Errors of Heretics found Adhesion into the Church, and the Pretence of new Revelations seduce'd some Part of the Christian World.

To this fatal Credulity, and Danger of Illusion arising from it, God and Nature have prescrib'd an excellent Remedy, the Use of Reason, which may examine the Grounds and Testimonies of all pretended Revelations; enquire into their Truth, and after a scrupulous Trial, pass Sentence on them. This, the Interest of Truth, and the Honour of our Nation requires us to perform, that we may neither profligate the former, nor depreciate the latter. — With-
"out this precedent Enquiry, our Belief would become unlawful; for to obviate the Rules of Conduct, prescrib'd to our Understanding, were to overthrow all the Laws of Nature, to debase the Dignity of Mankind, and to efface the Image of God implanted in us. These Rules assure us, that God can't command any thing.

"foolifh or ridiculous. • No greater Injury can be offer'd to the Deity, than to believe him the Author of any Religion, which prescribes, or encourages foolifh or superflitious Practices. Juiliy does Plutarch wonder,

"why Atheifm mould rather be accus'd of Impiety, than Superflition; fince few are mov'd by any Defect in the Order of Government, to call in quefion the Exiflence of God; but the Trick and Cheats of superflitious Perfons, their Enthufiafhk Motions, ridiculous Actions, Exorcifms, and Lufrations, and fuch like •, give c them Occafion to believe it better there mould be no God, than fuch a God, as the Author of fuch J a superflitious Religion muff neceffarily be. M

196 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 12.

If this Author reafons juftly, as all Proteftants will allow, at lead, when they write againft the Enthufiam of the Church of Rome\ does it not follow, that 'tis our Duty, before we embrace any inftituted Religion, to examine by that Light which God has given us, into every Part of it; and after a fcrupulous Trial, pafs Sentence on it? If the Intereft of Truth, and the Honour of Man's Nature require them to perform this grand Duty, muft not their Reafon, antecedently to all external Revelation, afford certain Tests to diflinguih between Truth and Falfehood in all religious Matters? 'T would be ridiculous to tell Men, that 'tis a Crime worfe than Atheifm, to admit a Religion, which prescribes, or encourages foolim or superflitious Practices; unlefs upon a Suppofition, that their Reafon can tell them what are fuch Practices; and thereby hinder them from embracing a Religion, which requires Things of this nature. And if Men are apt to embrace any Religion (the Mahometan for Inflance) which flat ters their Hopes of future Felicity, and makes them loth to difcover the pleafing Illufion; does
it not follow, that the more any Religion does
fo, the more Caufe Men have critically to exa-
mine into its Reafonablenefs ? Becaufe without fuch
a precedent Enquiry, their Belief would be irra-
tional and unlawful, debating the Dignity of Man-
kind, and effacing the Image of God implanted in
them. And,

If the Abfurdties, not only of the Pagan Re-
ligion, but even the mod pernicious Errors a-
mongft Chriftians^ have been occafion'd thro' want
of previous Examination ; nothing can be rrequi-
fite to difcover True Chrifitianity, and to prefer ve
it in its native Purity, free from all Superftition,
but, after a ftrict Scrutiny, to admit nothing to
belong to it, except what our Reafon tells us is
worthy

Ch. 12. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. 197

worthy^of having God for its Author. And if
it be evident, that we can't difcern whether any
inftituted Religion contains every thing worthy,
and nothing unworthy of a divine Original ; ex-
cept we can antecedently by our Reafon difcern
what is, or is not worthy of having God for its
Author 5 it neceffarily follows, that natural and
reveal'd Religion can't differ: Becaufe whatever
Reafon fhews to be worthy of having God for its
Author, mud belong to natural Religion; and what-
ever Reafon tells us is unworthy of having God for
its Author, can never belong to the True Reveal'd
Religion. 'Tis upon this very Plan, that I have
endeavour'd to (hew you wherein True and Ge-
uine Chrifitianity confifts.

B. By the reafoning of thefe Divines, Religion
is the plaineft thing in the World : We, it feems,
have nothing to do but to examine what Notions
are worthy of God, in order to know his Will j
but do they tell us how we may certainly know
what thofe Notions are ?

A, All Divines, of what Denomination foever,
agree, at leaft in Words, that God can't act arbi-
trarily in the Government of the World, or com-
mand things for Commanding-fake ; but that all
his Laws, being calculated for the Good of Man-
kind, carry with them the Marks of confummate
Wifdom and Goodnefs. However, I fhall men-
tion two.

''It would be little lefs than an horrid and dread-

ful Blasphemy, to fay, that God> out of his fo-
vereign Will and Pleafure, can do any thing
which contradicts the Nature of God, or the ef-
fential Perfections of the Deity; or to imagine
that the Pleafure and Will of the holy, juft, and ?

good God is not always regulated, and deter-
mined by the effTential and indifpenfable Laws of
Goodnefs, Holinefs, and Righteoufnefs.

O 3 The

198 Chriftiannity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

Chrift. Life, The judicious Mr. Scott, affirms, " That to
Parti. Vol.1. " I uppofe the Will and Power of God is not
p ' s6z ' " perfectly fubject to his moral Perfections, is to

uppofe him a very defective and imperfect Be-
ing; a laulfes Will and Power being the great-
eft Defect: in Nature: Wherefore, to fecure
our Minds againft all Injurious Apprehen-
fions of God, this is a moft neceffary Rule;
that we conceive him to be fuch a Being
as can never will, nor ad any thing, but
what his own effential Wifdom, Goodnefs and

Juftice do approve. - To affirm, he is not

oblig'd to regulate himself by Wifdom, Juftice
*§ and Goodnefs; or that he can do otherwife;
" is to attribute him a Power to will, or act
M foolifhly, 65V."

B. I mould readily approve what the Authors
you quote have faid, to fhow the Reafonablenefs of
the divine Law in every Inftance •, were there not
in Religion, proportions to be believ'd, which are
above Reafon.

A. If I do not underftand the Terms of a
Propofition •, or if they are inconfiftent with one
another; or fo uncertain, that I know not what
Meaning to fix on them •, here is nothing told me,
and confequently, no room for Belief: But in fuch
Cafes, where I am capable of underftanding a Pro-
pofition, 'tis Reafon muft inform me, whether
'tis certain, probable, or uncertain; and even in
Propofitions relating to fuch Facts as we learn
from Report, 'tis by our Reafon alone, in com-
paring Circumftances, 13 c. that we muft judge of
their Probability. But,

Altho' defigning Men very well know, that
it's impoffible to believe, when we know not
What it is we are to believe •, or to believe an absurd, or contradictory Proposition; yet they, because without Examination, People may be brought to fancy they believe such things, and it

Ch. 12. Christianity as Old as the Creation, 199

it being their Interest to confound Mens Understandings, and prevent all Inquiry, craftily invented the Notion of believing things above Reason: Here the Ravings of an Enthusiast are on a Level with the Dictates of infinite Wisdom, and Non-sense render'd most sacred •, here a Contradiction is of great Use to maintain a Doctrine, that, when fairly stated, is not defensible; because by talking backward and forward, by using obscure Terms, and taking Words in different Sense, they may easily amuse, and puzzle the People. On this Foundation Truthfulness is built, and most of those mysterious Proportions, about which, in former Days, Christians so frequently murder'd each other. But,

If the Scripture was design'd to be understood, it must be within the reach of human Understanding; and consequently, it can't contain Propositions that are either above, or below human Understanding: And if there are no Propositions in the Bible, but what have certain Ideas, by common Usage, annexed to the Words; how can we suppose some are design'd to be understood, and some not? or know which are, and which are not? And indeed, if the End of God's giving a Revelation was to direct Mens Thoughts and Actions, it must (as necessary to that End) be delivered in such a way, as is plain and easy to be understood, even by mean Capacities •, and consequently to suppose it dark and mysterious in any Part, is to represent it as unworthy of having God for its Author. And,

One would think, that Men, when they knew they had Truth on their Side, would speak after the plainest manner, and not study to disguise it by unnatural ways of expressing themselves •, especially, when they reflect on others for fo doing.

0 4 The
The Christians said, the Heathens were conscious their Religion was absurd by their having recourse to allegorical, enigmatical, and mystical Explications; and consequently, that it could not be designed for the common People, incapable of such Explications, and that their Priests, instead of defending it, rendered it uncertain; since where the literal Sense is quitted, there may be many allegorical, or spiritual Senses, opposite to one another; and indeed, the wise Men among them, as Tully, &c. own'd as much.

Nor did the Heathens fail to retort the like Objection upon the Christians; and, in Truth, they equal'd, if not out-did them in allegorizing away, not only the plain Texts, but even Matter of Fact; which prov'd the Occasion of innumerable Herefies.

Short History. Dupin, speaking of the extravagant Opinions, of the Church which obtain'd among silly People in the prime Times, says, "They sprang from the Principles of the Pagan Philosophers, and from the Mysteries, which crack'd-brain'd Men put on the History of the Old and New Testament, according to their Imagination; the more extraordinary these Opinions were, the more did they relish, and the better did they like them; and those who invented them, published them gravely as great Mysteries to the Simple, who were all disposed to receive them." But could any crack'd-brain'd Writers have found out more Mysteries in the Old and New Testament, than the primitive Fathers, (who interpreted them according to their Imagination, and jumbled them together with that Pagan Philosopby they were educated in?) Or have published their mysterious Reveries with greater Gravity to simple People, always disposed to receive what they do not understand?

The

Ch. 1 2. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 2 o i

The same Author, speaking of St. Barnabas'** Catholic Epistle in Answer to this Objection,
46 That it was incredible for great an Apostle, full of the Holy Ghost, and Colleague of St. Paul, mould be the Author of such forc'd Allegories, and extravagant Explications of Scripture; of those various Fables concerning Animals, with divers other Conceits of the like Nature, says, "They have but little Dupin\ Life Knowledge of the Jewish Nation, and of of Barnabas,
"the primitive Christians, educated in the Sy- p< 6 " col, 2> & nagogues, who obfriantly believe, that fuch 7 ' 00 ' 1 ' fort of Motions could not proceed from them *, that on the contrary, it was their very Character to turn the whole Scripture into Allegory/* And,

I think, none of our celebrated Writers reject Wakt* Life this Epiftle as fpurious, becaufe of the Allegories of$ ^nabas, it abounds with: Our excellent Archbifhop fays, Seei Cor ** Even St. Paul himfelf in his Epiftles, receiv'd 1,4. Gal. 4/ * by us as Canonical, affords us not a few In- 2! - Eph. 5. ftances of this, which is fo much found fault 3I,Heb . 9 ' 8, with in St. Barnabas: As I might eafily make ^/scc appear from a Multitude of PafTages out of them, were it needful for me to enlarge my felf on a Point, which every one, who has read the Scriptures with any Care, cannot chufe but have obferv'd." And thofe Chrif- tians St. Paul mentions, for believing the Refur- reftion was paft, were, no doubt, great Allego- rites.

The primitive Fathers exactly follow'd the Precedent fet them by the Apostle Barnabas, and other Apoftolical Men: Clemens of Alexan- dria fays, " The Oeconomy of the Law, is Stroma 1. 2. " typical and prophetical; and that Mofes and S: \9- P-4°3- " the Prophets, wrote all in Parables: 9 So Ter- j, [ 6?s %**' tullian, " The Law is fpiritual and prophetical, Adv. Mar. I. . " and 2 - c - *9- 

202 Chrifiantiity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

" and almoif. hi all Points figurative." 1 And Le LeClerssLife Clerc oberves, " The Fathers did not content E^TraX" themdfves with interpreting the Old Teflament p.54. & Bib- \ 6 alkgorically, but they d 1 H the fame as to the lioth. Univer. " New."- But btfcuflf

To.io.p 236. Origen was famous for this allegorical Method, and by virtue of it efteem'd the greatest Cham- pion of Chrifianity, next to the Apoftles; and fmce what he fays, v/as not only his own, but the Senfe of the then Church, it will not be im- Horn. 7. in proper to cite him. >' If we adhere, fays he, to (o\X% C * " t * ie Letter; or underftand what is written in " the Law of God, as the Jews do, in the com- 11 mon Acceptation of the Words ; I blufh to own, cc that God ever gave fuch Laws: For mere hu- " man Conflitutions, as thofe of the Romans, Athe- " mans, or Lacedaemonians, will feem more rea- 1c fonable and proper; but if the Law of God is
"to be understood in the sense the Church teaches, " then truly it exceeds all human Ordinances."

For which Reason he makes the allegorical Way of interpreting Scripture to be the Key of Knowledge • and following the Letter of the Law, the Homil. 26. in direct: Way to Infidelity and vain Superstition. Li-Mat.fol.50. teram f ententes in Fidelitatem, & varias Superstitiones incurrunt. And he objects to Marcion the He-147. G. retick, that he was against the allegorical Way of interpreting Scripture.

B. Do not these Fathers suppose God either a weak Being, who could not frame as wise Laws as Men; or else an ill-natur'd Being, who, in order to puzzle Mankind, speak's in Riddles and Mysteries? What would we think of a Lawyer, who said, he would be ashamed of the Laws of his own Country, if taken in a literal Sense; but that there was an allegorical Sense. which could one but hit, would discover profound Wisdom? -

A,

Ch. 12. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. 203

A. Thus the Fathers sufficiently acknowledge the Sovereignty of Reason, in allegorizing away Matters of Fact, that were in truth, incapable of being allegoris'd; tho' that is but running into one unreasonable thing, to get rid of another: And how can we depend on any thing sa'd in the Scripture, if we can't on its Facts? One would think nothing was a plainer Fact, than that of Lot's lying with his two Daughters, yet St. Irenæus allegorizes That away •, P er totum. and is so fond of allegorizing, that for the sake of it, he contradicts the Scripture, and says, "The Harlot Raab entertain'd three Spies j" Lib. 4. c. 37. and had he not made them three, he would P- 33- co1 - 1- have been at a loss, how to say, as he does, ia^-^, that this Harlot hid in her House, Father, Son, ' and Holy Ghost. " How can we be edify 'd, says Horn. 6. in " Origen, in reading that so great a Patriarch asp. 60,10 - 1 ' " Abraham, not only ly'd to King Abimdech, A ' I3 " ." but also betray'd to him the Chastity of his " Wife? What Instructions "can we reap from " the Wife of so great a Patriarch, if we think " she was expos'd to be debauch'd by her Husb- " band's Contrivance? Let the Jews believe " fuch things, and thefe with them, who are " greater Friends to the Letter than to the " Spirit."

He aferts, " That there are, even in the Gof- Horn. 6. in
"pel, things faid, which, according to the Letter, ^ a - fol - Io6 = 
" or taken in their literal Sense, are mere Fal-
" fities, or Lyes; as where our Saviour fays, He
" that believe th in me, the Works that I do, jh all
" he do alfo\ and greater Works than thefe Jhall
" he do. John xiv. 12, csV. which, he mews,
" was not verify d literally, but fpiritually. "
And,

"That it was want of Knowledge in the ° r 'g- contra
" Scriptures, to think, that God fpent fix real ^* 3 J n 6 ' s ^ e
" Days in the Work of the Creation." Philocal. c. 1.

He p. 12.

204 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.
Tom. 10. in He defires any One to fhew, " how the Truth
Joh^p. 150. « Q f t | ie Q fp e } s can t, e maintained, or their feem-
" ing Contrarieties clear'd by any other than the
" anagogical Method; which he affirms necefTary
M for that Purpofe.

Horn. » 4. in He fays, " The Pair of Turtle Doves, or

Luc. p. 1 01. " two young Pigeons, offer'd for Jefus, were not

B.To. 3. tc foch as we f ee w j t } l our carna i Eyes ; not

" Birds, fuch as fly in the Air, but something
" divine and auguft, beyond human Contempla-
M tion, &c.
Cap. 1. p. 12. If you defire to be more plentifully furnifh'd
& ieqq. Edit. w j t h Infiances of the like nature with thofe above-
Cantab. 1658. mention xd 9 con fa\ t the Philocalia of Origen.
Contra Men- St. Aujlin, a Man of the greateft Authority of
C!acium,c 10. a |j the Fathers, fays, " We mull not take the
To 4 !' 45 " Story "f 7 aco b's cheating his Father, by per-
" fonating his Brother Efau, literally, left the
" Scripture fliould feem to encourage Lying.

And fpeaking of Jefus curfing the Fig-Tree,
Serm -4. 1. ^ a Y s > Hoe fatium, nifi figuratum, ft ul turn invenitur.
2. deGen. And he, with the reft of the Fathers, not only
Contra Mani- moft unnaturally allegorifes away the Hiftory of k
che^^. c, 17. t ^ e p a jj^ | 3Ut evcn Q f t ^ e w hole Creation > and

Toni.3. lib. fay** " The whole World was created in an In-
impert. de " riant." And tho' there's not one Word about
Gen. ad. Lit. Angels in the Text, yet this angelical Doctor makes
o> y ' ( Part of the fix Days Labour relate to the Creation
of Angels.

B. But how could he account for God's instituting the Sabbath, upon his resting from his fix Days Labour, if all Things were created in an Instant?

A. How happy he was in allegorizing, you may judge from his explaining that Passage of Lib. Z) de Genes, i i. - 14. where the Latin Version which runs thus ' Upon thy breast, and upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all that

Ch. 12. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 205

the Bays of thy Life. By the Breast, fays he, is to be understood Pride; by the Belly, the Lusts of the Flesh; and by that which is added, Dust) alt thou eat, is meant Curiosity, which extends to things temporal and earthly; and by Curiosity, he means Avarice. And,

St. Ambrofe will not allow the Rainbow to be Lib. de Nee the Bow, which God plac'd in the Clouds; and & Area. 27. faith, " Far be it from us to call this God's Bow; ** for this Bow, which is call'd Iris, is seen in-deed in the Day, but never appears in the Night: For which weighty Reason he substitutes in its room, a strange, allegorical Bow, out of his own Imagination.

If the Fathers could alJegorife away the mod stubborn Matters of Fact, they could have no difficulty in allegorifmg away any other Matter, where Words are capable of various Senfes: One would think, it was difficult to find out an allegorical Meaning to this Text, O Daughter of Origen contra Babylon, happy is he, who laketh, and dafhes thy Cel f um * * * ?-little ones againjl the Stones, yet nothing is too ^' 34 ^* hard for Origen, who allures us that the Text in-tends, The Man who dafhes his vicious Thoughts against the f old Rock of Reafon.

And, indeed, the Fathers have fo turn'd and twisted the Scripture, with a pious Intention to make it fpeak nothing but w,hat they thought agreeable to Reafon; that they have render'd ic like Arifotle's Materia prima *, nee quid, nee quale, nee quantum, nee aliquid eorum de quibus ens deno-
minatur: For by making the Scripture, in fo many Places say one thing, and mean another, they have destroy'd its Certainty; since, as Le Life of Clem. Clerc observes, "If, according to this Method, Alex. p. " the sacred Writers had laid quite another thing than what they said, or, if you will, the quite Bibli. Univer. ** contrary, yet one may find as good Sense in To. 10. p.

" them ; 2 3 6 , 237^  

206 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 1 2.

" them •, as those that will try it, will presently observe. Therefore the Christians, and the

" Jews would have done much better to keep close to the Letter, than to use so uncertain a Method, to defend the holy Scripture against the Pagans."

B. All the Fathers do not allegorize like Origen; Juftin Martyr, for Instance, afferts, that Biaio. cum t | ie threatening, that In the Bay thou eateft thereof ' u ^'^- thou (halt fur ely die, was literally fulfill'd, in that Adam did not live out a thousand Years; which, with God, is but one Day. But to go no farther than the Story of Abraham's prostituting his Wife;

Lib. i.de St. Aynbrofe, to justify Abraham's Conduct, round-Abr. Pa ™, ly aflerts, Adultery to be no Crime before the De'ufuPatr. S^ v m g °f the Law by Moses. And St. Auftin p. 271, 272. makes Adultery fill lawful, if Husband and De civit. Dei, Wife content. St. Jerom, indeed, runs into the Com on Ion other extreme, and approves the Conduct of those, To. 6. p. 150. who kill'd themselves to preserve their Chastity.

D- But the moft eloquent St. Chryftftom enlarges very hom. 32. in muc h j n Commendation of Abraham and Sarah, and says, M Tho' nothing gives a Husband more
Uneafinefs, than to imagine his Wife has to
do with another *, yet this juft Man did what
he cou'd, even to accompliſh the Act of Adul-
tery. And adds, that Sarah too (whom
for he fets as a Pattern for all marry'd Women)
accepted the Propofal very courageouſly; and
then cries out, Who can enough admire this
M Readinefs to obey her Hufband ? Who can
fufficiently celebrate the Praifes of Sarah, who,
after fo long Continence, and at her great
46 Age, readily confented to this Act of Adul-
tery, and to let the Barbarian have the Ufe of
11 her Body, to lave her Hufband ?
A. Might not thofe Fathers as well have
allegoris'd, as talk thus abfurdl'y ? 'Tis chiefly
owing

Gen.

Ch. 12. Chrijlianlt as Old as the Creation. 207
owing to the Papifts taking fome Words in a
literal Senfe, relating to the eating the Flefto, and
drinking the Blood of the Son of Man \ that makes
them to be of a different Religion from the Pro-
tefants: arid tho' two Parties may agree, in
taking the fame Words in an allegorical Senfe ;
yet by allegorizing them indifferently, they may
be of different Religions. By allegorizing fome
Texts, the Jews have made the MeJJiah a Temp-
oral Prince 5 the Chriftians a Spiritual One.
Mr. Whift on muft think there are no Words fo SeeSupp.em.
plain, but are capable of being allegoris'd; fmce, to his Effay,
he fuppofes the Catholick Church has all along ab mmo *
allegoris'd plain Love- Songs, between Solomon
and one of his Miftrefs, into fpiritual Hymns
between Chrift and his Spoufe, the Church. And
what Dr. South muft have thought of the Reve-
lations* I leave you to judge ; when he does not
fcrupule to call it, a myfterious, extraordinary Book ; Souths Serm.
The Chriftians have had the Knack of allegorizing Nonfenfe,
Fools and frantick Perfons would not have been
had in fuch Honour and Reverence among the
Mujfelmen, only becaufe their Revelations and En- Ricaufs Pref,
thufiafms tranfported them out of the ordinary c Tem- State oi the per of Humanity. Therefore, upon the whoh , I "P- muft needs fay, Happy is the Man, who is fo far, at leaft, directed by the Law of Reafon, and the Religion of Nature, as to fuffer no Myfteries, or unintelligible Propofitions, no Allegories, no Hyperboles, no Metaphors, Types, Parables, or Phrafes of an uncertain Signification, to confound his Underftanding. And certainly, the common Parent of Mankind is too good and gracious, to put the Happinefs of All his Children on any other Doctrines, than fuch as plainly mew them- selves

208 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 12.

felves to be the Will of God, even to the igno- rant and illiterate; if they have but Courage and Honeftty to make ufe of their Reafon: Other wife the Scripture wou'd not be plain in all neceffary things, even to Babes and Sucklings.

B. You fuppofe then, that the Bulk of Man- kind are taught by God himfelf, to know what Religion comes from him *, even tho' they want Letters to make them capable of under (landing thofe external Proofs, on which all traditional Re- ligions do, and muft depend.

CHAP.

Ch. 13. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 209

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CHAP. XII

lie Bulk of Mankind, by their Reafon, muji be able to diftinguifli between Religion and Super/lit l ion ; otherwije they can never extri- cate the mjelves from that Superjiition they chance to be educated in.

^.TIELIGION either does not concern the Majorify, as being incapable of forming Judgment about it; or, it mud carry fuch inter- nal Marks of its Truth, as Men of mean capacity are able to difcover -, or elfe notwithstanding the infinite variety of Religions, All who do not un- derftand the original Languages their traditional
Religions are written in, which is all Mankind, a, very few excepted, are alike bound in all Places to pin their Faith on their Priests and believe in Men, who have an interest to deceive them; and who have seldom fail'd to do so, when occasion'd.

Can People, if incapable by their Reason to distinguish Truth from Falsity, have any thing more to plead for the Truth of their Religion, than that they believe it to be the true Religion; because their Priests, who are hired to maintain it, tell them it was a long while ago reveal'd to certain Persons, who, as they, on their Priestly Words, assure them, were too wise to be imposition'd on themselves, and too honest to impose on others? And that no change could have been made in their Religion in after-times, the care Men have of their own Souls, as well as their natural affections to posterity, obliging them from generation to generation to hand down their Religion just as they receiv'd it: And that it was morally impossible, Innovations should creep in, since it would be the highest

210 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13

highest folly in any to attempt to introduce new Doctrines, as a Tradition receiv'd from their Ancestors, when all must know they had received no such Tradition. As this is all, the bulk of Mankind, if they are not capable of judging from the Doctrines themselves of their Truth, can say for their Religion; fo they, in all places, make use of this argument; and with equal confidence aver, that th'o' all other extraordinary Religions are full of gross Palpomds, and the most absurd Notions, which their Priests impudently impose on them as divine Truths; yet our own Priests are such faithful Representers of things, that one may as well question the Truth of all History, as the Truth of things believ'd on their Authority. Priests of other Religions, we know, will lie for Interest, and conscious that their Traditional Religion will not bear Examination, guard it with penal Laws, but we can never suspect, that our own Priests, tho' they take the same Methods, act on the same motives.

This boasted Argument, in which Men of all Religions thus triumph, if it proves any thing would prove there never was, nor could be any false Religion, either in whole, or part; because Truth being before Falsity, and Mens Ancestors having once possession'd it, no change could afterward
ever happen: Whereas on the contrary, tho* there have been at Times great numbers of traditional Religions, yet as far as it appears, no one of them has long remain'd the fame; at leaft, in fuch points as were merely founded on Tradition.

I fee no middle, but that we muft either own, that there are fuch internal Marks fix'd on every part of the true Religion, as will enable the bulk of Mankind to diftinguifh it from all falfe Reli- gions; or elfe that all traditionary Religions are upon a Level: Since thofe, who, in every Country, are hired to maintain them, will not fail to aflert, they have all external Marks *, fuch as, uninterrupted Traditions,- incontefied Miracles, Confeffwn of Adver-

faries

Ch. 13. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 2 1 1

furies, Number of Profelytes, Agreement among them- /elves; and all thoie other external Arguments, that the Papifts and Mahometans fet fo high a value on. In this cafe, what can the common People do, who underftand not a word of the Language, their Religion and its external Proofs are writ in, but be of the Religion in which they are educated? Efpecially, if nothing is fufter'd to be publifh'd, which may in the leaft tend to make them queftion its Truth; and all other Religions are repreffed as full of the groleft Abfurdisties.

Had the People of Rome, in the primitive Times of Chriflianity, been govern'd by external Marks, none of them had quitted their old Reli- gion, which had every external Mark proper to recommend it; and under which they were fo blefs'd, as to become Mailers of the befb part of the known World. But,

Because this is a Point, wherein the greater!: part of Mankind are at all times nearly concern'd, I mail beg leave to mention, tho' it be somewhat long, what Mr. Locke fays on this Head.

" Have the bulk of Mankind no other Guide, Of Human " but Accident, and blind Chance, to conduct Underft. 7.4. " them to their Happinefs or Mifery ? Are the f - L 9- Se6L 3- " current Opinions, and licenfed Guides or 3 ^9» " every Country fufficient Evidence and Security " to every Man to venture his great Concern - "c ments on ; nay, his everlafting Happinefs or "' Mifery ? Or, can thofe be the certain and in- " fallible Oracles and Standards of Truth, which " teach one thing in Chriftendom, and another in
'Turkey? Or, (hall a poor Country -man be eternally happy, for having the Chance to be born in Italy -, or a Day-labourer be unavoidably loft, because he had the ill luck to be born in England? How ready some Men may be to fay some of thefe things, I will not here examine; but this I am sure, that Men mud allow one or other of thefe to be true 5 (let them chufe P 2 " which

Sed. 6. Edit.

213 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13

which they please,) or elfe grant, that God has furnised Men with Faculties fufficient to direct them in the way they fhould take, if they will but ferioufiy employ them that way, when their ordinary Vocations allow them the leifure. — lb. 1.4. c. 15." There can't be a more dangerous thing to rely on, than the Opinion of others, nor more likely to mislead one; fince there is much more Falfhood and Error among Men than Truth and Knowledge: And if the Opinions and Perfuafions of others, who we know, and think well of, be a ground of Aflent, Men have reafon to be 46 Heathens in Japan, Mahometans in Turky, Papifts in Spain, P rot eft ants in England, and Lit- therans in Sweden" Was there a Set of Prieits, on whose Authority the common People were every where to depend for their religious Sentiments, they muft be known by fome plain, external Marks: To fay the People muft follow thofe Prieits that are in the right, is to fuppofe People muft judge what is right; and then judge (if that concerned them) whether any Set of Priefts are in the right; and if Men can't believe, when they fee no Reafon for believing, what reafon can the Bulk of Mankind have to prefer one Religion before a number of others, on the account of fuch things, as, upon Prieftly Authority, are believ'd to belong to every one of them; fuch. as Vifions, Dreams, Trances; Extafies, Infpirations, Conferences witt Spirits, traditionary Report about Miracles, &c? And fhould the Chance of Education throw Men into the true traditionary Religion, yet confidering its Style is not very exact, there being generally more exprefs'd than is meant •, and things of the grcateft Confequence are often fo treated, as that Men can't from thence perceive the Nature and Extent of their Duty •, and even Precepts of the grcateft moment are fjrnetimes fo
far from being deliver'd plainly and limply, that
they are expres'd after a- general, undetermined,

nay,

Ch. 13. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 213

nay, hyperbolical manner •, fo that even in this cafe,
there's a neceflity for the common People to have
recourfe to the Reafon of Things.

Are not the Unlearned wholly unacquainted
with thofe Keys of Solution (as they are call'd) which
the learned have fuch frequent recourfe to, fuch as
thofe of a Tranfpofition of Words or Claufes, Errors
of Copies, various Readings, various Meanings of the
fame Word, Punctuation, taking away or adding of the
Negative Particle ; Allufion to Cuftoms, Confederation of
the matter in hand, Exaggeration, Interrogation, Pa-
rent he/is, literal Senfe, figurative Senfe •, Want of ex-
atinefs in the sacred Writers, Prudence in concealing
fome things, or in complying with fome Opinions prevail-
ing in their Times -, Condefctnftion to Pagans or Jews;
ufingfuch Ideas as prevailed in fuch a Religion ; Pre-
judication in the Hearers, Anfwers fuitable to their
Needs, rather than to their Queries ; compendious Ex-
prefftons, Phrafelogy of that Time, the Author's Na^
tion, or native Country •, Parallel Paffages, Precepts
peculiar to the Apoftles, Advices to Perfection, Cenfures
againft certain Hereticks, the Circumftances of the
Subjec\, the Scope of the Author, what goes before, and
what follows ; the Barrenefs of the Hebrew Tongue •,
and confequently, its Ambiguity, its particular Idioms ,
the various Senifes of the fame Verb, in different Con-
jugations ; the Want of certain ways of Expreffwn us'd
in other Tongues •, the fublime and metaphorical Ex-
prefftons moft frequent in the Oriental Languages ; the
Imitation of the Hebrew Idiom in the LXX Verfion;
and in the original Text of the New Teftament Greek
of the Synagogue, &c.

The bulk of Mankind being incapable of Me-
taphyfical Speculations, and their Underftandings
given them to difcern thofe Rules of Action which
God prefcribes them, he has, no doubt, adjufed
one to the other •, and confequently, the Simplicity,
the Reafonablenefs, the Conveniency and Ufefulnefs
of thefe Rules, point them out to be the Will of
God, to Men in all Places, and Conditions of Life;
P 3 but

&I4 Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,
but to carry things further, can only serve the De-
igns of ill Men, who have taken occasion from
thence to abuse their credulity to the vilest purpofes.
Can, for instance, the common People, who un-
derfand not a word of the Language the Jewi/h
Books are writ in, be better Judges than the Jews
themselves of the Meaning of their own Books *
and of their own Prophets speaking in their own
Language? Or, are the common People capable
of judging of the innumerable Disputes among
Christians if those likewise depend, not on the
Reafon of Things, but on the critical Understand-
ing of Books, written in dead Languages? Nay,
what do they know of the distinguishing Doctrines
of their own Churches? They, indeed, on all fides,
know whom their Leaders would have them hate*,
but little, or nothing of those Opinions, which di-
vide their Leaders.

B. Is there any Divine of Note, who makes Re-
velation thus difficult to be understood by the igno-rant, and unlearned?

A, I shall mention one, againft whom you have no
Exception; who reprefents it thus obfcure, even to
the Learned. Is not Bifhop Baylor (highly efteem'd
for his devotional, as well as polemical Works) a
competent Judge in this Matter? And he (fumming
up, and that very briefly, what he had fpent feveral
Polem. Works, Chapters to prove at large) fays, " Since there are
/. 452. cc f Q many Copies with infinite Varieties of Reading \
" fince a various Interpunclion, a Parenthells, a
" Letter, an Accent, may much alter the Senfe -, fince
" fome places have divers literal Senfes, many have
" fpirtual, myftical and allegorical Meanings -, fince
4C there are fo many Tropes, Metonymies, Ironies,
* c Hyperboles, Proprieties and Improprieties of
" Language, whose Undemanding depends upon
" fuch Circumstances, that it's almoft impofiible to
" know the proper Interpretation; now that the
" Knowledge of fuch Circumstances, and particular
Jb. 45 3. « Stories, is irrecoverably loft: Since there are fome

" Myfte-

Ch. 13. Qhrljlianiy as Old as the Creation. 21 §

<c Myfteries, which at the ben: Advantage of Ex-
<c predion, are not eafy to be apprehended -, and
<a whose Explication, by reafon of our Imperfecti-
" ons, mud needs be dark, fometirnes unintelligi-
" ble: And laftly, fince thofe ordinary Means of
" expounding Scripture, as fearching the Originals,
" Conference of Places, Parity of Reafon, Ana-
"logy of Faith, are all dubious, uncertain, and
very fallible; he that is wifeft, and by confe-
quence, the likeliest to expound trueft, in all
probability of Reafon, will be very far from
Confidence; becaufe every one of them, and
to many more, are like fo many degrees of Impro-
ability and Incertainty, all depreffing our Cer-
tainty of finding out Truth in fuch Myfteries,
and amidft fo many Difficulties."

And in another Place, Ct The Obfcurity of Pole m. Works,
"fome Queftions, the Niceties of fome Articles/* S 21 *
the Intricacy of fome Revelation, the Variety of
human Underftandings, the Winding of Logick,
the Tricks of Adverfaries, the Subtilty of So-
phifters, the Engagement of Educations, perfonal
Affections, the portentous Number of Writers,
the Infinity of Authorities, the Vaftnefs of fome
Arguments, confiding in an Enumeration of many
particuIars, the Incertainty of others, the feveral
degrees of Probability, the Difficulties of Scrip-
ture, the Invalidity of Probation, of Tradition,
the Oppofition of all exterior Arguments to one
and their open Conteftation, the publick
Violence done to Authors and Records, the pri-
Vate Arts and Supplantings, the Falfifyings, the
indefatigable Induftry of fome Men, to abuse all
Underftandings, and all Perfuafions, into their
own Opinions: Thefe, and a thoufand more,
have made it impoffible for a Man in fo great
a Variety of Matter not to be deceiv'd."

And I might add, in Confirmation of the Bifhop's
Sentiments, and demonftrate too, were it not endlefs to
go through particulars, that there's fearce a Text,
except

16 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

except in things of their own Nature evident, where
Commentators do not differ. Whether thefe Con-
iderations alone, be not a fufncient Reafon for the
unlearned to adhere to thofe plain, ftmple Truths,
the Light of Nature dictates, I leave you to judge?

And do not other Divines, in effect, fay the
fame, when they make Religion not to be im-
planted in human Nature; but an Art fo far a-
bove the Capacity of common People, that it re-
quires great Learning and Labour to be compe-
tently fkill'd in it? And tell us, that they, who
have fpent their time in ftudying it, can't have too
much Honour, or too great Rewards given them,
for deciding for the People, Points of Religion,
as the Common-Law Judges do Points of Proper-
ty; and that People juftly incur the dreadful Ana-
thema pronounc'd in Synods and Councils, againft thofe who refufe to submit to their Decifions; and that 'tis the Duty of the Magiftrate to fee their Decrees put in execution.

A Right in Priests, whether in, or out of Con-vocations* to judge, and determine for the People, what they mall believe and profefs, fuppofes it a Duty in them fo to believe, and fo to profefs *, and confequently, that the Religion of the Laity confifts in believing their Priests; and that whatever they decree, is to be the Rule of their Actions.

B. This is too feverel; they only claim a power of interpreting the Laws of Chrift, not of making new Laws themfelves.

A. There's only a verbal Difference between a Law-maker, and a fovereign Interpreter of Laws, to whose Interpretation all are oblig'd to submit; fo that ever fince the Council of People have been taught to renounce both Natural and Reveal'd Religion; and become Priests Worhippers, and to have a divine Faith in their Dictates \ and indeed,' fo they ought, if thefe Priests had, as they claim, a judicial Power to determine of Mens Condition hereafter; and thereby make God a mere Executioner.

Ch. 13. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. nf tioner of their Sentences, by which they bind, or loofe Mens Sins to Eternity.

As this Notion carries with it the higheft Blaf- phemy and Idolatry, fo I think it is treated too gently by Mr. Chillingworth* m faying, " This ChHUngr- " prefumptuous impofing of the Senfes of Men^rz/ysRelig. " upon the Words of God, the fpecia! Senfes of °J Proteft - " Men upon the general Words of God, and lay-ggft' [5 ° 4 * " ing them upon Mens Confciences together under i^ 2 . Edit c. " the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation: " This vain Conceit, that we can fpeak of the " Things of God better than the Words of God - 9 " This Deifying our own Interpretations, and ty- " rannous Inforcing them upon others; this re- " ftraining of the Word of God from that Latitude " and Generality ♦, and the Underftandidg of Men " from that Liberty, wherein Chrift and the A- " poffles left them; is and hath been the only " Pofitfion of all the Schifms of the Church, and " that which makes them immortal —, the common ct Incendiary of Chrift endom^ and that which tears
In short, true Religion can't but be plain, ample, and natural, as design'd for all Mankind, adapted to every Capacity, and suited to every Condition and Circumstance of Life, and if it be render'd otherwife, is it not owing to tho'fe, who have made it their Business to puzzle Mankind, and render plain things obfure; in order to get the Confciences, and confequently, the Properties of the People at their difpofal, and to be in a manner ador'd, notwithstanding the grofleft Immoralities, as the fole Difpenfers of fuch Things, as no ways relate to the Good of the Community; and to deftruy all that will not comply with their pernicious Defigns, as Enemies of God, and his Holy Church? And, Tho' the Clergy have taken all poftible Methods for a blind Submiffion, and a fore'd Uniformity, yet they have not been able to hinder Christrians from being

21 S Christijnity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

ing endlefly divided, even in what they call Fundamentals. And tho' no one Seel, as far as I can find, have ventured to give us a compleat Set of their Fundamentals \ yet all Seels unanimously own, that tho'fe Things, which are necenefary to the Salvation of Christians, muft be fo plain, as that all Christians even tho'fe of the meaneft Capacities, may apprehend them. Would not one think, that a little honed Reflexion mould carry them further, and make them fee, that it is inconfiflent with the univerfal and unlimited Goodnefs of the common Parent of Mankind, not to make That which is necenefary for the Salvation of all Men fo plain, as that all Men may know it? Tho' one would be apt to think, that by the Number and Oddnefs of tho'fe things, which in moft Churches Divines have made necenefary to Salvation, they were more zealous to damn others than to fave themfelves, or, at leaft, that they thought there was no room in Heaven for any, but Men of their own narrow Principles. But,

Let me aik thefe charitable Gentlemen, Whether the Happinefs of others wou'd make Christians unhappy? Or, what Prejudice it will be to them, to fuppofe God is no Refpefer of Perfons; but that all may come to him, who believe that he will reward tho'fe in all Nations, and at all Times, who have diligently fought him?

Natural Religion, which is of the greateft importance to Mankind, and is a perpetual (land-
ing Rule for Men of the meanest, as well as high-
eft Capacity, carries its own Evidence with it, tho'fe
internal, infeparable Marks of Truth *, but can that
be faid of any Religion, which depends on Tra-
dition? Does not that want foreign Aid and Affif-
tance? Ought we not to be certain, that the firft
Propagators of it cou'd not be impos'd on themfelves,
or wou'd not impofe on others? Or, in other Words,
were infallible, and impeccable? But fince Num-
bers have taken their Reveries for divine Infpira-
tions 9

Ch, 13. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 219

tions, ought we not to have certain Marks to di-
ftinguifh the one from the other? Nor is this alone
fufficient -, for if evil Beings can imprefs Notions in
Mens Minds as strongly as good Beings, and caufe
Miracles to be done in confirmation of them; is
there any way to know, to which of the two, No-
tions, thus imprefs'd, are owing, but from their
Nature and Tendency *, or tho'fe internal Marks of
Wifdom and Goodnefs, by which they plainly mew
themselves to be part of Natural Religion? If fo,
can external Proofs carry us farther than the inter-
nal Proofs do? But,

'T 1 s not enough to be 'certain, thefe Men were
not impos'd on *, we muft be as certain, they wou'd
on no occaflon whatever impofe on others: Or, in
other words, were not Men of like Pafions and
Infirmitiies with other Mortals. Does not the Scrip-
ture give very many Infiances of infpir'd Perfons
as much govern'd by their Pafions, as uninfpire'd?
Was not Abraham, tho' a Prophet, and fo dear to
God, that he wou'd not deftroy a neighbouring Gen. 1 8. 15.
Town without acquainting him with it, guilty of
an inceftuous Marriage, his Wife being his Sifter by 20 - I2 -
The Father's fide? And did he not endeavour to 12. 19*
betray her Chaftity to two Kings, in difowning her
to be his Wife, by which Conduct he got from one 20. 2.
of them, who entreated him well for her fake, Men 12. 16.
and Maid-Servants, Sheep, Oxen, Aijes, and Camels 20. 16.
and from the other, a thoufand pieces of Silver, be-
fides Sheep, Oxen, Men and Women-Servant s? And 15. 6,8.
immediately after his Faith was counted to him for
Right eoufnets, did he not doubt of God's Promife, 12. 13,
till God fpoke to him in a deep Sleep ?

Was not David, tho' a Prophet, and a Man
after God's own heart, guilty of many enormous
Crimes, from the time he defign'd to have murder'd 1 Sam. 25. 22,
all the Males in Nabal's Family, becaufe he wou'd
not pay Contributions to him, and thofe Men, who
put of Debt, Difcontent and Diftrefs join'd him ?

tho' Nabali by fo doing, might have incur'd the 22>2 «
Fate

£20 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Fate of thofe Priefts, from whom, David, by feve-
iSam.2i.69.ral Falhoods, got both Sbew-Bread, and Goliab's
Sword. What cou'd be more treacherous, than his
invading People, that were, at leaft, in Peace, if not
- 27.8- 1 -'Allies df the King of Gath, to whom he fled for
Safety ; and having neither fav'd Man or Woman
alive to bring Tydings, told his generous Protector,
he had been making an Inroad into Jud<ea?

I n a word, (not to mention his Treatment of
Uriah, which no brave Man can think of without
horror) did he not leave the World in a very un-
forgiving Temper, when the laft thing he com-
1 Kings 2. manded his Son Solomon, was, to put Shimei to
8 > 9- death, tho* he had /worn before the Lord, that he

>am. 1 9, 23. wou >j mt p ut fe m tQ death, and that bejbou'd not die ?

Solomon, tho' infpir'd with Wifdom from
above, and had Conferences with God himzelf, yet
his Paflion for Women made him guilty of grofs
Idolatry. And not to multiply Inftances; we find
one Man of God lying to another Man of God in
the Name of God ; purely for the pleafure of mak-

1 Kings 1 3. i n g him eat Bread, and drink Water with him. And

18, if we go to the New Teftament, 'tis plain, by what
Mat. *?. 22, our Saviour fays to thofe, who had prophecy d, and
23. caft out Devils, and done many wonderful Works in his

Name, Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity ; that
neither Prophecies, nor Miracles, are abfolute Se-
curities for Men to depend on. Nay, do we not
find one of the Apoftles, tho' he, with the reft,
had the power of doing Miracles, even to the Rai-

— 10. 8. fing of the Dead, betraying his Mailer for the paultry
Sum of thirty pieces of Silver ? And the other
Apoftles not only fled, and deferted him *, but the

— 26. 72. chief of them forfowre him, as often as he was afk'd
about his being one of his Followers *, and he, as

Gal. 2. 13. well as Barnabas, was afterwards guilty of a mean
piece of DilTimulation. And Paul and Barnabas

Afte 13.59. h a d fuch a fharp Contention, tho' about a very in-
different Matter, as to caufe a Separation : And

Rom. 7 . 19, even St. Paul fays, The Good that I would do, I do not ;
23- z but

Ch. 13. Chrijlianiy as Old as the Creation. 22 l

but the Evil which I would not, that I do, — But I fee
another Law in my Members, warring againft the
Lazy of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity *to
the haw of Sin, which is in my Members. And a
great deal more to the fame purpofe.

Do not thefe Inftances, tho' many more might be
added, plainly fhew, that infpir'd Perfons, whether
Prophets or Apoftles, are fubject to the fame
Paffions, even to difTembling and lying, as other
Men I And that we fin againft that Reafon, which
was given us to diftinguifti between Good and Evil;
Religion and Superftition ; if we do not by it examine
all Doctrines whatsoever, and by whomfoever de-
liver'd ? But fuppofing Prophets and Apoftles im-
peccable as well as infallible ; yet what Certainty
can People have, that thofe things which were
taught by them have been faithfully convey'd down
for many Generations together by Men, who were
far from being infallible, or impeccable? So that
here, certainly, they ought to make ufe of their
Reafon, in judging of all Doctrines thus convey'd.
Admitting Tradition has been a faithful Convey-
ancer, yet how can the common People be certain
the Scripture has been truly tranflated ? But, grant-
ing even that ; yet fince moft Texts have vaftly va-
ried, and sometimes contrary Interpretations, and
the literal Sqt\(q very often kills -, how can they be
confident they do not mistake their meaning, except
the Reafon of things makes it evident ? But fup-
pofing no fuch uncertainty in the meaning of Texts,
yet fince the Scripture contains fome Precepts, which
are occafional, obliging only certain Perfons, upon
certain Occasions, and in certain Circumstances; and others that are of an eternal Obligation, and makes no distinction in delivering them--, can Men, even the most learned, have any other way of knowing one from the other, but from the nature of the Precepts; and that those only are of eternal Obligation, which are founded on the eternal Reason.

522 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13*

of things; and which would eternally oblige, whether delivered in Scripture, or not? And,

Let me further add, That to make external Revelation of any use, must we not, as I have already observed, be able to determine, whether God is oblig'd to act, as he declares in it he will do? And in order to settle this important Point, which Revelation itself can never do; must not our Reason tell us, that infinite Wisdom can have no Commands, but what are founded on the unalterable Reason of things? And if God cou'd command at one time for commanding-fake in any one Point, he might do so in all points and times; and consequently that an arbitrary Will, which might change every moment, would govern all things? --And can they, who plead that their external Revelation is the unchangeable Will of God, any otherwise do it, but by having recourse to the Nature of God, by which they can't but perceive, that the Will of God before, as well as since any external Revelation, must be as immutable as God himself; as being founded on the eternal Reason of Things? So that they who make the Will of God, whether revealed by himself, or by any Messenger, not to be unchangeably the same, destroy all possible Proof, that any external Revelation cou'd be, or at least, continue to be the Will of God. Thus you see, that whatever Hypothesis you please, yet you can prove nothing to be his Will, but what the Nature of God, and the Nature of Things point out to all Men, who dare use their Reason, to be his Will, his immutable Will.

Among the numerous Answerers of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, Mr. Chandler is
deferently reckon'd to stand in the foremost Rank, and this judicious Divine says, that "Natural Re-
d1c "M 6 " \%!n is the on ty Foundation, upon which Re-
\hz0ldJ every " relation can be supported", and which must be
understood, before any Man is capable of judging either of the Nature and Evidence of Christianity:

Cb. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 223

: And I am persuaded, says he, that 'tis to the want of a due Knowledge of the first Principles of all Religion, those Mistakes about the Christian are owing, that have obscur'd the simplicity of it, and prejudiced many against entering, and believing it. — If natural Religion is not part of the Religion of Christ, 'tis scarcely worth while to enquire at all what his Religion is. If it be, then the preaching Natural Religion is preaching Christ. The Religion of Christianity must be understood, before it can, or ought to be believ'd; and that it must be prov'd to be a confident, and rational Religion, before they can be under any Obligation to receive it.

And, indeed, why should not every Man insist upon those things? The only Consequence that I can imagine can flow from it, is, not that the Cause of Christianity will suffer, which will stand the test of the most impartial Inquiry; but that the rigid Directors of the Faith and Consciences of Men will lose their Authority, and human Schemes and Creeds, that have been set up in the room of Christianity, will fall into the contempt they so justly deserve.

'Tis my hearty Prayer to the Father of Lights, and the God of Truth, that all human Authority in matters of Faith, may come to a full end; and that every one, who hath Reason to direct him, and a Soul to save, may be his own Judge in every Thing that concerns his eternal Welfare, without any prevailing regard to the Dictates of fallible Men, or fear of their peevish, and impotent Censures." And in this Prayer, I believe, every honest Man will join.

The Reverend and Judicious Mr. Bullock, inserm. 3, 4, summing up what I have been endeavouring to prove at large; says, 4C A Revelation coming from God, unless it could be known to be such, is in effect the same, as having none at all. — Shall a Man, says he, embrace the first Religion that offers
224 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13*

'* feers itself to him, and without feeking any fur-
ther, flick close to the Principles of his Educa-
tion? If this were fafe, then all the contradic-
tory Notions that are in the World, would be
equally fafe and true-, and there would be no
fuch thing as a falfe Religion, or the Spirit of
< Error any where: But this will not be admitted.
** Is Truth, then, confin'd to any certain Coun-
try, or to any particular Set of Men ? No: But
if it were, ftill there would remain this diffi-
culty, to be aflurred to what Country, or to what
fort of Men it belonged. If this were all the
Rule we had to go by, every Man (no doubt)
could be partial to his own Country, and to
thofe Men he is beft acquainted with. And fo
the Principles of Education muft prevail every
where, inftcad of true Religion."

In anfwer to thefe, and fuch like Objections, he'
Serm p 18 *$& "We are well affur'd, that God is the Au-
thor of our Beings, and all our Faculties; and
we cannot but acknowledge, that our Under-
(landing is the moif excellent Faculty he has
given us. It is in that we excel the Beafs that
perifh j and it was plainly given us with this in-
tent, that by a due Ufe and Application thereof
we might difcern Truth from Error -, that which
is juft and fit to be done, or obferved by us*
from that which is not. — Should we, therefore,
admirt any thing, as a Revelation coming from
ct him, which contradicts the evident Dictates of
** our Reafon; we facriflce one Revelation, that
which God gave us with our very Beings, to make
4C way for another, which is inconffient with it. It
4C is in effect admitting, that the Judgment of our
own Minds is in no cafe to be depended upon *,
that the Faculties thereof, the very belt Gift
which God has given us, are of no ufe and fer-
vise to us, no, not even in difcerning which
Doctrines come from God, and which do not.
For, if I cannot depend upon the plaineft pictates

" of

Ch. 13. Chrijliamty as Old as the Creation. 225

" of Reafon, how can I be affTurM that any Doc-
<; trine is a Revelation from God ? If I receive it
" without confulting my Reafon, then for ought I
** know, it may be an Impofture; and I am every
"way as liable to embrace an Error as the Truth.
"But if I embrace it upon the Tryal and Conviction of my Reason, then 'tis plain, I admit the principles of Reason are to be depended upon;
"which if I do, I cannot confidently admit any thing as true, which contradicts it."

To apply this Author's Reasonings, God is frequently said to swear in Wrath. Now, if we are to p**alm 95:1: admit nothing, that is repugnant to the Natural Notion we have of God, ought we not to examine by our Reason, whether God, who has no Superior to invoke, can swear at all; much less be in a Passion, and swear in Wrath?

Again, If there are ever so many Texts, which seemingly confine Salvation to a Belief, to which the greater part of Mankind are utter Strangers; or else have not had sufficient Reason to fee they were oblig'd to examine into it; or if they did, could not find out its Truth; must it not, by this Author's Reasoning, be my Duty to consider, whether this is consistent with the Character we have from the Light of Nature, of the impartial and universal Goodness of God, to damn Men for Impossibilities? Or, whether One can be said to be sent as a Saviour of Mankind, if he comes to shut Heaven's Gates against those, to whom before they were open; provided they follow'd the Dictates of their Reason?

I f, besides these, there are innumerable Texts, which, in the plainest manner Words can express, impute human Parts, human Infirmities, and human Passions, even of the worst kind, to God; does not this suppose, that even all have a right to examine; and consequently, sufficient Understanding to judge, when Texts, taken in their plain, 'obvious meaning,
Ezek. 20. 21, pie Statutes, which were not good; and Judgments, 25. by which they could not live? And does not St. Peter

to mention no other A pottle) the a Jew^ call the
A&s 15. 10. Jewifh Law, given by God, a Yoke that neither we,
or our Fore-fathers could bear? In what a Number
of Places is God said to do things to try People •? and yet notwithstanding this Caution, how often is
he said to repent? Does he not even repent of the
Gen. 6. 6. first Action he did in relation to Man? He repented that he made Man, and it grieved him at his Heart.
Nay, does not the Scripture suppose he has so often
Jcr. 15.6. repented, that he is weary of repenting? What
strange Notions must the Bulk of Mankind, cou'd
not their Reason direct them right, have of the su-
preme Being, when he is said to have rested, and to
Exod. 31. 17. - refted' and to
Exodes 9. 13. j^ an p ^ n j w hat is yet ftranger, fuch Actions are
attributed to him, as can only belong to the loweh:
Ifa. 5. 26. rank of Creatures, fuch as hijfmg ; God being in
three places of the Prophets said to his; and in
Zach. 10. 8. place to his for a Fly' that is in the uttermoft
7-! 8. p ar t th e Ri ver c f Egypt ; and for a Bee> that
is in the Land of AfTyria,

B. Divines tell us, We must recede from the
Letter, when the nature of the thing requires it •, that is, when it contains any notion, or fact, which
our Reason tells us is unworthy of God; as being
inconsistent with Jiis Wifdom, Goodness, Juftice,

Immu-

Ch. 13. Chrifianity as Old as the Creation. 227

Immutability, impartial and univerfal Benevolence,
or any other of his Perfections •, or any ways
x: ladies with thofe Duties, that Men as Men, or
Creatures of the fame Creator owe their Fellow-
Creatures.

A. I fhould think that Man was unreasonoble,
who required a greater fcope in reading any Book,
than what thefe Divines allow him in reading the
Scripture; efpecially confidering the frequent occa-
fion he will have to exercife his reafoning Faculty,
in alicgorifing away facts deliver'd after the plained
manner: As for Inftance, If Reason tells us, that
God, the only true God is invisible, we must not
interpret thofe numerous Texts literally, which
fuppofe him to have been fo often ken by mortal
Eyes: No, not even thofe which reprefent him for
many Days together visible on Mount Sinai) where
v/hat v/as under his Feet is mentioned •, and that
the Nobles, on whom God laid not his Hand, faw God, Exo( *- 2 4- I0 * 
and did eat, and drink. And Bishop Patrick says, ili' 

" that after they faw God, they were fo far from the place of 
receiving any harm, that they feafted with him 

M upon the Relicks of the Peace-Offerings, with 

" great Joy and Gladnefs. 5 ' And tho' 'tis said, 
God f pake to Mofes face to face, as a Man does toExod. 33. 11J 

his Friend; yet for the fame reafon, that Text muft 
not be interpreted literally .

B. That's certain, mice God, in the fame 
Chapter, fays to Mofes, Thou canft not fee my Face ;Exod. 33. 20, 
for there Jhall no Alan fee me, and live. 

A. Does not God immediately add, Behold there — Vex. 21, 
is a Place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a Rock. And 22 > 2 3— 
it fhall come to pafs, while my Glory paffeth by, that I 
will put thee in a Clift of the Rock ; and I will cover 
thee with my Hand, while I pafs by. And I zvill take 
away mine Hand, and thou fhalt fee my Back-parts 
but 
my Face fhall not befeen. And firce Reafon tells us, 
God has neither Fore-parts, or Back-parts, muft 
not the Rock, the Clift of the Rock, and the Hand that 
cover'd Mofes in this Clift, and the Back-parts feen 
Q^2 upon 

228 Chrijlianify as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13; 
upon taking away the Hand, be underftood by Men 
of the meaneft Capacity, in a fpiritual Senfe?

Accor d ing to the acknowledged Maxims, you 
have laid down from Divines, we mud not take 
literally the two Conferences mention'd in the nrft 
and fecond of Job between God and Satan ; when 
Satan, in very good Company, with the Sons of God, 
prefented himself before the Lord—, who, when Satan 
would not otherwife be fatisfy'd of Job's Integrity, 
permitted him to flay Job's Children and Servants, 
and reduce him to extremity to make the experi-
ment. The fame may be faid of the Lord's faying 

Zech. 3. 1, 2. at another time to Satan, ftanding at the right Hand 
of the Angel of the Lord, to rejift the High-Prieff Jo-
fhua, ftanding likewife before him, The Lord rebuke
thee, O Satan: And must we not think it as unworthy of God to talk to a Serpent as to Satan? Or, how can we conceive a Serpent cou'd talk to Eve, and delude the Mother of Mankind, tho' in the high State of Perfection *, even tho' the Apostle fays,

1 Cor. 11. 3. The Serpent deceived Eve by his Subtilty?

Some wou'd be almoin apt to imagine, that the Author of the Book of Genesis thought, that Words hr.d Ideas naturally fix'd to them, and not by Con-
ent: Otherwife, fay they, how can we account for his fuppofing, that God brought all Animals before Aadm, as foon as he was created, to give them

Gen. 2. 19. Names; and that whaioever Adam called every living Creature* that was the Name thereof--, and that the Serpent and Eve, almofr. as foon as created, entertain d one another in the fame Language? And fome think, that this Author did not know the rea-
son of the neceiiTary variety of Language upon the Increafe of Mankind, by making God to come down

Gen. ii. 4, 6, to fee the City and Tower, whoseTop was defign'd to reach to Heaven; and then faying, this they begin to do --, and now nothing will be refrain'd from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down* and there confound their Language. And, per-
haps., the not knowing the natural Caufe of the Rain-tow,

Ch. 13. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. 3.29

Rain-bow, occaflion'd that Account we have in Ge-
nejis of its Institution.

As to the Story of an Angel of God's wrestling all Night with Jacob, and then laming, and bleffingGen. zz.z^ him, and changing his Name *, " Interpreters of 2 5> 28 » 2 9-
" note, whether Jews or Chriflians (as Mr.A^ m 1 ^ obferves) " underilood it done, not in Fact, butr lgt p. 203.
" in Virion only: " Tho' one w r ould imagine the Jews thought it literally true, becaufe the Text fays, They mt not of the Sinew, that Sinew, which -- Ver. 32.
jhrank, unto this very Bay.

W h a t a number of Ideas muft Balaam's Afs have, to be able to reafon with his Matter; when he faw, and knew an Angel? And tho' 'tis faid by Peter, that the dumb Afs /peaking with Man's Voice, 2 Pet. 2. 16.
forbad the Madnefs of the Prophet --, yet in the Story itfelf --, there does not appear any thing like Mad-
nefs: For that Prophet did nothing but what the Lord enjoin'd him; and declares th'o' Balak would give me his House full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the Ward of the Lord, my God. And when he went to Balaam's second Messenger, it was by the express Command of God; and yet the Text says, God's Anger was kindled because he went: And Num. 22. 22. then follows the Dialogue between the Ass and his Master.

How many Commands did God give his Prophets, which, if taken according to the Letter, seem unworthy of God, as making them act like Mad-men or Idiots? As for Instance, The Prophet Isaiah walk'd 2K. 20. 3. for three Tears together naked for a Sign. Jeremiah is commanded to carry his Girdle as far as Euphrates, Jer. 13.4,6. and there to bury it in the Hole of a Rock; and after many Days he is sent to dig it up again. So he is commanded to make Bands and Yokes, and put them about his Neck, and send them to several Kings. Ezekiel is commanded by the Lord to draw Jerusalem on a Tile, Ezek. 4. 1, 2, and lay siege to it, build a. Fort against it, set a. Camp against it, and set Battering-Rams against it round about. Moreover to take an Iron Pan and set it for a Wall.

239 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Wall of Iron between him and the City: And immediately after he is commanded, to lie three hundred and ninety Days on one Side, and forty Days or, Ufa ether -, and then to mix Man's Dung with his Bread, Ezek. 4. 12, And afterwards the Lord said, I have given thee *5- Cow's Dung for Man's Dung. Another time he is commanded to dig a Hole through the Wall of his House, and carry forth his Goods in the Twilight, and cover his Face, as not to see the Ground. And as St. Rev. 10. 9. John was commanded to eat a Book, so the Prophet Ezek. 3. 1, 3 >was commanded to eat a Roll \ and likewise io clip 3T4.' **' Z '^ s &***' anc * t0 dispose of the Clippings after a very odd Manner \ and several other things as strange, Hof. 1, 2, &c, too many here to mention. And the Prophet Hosea, who was like wife a Priest, was bid to take a Wife Lev. 21. 14. of Whoredoms, (tho' that by Moses Law was forbid aPriest,) and Children of Whoredoms; and had three Children by this Wife, to whom the Lord himself gave Names.

No Mathematician could give a more exact Description of a City, than John does of that great & c: City, the Holy Jerusalem; v/hkh from an high Moun-
tain he saw defending out of Heaven from God-, and he was so near it, as to describe the Gates, Walls and
Streets and to measure its Length, Breadth, and Contra Mar-Height with a Reed. And Tertullian affures us, cion./.3.c.24." that in his time there was {qqxi for forty Days " together, a City hanging in the Air over JudeaS* And yet Interpreters have since allegorised this great City into a meer Caftle in the Air. But, 

To come to things of greater moment, did not the Scripture suppose Reafon was able to teach Men of the meaner! Capacity, that God cou'd not be deceiv'd himfelf, or deceiv us *, the Prophet Je- Jer. 20. 7. remiah wou'd not have faid, O Lord, Thou haft de- ceived me, and I was deceived*, thou art ftronger than — 1 5 • x 8 » /, and haft prevailed. — Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Liar \ and as Waters that fail? And in another Ezek. 12. 22, Prophet the Lord fays, The Days are prolonged, and * 8 -- every Vifion fails. And tho' the Lord adds, Thus fhall

Cb. 1 3. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 23 r

ftjall none of my. Words be prolonged any more, but the Word which I have fpoken fhall be done-, yet he after- wards fays, If the prophet be deceived when he hathEzck. 14. 9. fpoken a "Things I, the Lord have deceived that Pro- phet. And if the Prophet is deceiv'fd, muft not the People, who rely on that Prophet, be deceiv'fd ? And does not the Prophet Jeremiah fay, Ah ! Lord God, Jer. 4. 10. fully thou haft greatly deceiv'd this People ? And to the fame purpofe the Prophet Ifaiab, Q Lord, thou

There are other Texts which go farther, and, if taken literally, reprefent God not only falfifying his Word, but his Oaths. To mention two, the firft relates to the Children of Ifrael, to whom the Lord faid, Ye Jhall not co

Breath of Promife. The fecond is in Pfalm 89. in the firft Part of which is largely fet forth the Pro- mifes of God to David by Covenant and Oath ; and in the other Part David complains of God's

Breath, both of his Covenant and his Oath •, and in fumming up thofe Breaches he fays, Thou haft Pfalm 89. 39. made void the Covenant of thy Servant : Lord, where~~^ QX - 49- are thy former loving- Kindncfjes which thou fwear eft to David in thy Truth? And there are feveral Facts mention'd in Scripture, which, if taken literally, look as tho' the Prophets were either deceiv'd them- selves, or were willing to deceive others. [* Jeremiah Jer. 34. 5. proprieties, King Zedekiah mould die in Peace ; and yet the poor King had his Sons flain before his Eyes, — 52. 10, 1 1. and his Eyes then put out, bound in Chains, and died in Prifon. And tho' he prophefied that J ehoiachim— 22. 19.
mould be buried with the Burial of an Afs, drawn, and cast forth beyond the Gates of Jerusalem —, yet this does not at all agree with what is related of him in the last Chapter of the second Book of Kings, or even in the last Chapter of Jeremiah." The Prophetess Hilda affures good King Jojiab from the Lord, that he should 2 Chron. 34. be gather'd to his Grave in peace; and yet soon after he 28. receiv'd a mortal Wound, of which he died. The 1b. 35. 23.

Q^4 Prophet

232 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

2 Kings 3. Prophet EUfha fends word to Benhadad, the King of 7–10. Syria, who consults him about his Recovery, that he may, (or rather mall or will, for fo it ought to be render'd) certainly recover —, yet he tells Hazael, who had a Defign on his Crown and Life (and who before had been anointed King of Syria, by the Prophet 1 Kings 19. Elijah) that he should surely die. And this look'd the *!>' more ungrateful in the Prophet, because he had re-

2 Kings s. 8, eely'd forty Camel Loads of the good thingsDamascus, to tell the King the Truth. But I need not men-
nition single Prophets deceiving, or being deceiv'd,
z Chron. 18. when the Scripture tells us of four hundred being $> 12 – deceit'd at once, to the derhrudtion of a number of

z Chron. 18. innocent Persons. If aw, says the Prophet Micaiah, 5, 18, 21, 22. the Lord fitting upon his "Throne, and all the Host of Heaven ft an ding on his right Hand, and on his left. And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab, King of Israel, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one f pake, faying after this manner, and another faying after that manner. Then there came oat a Spirit, and flood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt prevail. Go out, and do even fo.
As to the New Teftament, I mail now only ob-
Jade9, 12. ferve, that tho' St. Jude quotes (befides the Af-
furhption of Moses) a Prophecy of Enoch, the fe-
venth from Adam, and the Book containing this Prophecy was then in being —, yet, because there were things in it, which seem'd unworthy of God, and cou'd not be well allegcri'd; the Authority of an infpir'd Perfom quoting it as an infpir'd Book, cou'd not support its Credit, but it fell into Ccm-
tempt, and was loft.

B. Tho you allow Reafon to be the proper Judge in things of Morality, as falling under its
Cognizance; yet as to Prophecies, you must own, we are entirely to rely on Authority.

A I

Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 233

A. I have hitherto (aid nothing in relation to Prophecies, designing to speak of them at another season; but since you mention them, I must, as to the Prophecies in the Old Testament, confess my Ignorance, that I do not understand them; and Pivines themselves, as far as I can find, are infinitely divided about interpreting them: And as to those Prophecies, if they may be so call'd, in the New Testament, relating to the second Coming of Christ, and the End of the Worlds the best Interpreters and Commentators own, the Apostles themselves were groffly mistaken \ there scarce being an Epistle, but where they foretell that those Times they wrote in, were Tempera novissirhd; and the then Age the kft Age, and those Days the last Days; ajid that the End of the World was nigh, and the Coming of Christ at handy as is plain, among other Texts, from iCor. x. 11. Rom. xiii. 11, 12. Heb. ix. 26. Jam. v. 7, 8. 1 John 11. 18. 2 Pet. Hi. 12, 13. And they do not affer this as a mere matter of Speculation, but build Motives and Arguments upon it, to excite People to the Practice of Piety, and all good Works; as Phil. iv. 5. Let your Moderation be known to all Men, the Lord is at hand. And to the same purpose are Heb. x. 24, 25. iPet. iv. 7, 8. 1 Cor. vii. 29. 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. And tho* they do not pretend to tell the very Day and Hour, when these things must happen; yet they thought it wou'd be during their time, and continually expeeled it. Timothy is charged to keep this Command—1 Tim. 6. 13, 14. to the Corinthians, As oft as ye eat this Bread, and 

234 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13, remain, jhall be caught up together with them in the
Clouds v to meet the Lord in the Air; and fo (hall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these Words. And there are other Texts to the same Purpose, as 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. 2 Cor. v. 4.

cThef. 2. 3. B. Does not St. Paul suppose, that before the Coming of Christ, Antichrift must appear?

A. That does not in the least hinder, but he might believe both would happen in his Time;

— Ver. 7. For, says he, the M\ftery of Iniquity does already work. And St. John puts this matter out of Dis-
i John 2. 18. pute, in laying, Little Children, it is the last Time, and as ye have heard the Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists\ whereby we know that it is the last Time.

g Pet. 3. 3,4. B. Does not St. Peter say, There shall come in the last days, Scoffers saying, where is the Promife of his Coming?

A. Saint Peter owns those to be the last Days^ and the Promife of his then coming he confirms, by

lb. Ver. 9.— saying, God is not slack concerning his Promife, the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night:

— Ver. 8, B. Does not St. Peter say, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one Thing, that one Day is with the Lord as a thousand Tears, and a thousand Tears as one Day?

A. This, as in the Margin, seems to be quoted from Pfalm xc. 4. where 'tis said, A thousandTears in thy fight, are but as Tefterday when it is past. And surely St. Peter cou'd not imagine, that God affed to fpeak unintelligibly; and by one Day meant a thousand Years \*, and by a thousand Years one Day; and refer to this Place as a Proof.

B. Divines are at a loss how to account for the Apoftles so frequently declaring, the End of all Things
Ch. 13. Chriftiwiity as Old as the Creation. 235

Things to be at band, and Chrift to be then a coming \ when our Saviour fays, Of that day and Hour know—Mat, 24. 36., etb no Man ; no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my pat far only.

A. Those Divines wou'd not make thefe Re-

flections, did they but confider what our Saviour declares to his Disciples, when they came to him privately —, faying, Tell us when thefe things fhall be ; _ y er — and what fhall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World. Does he not in anfwer to their Queition tell them what thofe Signs would be ? Withal adding, So likewife ye, when ye fhall fee all thefe— yer. 33, 34, Things, know that it is near, even at the Doors. Ve-

rily, I fay unto you, this Generation fhall not pafs, till all thefe Things be fulfilled. And to aftarre them of the Truth of what he declares, Heaven and Earth, fays Ver. 35. he, jhall pafs away , but my Words fhall not pafs away. And his adding, But of that Day and Hour knowethyi^ 2 ^. 36. no Man, no, not the Angels of Heaven, but my Father only j was not meant to contradict what he juft: be-

fore declar'd, that this Generation fljall not pafs till"—" Ver — 34-

thefe Things be fulfilled —, but to warn his Disciples not to be furpris'd, as the old World was, when the Flood came andfwept them all away \ Watch, therefore, for ye know not what Hour the Lord will come : But know this, that if the good Man of the Houfe bad known in what Watch the Thief would have come, he wou'd have watch 9 d. — And the A po files, agreeable to this

Admonition of the Lord, fay, Tourfelves know per- 1 Thefl*. 5. 2. feclly, that the Day of the Lord comet h as a Thief in the 2 Pet - 3- 10 - Night. And after the Refurrecrion, our Saviour fays to Peter,, who afks him concerning the beloved Disciple •, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is John 21. 22, that to thee ? And the laft thing his Disciples afk'd him on his Afcenfion, is, Wilt thou at this Time re-A&s 1. 6. ft ore again the Kingdom to Ifrael? And the Anfwer he gave them is very confident with the Kingdom, even the temporal Kingdom of Ifrael's being reftor'd again during their Lives, And by our Saviour's faying when the laft Supper was ended, I will notMat. 26. 29,

drink

236 Chrijlijianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.
drink henceforth of the Fruit of the Vine, until that Day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.
They, no doubt, believ'd this happy Time was not far off. But,

I f nioft of the Apoftles, upon what Motives foever, were miftaken in a Matter of this Confequence; how can we be abolutely certain, that any one of them may not be miftaken in any other Matter? If they were not infpir'cl in what they faid in their Writings concerning the then coming of Chrift*, how could they be infpj'r'd in thofe Arguments they build en a Foundation far from being fo? And if they thought their Times were the laft, no Direction they gave, cou'd be intended to reach further than their own Times. And if John the Evangelift, and John the Divine, are the fame Perfon, he muft believe what is mentioned in xhzRevela- tion, wou'd have happen'd within the Compafs of that Age in which he writ. But leaving thefe matters to another time, let us return to the Conside- ration of thofe Duties, which Reafon mews us from the Nature of God and Man, and the relation Men ftand into him, and one another. ■

As I have already (hewn you by a number of Inftances, where Divines themfelves own, that tho' ih.Q literal Senfe of the Scripture be ever fo plain, yet it muft not ftand in Competition with what our Reafon tells us of the Nature and Perfections of God; fo I (hall now (hew you the fame in relation to thofe Duties Men owe to one another; and that if Men are not well grounded in the Reafon and Na- ture of Things, and from thence judge of their Du- ty, in relation to one another; there are things ei- ther commanded, or appro v'd of in the Scripture, which might be apt to lead Men aftray. A Man who looks no further than That, might think it no Gen. 27. Crime to cheat his elder Brother, impofe on his aged Parent, and by a Lye obtain his Blefling; nay, hope that God wou'd confirm it, when he fees how Jacob obtain'd the greateft Bleffing'from God. 1 If

Ch. 13. Chrifiiardty as Old as the Creation. 237

If Men flatter themfelves, that they are true Ifraelites, and thofe of a different Religion mere Egyptians; will they not be apt to imagine, when they fee how the Ifraelites fpciPd the Egyptians by the Command of God himfelf, who made them borrow what they were not to repay *, that this might be a good Precedent for them?

B. I mufl: own, that a Command to lend, hoping Lake 6. 35- for nothing again; and a Command to borrow, «?/£. Exod. 3. zi. out returning any thing again, feem to be very dif-
ferent Commands.

A. When Men find the Harlot Rahab celebrated, even in the New Testament, for lying to the Government, and betraying her Country to its cruel Enemies, * [and, as some think, miraculously fav'd with all her Kindred, by her House] 2. 15. (landing in which they were, when the Wall, on which it was, and in which she dwelt, fell flat.]—6. 20, 23. Are they not in danger, if they find their Advantage in it, and 'tis for the Service of those they judge to be true Israelites, to do the same? Since 'tis not pretended the Harlot had any more special Command for so doing, than Jael had for an Ad of the highest Treachery; for which, because it serv'd the Interest of Israel, me is declar'd by the Prophetess Deborah to be bless'd above all Israelites.

Wheat Prince can ever want a Pretence of going to War; and totally extirpating those he invades; when he sees Saul was commanded by God to de-1 Sam. 15.2, (troy the Amalekites, Men, Women, Infants and Sucklings, Ox and Sheep, Camel and As, for an Injury done four hundred Years before? And how, for sparing Agag, (whom Samuel hew'd in pieces Exod. iij. 8. before the Lord:;) and preferring some of the l Sam. —1 §—9> Cattle for Sacrifice, the Lord rejected him from being King; nay, order'd Samuel, left Saul (hou'd—16. 2 t &c. fufpecl: the Design, to pretend a Sacrifice, when he sent him to anoint David?

Woud

238 Christianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 13;

Woud not People, if, like the Children of "] Israel, they were delitute of an Habitation, be apt to think what the Israelites did to the Ganaanites, \ a good Precedent, and that they might invade a \ neighbouring, idolatrous Nation, that never did them the least Harm * and extirpate not only Men and Women* but even their innocent Infants, in order to get possession of their Country? And I question, whether the Spaniards woud have murdered so many Millions in the Indies, had they not thought they might have us'd them like Ganaanites. Jud. 3. 15, How many Precedents, besides that of Ehud—20,21. ("ho, on aMefTage from the Lord, ftabb'd die

King to whom his People sent him with a Prefent) did the Popeh Priests plead from the Old Testament for the Aflafli nation of the two Henries of France t And had the Gun-Powder-Plot succeeded here, they
wou'd, no doubt* have made ufe of the fame Plea
to juftify it.

Tho' the Lord bids the Jew$ to pray for the
Jer. 29. 7. Peace of Babylon, whither he had caufed them to be
carry* d away Captives ; and that in the Peace thereof
they fhou 9 d have Peace , yet is it not faid in the
fcf. 137. 8,9. Pfalms, Daughter of Babylon, happy fh all he be,
who taketh, and dafheth thy Little Ones againft the
Stones ? And this for no other Reafon, but becauie
* - Ver. 3. Jhe defir'd of her Captives one of the Songs of Zion.

The holier Men in the Old Teft anient are repre-
fented, the more cruel they feem to be* as well as
more addicted to curfing : How plentifully does
David in the 109th Pfalm beftow the bitterer!:
Curfes on his Enemies ? And how cruelly did he
treat the Ammonites, when he took their Cities,
xChr. 20. 3. cutting the People with Saws, and with Harrows of
Iron, and with Axes ?

Who is not furpris'd to find the holy Prophet
Elifha curfing in the Name of the Lord, liltk Chil-
dren ; for calling him Bald Pate? And what is (till
2 Kings 2. 23, more furprifing* Two She-Bears, upon his curling,
2 4» fir ait devour } d forty two little Children.-

3 And

Ch. 13. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. 239

And he likewise entail'd the Curfe of Leprofy
on his Man Gebazi, and his Seed for ever; for ac- 2 Kings 5. 27*
cepting, without his Matter's Knowledge, a fmall
Preient from Naaman^ the Afjyrian *, tho' the Pro-
phet himfelf afterwards took forty Camel Loads of^-- 8 > 9> &c *
the good things of Damafcus, to tell their King the
Truth, in relation to his Recovery *, and yet de-
ceiv'd him.

Elijahs caufin.g Fire to come down from Heaven^
fo deftroy two Captains with their Companies, for
no other Fault, but bluntly delivering a MerMage
from the King ; and perhaps, in the very Words
they were commanded ; was not fo cruel, as his
hindring it from raining upon the Earth for thefpacej 2m - S- l 7-
of three Tears and fix Months ; fince a Drought of
that Continuance, without Dew or Rain, in fuch
a barren Country as Jitd<ea, muft have, without *Ki n g s l 7- ** Miracles, deftroy'd every thing -, and yet St. James from hence takes occaflon to recommend the Effi-Jam. 5. 17. cacy of Prayer.

If God will not, in this Life, miraculomly alter the Courfe of things, for the fake of the Innocent, he, certainly, will not do it for the Guilty; nor break in upon the ordinary Methods and Laws of his Providence, to punifh one Man for the Crime of another -, the Innocent for the Guilty. If God could act thus, it would be no crime in Man to imitate him; nay, how could we be sure, if God deals thus with his Creatures in this Life, he will not act fo in the Life to come •, fince if the eternal Rules of Juftice are once broke, how can we ima-
gine any Stop? And yet,

Are there not Examples in Scripture, which, taken in their literal Senfe, feem to make God break in upon the common Courfe of Nature, and the ordinary Rules of his Providence, to punifti Men for Crimes they are not guilty of? As God's caufing, in the latter end of David's Reign, a Fa-
mine for three Years together \ for the Crime of Sauh Sam. 21, 1. and his bloody Houfe, in flaying the Gibeonites: And

that

240 Chrijlianianity as Old as the Creation. Ch, 13

that God fenote Ifrael, and deftroy 9 d seventy thcufand of them for David's Fault*, in caufing the innocent Sheep, as he juftly calls them 5 to be mumber'd.

B. I believe there mud: be Tome Miftake in this laft Story 5 for is it not fit, for feveral important Reafons, that Kings mould know the Numbers of their People? Are they not the Strength and Riches of their Kingdom? And v/as not the People of Ifrael, by being frequenfly numbered* and some-
times by God's own Appointment, a good Prece-
dent for David? But palling that by, how can we reconcile this Story with itfelf? In one Place 'tis 2 Sam. 24. i.faid God mo"Sd David to number fflrael \ in another, iChr. 21. 1. Satan provoked David. Did God conibire with Sa-
tan in this Act, in order to deftroy a Number of innocent Perfons? But do these two Places any more agree in the Account Joab gives in of the Number of the People? Nay, if in the Beginning 1 Sam. 11. 8. of Saul's Reign, the Numbers were rightly calcu-
lated j 'tis morally imppoffible, to fay nothing of the Deitruclion made by continual War, that either Account mould be true. Beilides,
Can God change hjs Mind, and that suddenly too? Yet it is faid, God sent an Angel to Jerufaler. to destroy it \ and as he was destroying it, the Lord beheld, and repented him of the Evil. And can any One think this to be a mere Petition, when a real Angel is faid to be miraculously sent to execute 1 Chr. 21. 15, God's Anger? And David vbith the Elders of li-16,18. rae ] 5 f e n on their Faces, and few the Angel of the Lord ft and between the Earth and the Heavens, having a drawn Sword in his Hand, by the T'hejoining-floor of Oman the gebufite \ and is there commanded to build an Altar.

A. What you (ay may be true, fince there are several miftakes crept into the Old Teftament;

See PnJeaux'svįj here there's scarce a Chapter, which gives any Connect. Par.∧ft or j ca i Account of Matters; but there are fo me &Vl'p C7Į ^ngs * n '*> which could not be there originally:

'Ana even in this Bock of Chronicles* there are things mention'd

Ch. 13. Chriftianiiy as Old as the Creation. 241

mention'd, too late to be inferted by Ezra, or Ne-hemiah. And I might add, that the Jewijh Hiftory being for the moft part taken from larger Accounts, 'tis no wonder its Ab (tracts are not always very exact.

I cou'd give you many more Inftances of this Nature, but I am afraid fome will think thefe too many; tho' I have faid nothing, but what Arch-biftiop Tillotfon does in Effect, in affirming, " TheSerm. Vol. 2, " Difference between the Style of the Old andp- 185. " New Teftament is fo very remarkable, that one " of the greateft Sects in the primitive Times did, M upon this very ground, found their Herefy of " Two Gods. The One evil, fierce, and cruel, " whom they call'd The God of the Old Teftament; 46 the Other good, kind, and merciful, whom they " call'd The God of the New Teftament: So great a " Difference is there between the Reprefentations, " which are made of God in the Books of the " Jewijh and Chriftian Religion, as to give, at leaft, " fome colour, and pretence for an Imagination " of Two Gods." But,

I t muft be own'd, that the fame Spirit, (I dare
not call it a Spirit of Cruelty) does not alike prevail throughout the Old Testament; the nearer we come to the Times of the Gospel, the milder it appear'd: For tho' God declares in the Decalogue, that he is a Jealous God, visiting the Iniquity of the Jofh. 7. 24, Parents upon their Children, to the third and fourth Generation —, and accordingly Achan with all his Family, was destroy'd for his single Crime; yet the Lord afterwards says, The Soul that sinneth, it shall die; Ezek. 18. 20. the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, dec. *[Tho' before it was plain the Son did, by God's declaring to Abraham, that the uncircumcised Man-Gtn. 17. 14= Child was to be cut off from his People: Yet it does not appear any Punishment was to be inflicted on his Parents for not circumcising him.]

Our Saviour, by saying, He came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them\ condemns their taking R away

242 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation Ch. 1f1 away the Lives of any, except in defence of their own, and of what is necessary for their Support*, and this he declares, upon a most remarkable Occasion: Some of his Disciples, upon his not being

Luke 9. 54. received into a Samaritan Village, because his Face was towards Jerusalem, straightcried, Wilt thou command Fire from Heaven, and consume them, as

— Vcr. 55, Elias did? He rebuked them, and said, 2e know not 56° what manner of Spirit ye are of\ for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them* If any Precedent might have been pleaded from the Old Testament, it wou'd, no doubt, have been Elias, the Fore-runner of our Saviour *, who came from Heaven (to which he went up by a Whirlwind

2 Kings 2. 11. in a Chariot of Fire, with Horses of Fire) to meet

Mark 9. 2, 4. our Saviour on a high Mountain,

And if it be contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, even to wish to imitate that great Prophet so favoured of God; the fame will hold as strongly, in relation to all the Actions that are of a like nature of other Holy Men, tho' quoted with Approval in the New Testament —, as Moses is, for Afts 7. 24. acting the part of a Magistrate, when a private
Man, in destroying his Fellow Subject. And if there's a Contrait between the Spirit of the Old, and the Spirit of the New Testament, ought not we Christians to flock to the latter; and not suppose the Texts, which require doing good even to the Gentiles, and dealing with them as ourselves expect to be dealt with, to relate to Christians only before they had Power to act otherwise; and that after, they were to be govern'd by Precedents from the Old Testament?

B. Are there any so absurd, as to endeavour thus to reconcile the Old and New Testament?

A. We find the Orthodox, as soon as they had a Prince, who refus'd Submission to their Decisions in the Council of Nice, in express Terms own'd as much.

Lucifer

Chi 13. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. 243

Lucifer Claritanus then a moil orthodox Bifnop in several Discourses addref'd to the Son of Confiantine the Great does not scruple to tell the Emperor himfelf, that it. was the Duty of the Orthodox to kill him, on the Account of his Arianitf which he calls Idolatry: And for this he quotes Deut, xiii. 6. and 1 Maccab. i. 43. to Ver. 29th of Chap. ii. and then inflictedly fays, "If See § 7't> n ~ m you had been in the hands of Matthias or er " Phineas. they wou'd have kill'd you. You fay Confiant. *f you furTer despiteful Ufage from us, contrary to where the Sto-

1C Admonitions of holy Scripture. If ever any ry" at large,
m One of the Worftippers of God fpared A^J 6fsc ' z f
" {rates, let what you fay of us be true. Pray 7'aken out
<6 mew me but one of them, that ever fpar'd the of Bibliothb.
" Adverfaries of his Religion.'* And the Texts **' Patr -
for Obedience to Magiftrates from Titus iii. 1.* hef° m ' *^'*
evades, by faying, " That the Apoftle fpoke of Ci *
" thofe Princes and Magiftrates, who as yet had
* ; not believed in the only Son of God; that they
H by our Humility, and Meeknefs, and fuffering
long under Adversity, and all pofTible Obedience

in things fitting, might be won over to Chriftia-

nity."

Athanafius, and theConfefTors that were with him,
-highly applauded Lucifer's Difcourfes, and fays,
" We plainly fee the Picture of an Apostle, the
<c Boldnefs of a Prophet, the Magiftery of Truth,

the Doctrine of true Faith.- You feem to be

the true Temple of our Saviour, who dwelling
in you, fpeaks thefe things by you.

" Believe me, Lucifer □, you alone did not
" fay thefe things, but the Holy Ghoft with you ;
" how came you to remember Scriptute at that
" rate ? How came you to underftand the Senfe
" and Meaning of it fo perfectly ; if the Holy
** Ghoft had not affifted you in it?"

They, who defign a new Religion, in oppo-
sition to eftablifh'd ones, wou'd, no doubt, as thefe
Fathers fuppofe, begin with Precepts, of the
R 2 greateft

244 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 13.

greateft Humanity and Tendernefs, and doing the
utmoft good to Mankind, tho' of ever fo different
Perfuafions: But to think, as thefe Fathers then
did, (and the Orthodox, if we judge from their
Actions, have ever since thought •,) that all the Pre-
cepts of the Gofpel of this nature were defign'd on*
ly to draw Jews and Gentiles into the Church, as
Gallants gain their MiftrefTes by Obfequioumefs ;
and that after they are once in, the Church (as all
Seels and Parties term themselves) had a Right to
murder, not only private Perfons, but even their
Sovereigns, for not holding the Orthodox Faith ;
and that this is the only Way to reconcile the Old
and New Teftament, is* a Notion highly injurious
to the Chriftian Religion.

'T 1 s, no doubt, the Intereft of the wicked
Priefts, to have God reprefented under oppofite Cha-
racters ; and to give in one Teftament Rules con-
trary to thofe in the other ♦, that they, as it ferves
their turn, may make ufe of either : But is it not
aftronifying for Saints and Confefibrs, upon the firft
Occafion, to renounce their former Principles ♦, and
in Defiance of their Oaths of Allegiance, reprefent
a Man infipid by the Holy Ghoft^ and fay, that Chrifi
fpoke in him; when he declares it the Duty of Chriftians to murder an heretical Emperor?

B. Those holy Fathers, I fuppofe, thought they faw Things of the greateft Confequence, tho' commanded in the Old, forbidden in the New Teftament, and that to make the Old and New Teftament to contradict each other in these things, was to deftrroy the Authority of both i and therefore concluded, this Expedient was the only way to iupport both.

A. By reafoning thus, inftead of reconciling both, they deftrroy'd both, and natural Religion too, in fuppofing things are not good and evil in themfelves; but that all depends on the Will of an arbitrary Being., which might endlefly change, But,

If

Ch. 13. Chriflianlty as Old as the Creation. 24 £

I f there's a Law of Nature, with the obferving of which God can't difpenfe either in himfelf, or in his Creatures; and no Religion can be true, that in the minuteft Circumftances is contrary to teafy PrUeaux\ Righteousnefs; and the Gofpel inculcates all fuel) Lett, to the Precepts of natural Religion, as require doing good\*\*P- 12 7- to Jew and Gent He ^ even the fame we expect from 7 ' * w ' them; and that we are indifpenfably bound to al-low all others the fame Right of judging for themfelves, as we claim for ourfelves; muft we not, if we will support the Credit of the Old Teftament, fuppofe it to contain nothing inconfiftent with this natural Right confirm'd by the Gofpel ? If this be not fo, pray mew me my Miftake; but if it be juft reafoning, tell me how you can account for the Conduct" of the Jews, in invading, and that too, without any Declaration of War, the Canaanites 9 a free and independent Nation *, and againft whom they had not the leaft Caufe of complaint; and on pretence of their being Idolaters, deftroying not only the Men and Women, but Infants incapable of Idolatry, or any other Crime ? This, you know, has given great Advantage to the Enemies of our Religion, who reprefent the whole Proceeding, as an unparalleled piece of Injuftice and Cruelty; and therefore, I would be glad to know what our Dives, if they do not interpret this Fact allegori-cally, or as only done in Vifion, fay, to mew 'tis not contrary to the Law of Nature, and thofe Pre- cepts of the Gofpel which are founded on it.

E. I wonder you can be ignorant, with what eafe our Dives folve this feeming difficulty, by
having recourse to a postive Command for treating the Canaanites as they did.

A. Is not such a Command pleaded in vain, except it can be shewn, that the thing supposed to be commanded, is not inconsistent with the Law of Nature? Which if God can dispense with in any one case, he may in all; nor could his Wisdom then prescribe any certain Rule of Conduct, either

24$ Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,

for himself or his Creatures; but all would depend on an uncertain, fluctuating, arbitrary Will.

B. May not a thing, which is unlawful for Men to do of themselves, become lawful, by the command of the Supreme Being?

A. Suppose any would now plead that they had a divine Commission to destroy their next Neighbours, whom they judge to be Idolaters, Man 4 Woman and Child, in order to possess their Country *, would not our Divines say, no Man could be as certain he had any such positive Command from God, as he was that God had forbid it him by the Light of Nature? Nor could Miracles be a proof of any such Commission; since we can only know from the Nature of the things themselves, whether Miracles are done by a good, or evil Being *, and we are to compare what we are told of God, with what we know of him; otherwise we believe in Men, and not in God. And if the Light of Nature, (the Voice of God himself) teaches us, even to demonstration, that God is infinitely wise and good; does it not likewise demonstrate, that no Command, not stamped with these Characters, can come from him; much less a Command inconsistent with all those Duties that Men as Men owe to one another?

B. May not God punish some wicked Nations with Death, to fright others from committing the same Crimes?

A. Has not God a thousand ways of doing this, without commanding Men to do any thing, which, by the Law of Nature, he had forbid them? And if God design'd what he did to be a terror to others, wou'd he not act after such a signal, and supernatural Manner, as all fhou'd fee it was his own doing *, and the reason of his so doing: And in order to it, distinguish between the guilty, and the innocent?
If God would punish the Canaanites for acting contrary to the Law of Nature, would he a in order to do this, require the Israelites to act contrary to the same Law, in murdering Men, Women, and Children, that never did them the least Injury?

Besides, were not the Jews, considering their Circumstances upon their coming out of Egypt, the most improper People to convince the World, that they did not act out of a private Interest; but purely to execute God's Vengeance on an idolatrous Nation? Would God, in such a cafe, choose People as prone to Idolatry as the Canaanites themselves? Some question, whether, in this Cafe, the Plea of a divine Command, if taken literally, will not destroy all the internal Proofs of the Falseness of any Religion; for can that, say they, which is consistent with the Truth of any one true Religion, prove another Religion to be false? And do not all our Divines, when they are speaking against other Religions, maintain, that their commanding, or approving any thing contrary to the Law of Nature, is a Demonstration of their Falseness? Since it destroys all the internal Proofs of the Truth of any Religion, and confounds all the essential Marks, by which we discern Good from Evil, and supposes God may command a Son to sacrifice his Father; or do any thing, tho' ever so repugnant to the Light of Nature.

B. These Men carry their Reasoning too far; for has not Providence frequently made use of ill Men, not only to punish ill Men, but for other good purposes?

A. In the course of things it can't but happen, that some ill Men may be a scourge to others; yet that can't excuse them, if in so doing they act against the eternal Rules of Justice and Equity. Tho' a thing may be said to be done by the determinate Counsel of God, yet that will not justify, or excuse those that did it, if not consistent with the Law of Nature. St. Peter, speaking of the holy Child Jesus, says, The People /*/a's 4. 27,

Ifrael were gathered together, For to da uthatfoever thy 28. R 4 Hw'd%
Hand, and thy Counfel determined before to be done: And yet were not they, and their Posterity punifh'd for that Fact, which God's Hand and Counfel had determin'd mould be done? Befides,

If the Ifraelites had a divine Commiflion to extirpate the Canaanites, ought not the Canaanites to have known it, to prevent their refitting Men acting by a divine Commiflion? Otherwife would there not be two oppofite Rights at the fame time \ a Right in the Jews by Revelation, to take away the Lives of the Canaanites \*, and a Right in the Canaanites by the Law of Nature, to defend their Lives? Jofh. 10. 12, 5. Was not the Surfs ftayidingftill for a whole 1 S- Day together \ at the Command of jofhua^ that he might have Light enough to deftroy his Enemies, a fufficient Proof they ought to have offer'd up their Throats?

A. That did not happen till they were defeated before Gibe-on \*, and consequencefly till then, it cou'd be no Direction to them ; and even after that, ~e. u. 20. the Lord hardened their Hearts, that they fhould come againft Ifrael in Battle \ and tho' 'tis faid, that the ~<. 3. 10. living God is among you, and that he will not fail to « c 16. 10. drive out before you the Canaanites, &c. yet Ifrael \* c. 17. 12. could not drive them out of feveral Places : And in Judges 1. 19. one Inftance, 'tis faid, The Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the Inhabitants of the Mountain, but could not drive out the Inhabitants of the Valley, becaufe they had Chariots of Iron.

A Reverend Author, to folve the Difficulties at-

Nye of Nat. tending this Matter, fays, " The Criticks and Rabbins and Kev. Re-« take notice, that it is not faid by the Hiftorian, .jg. p. 202. <t that Jo/fjua commanded the Sun and Moon to ftand " ftill \*, but he recites the Words of a certain Book " (fupposed to be a Poem, written by one J a/her) " in which the Poet, becaufe of the great and " long Slaughter, that Jofhua made of the Ammo-

^ nites, introduces Jofhua, as requiring the Sun " and Moon to ftand {till, while he, and his Army
And now let me ask you, Whether the very
endeavouring to reconcile this, or any other Facts
mention'd in the Old Testament, with the Light
of Nature and the Evangelical Precepts, is not a
plain Confession what Men ought to think of them,
if they could not be reconcil'd, as no doubt they
can - 9 and that we are to use our Reason, in judging
of the Actions of the most celebrated Persons
of Old ? Else, to give no other Instances, than the
Transactions between Judah and Tamar, we might
approve her Stratagem, in getting to lie with her
Father-in-law : For tho' before he knew himself to
be the Man, he was resolv'd to burn her ; yet after
he cry'd, She has been more righteous than I: And Gen. 38. 27.
for this Righteousness she was bless'd with Twins,
from whom the noble House of Judah y with all
its Kings, and the Messiah himself was descended.

I think, I could not say less than I have, in vindication of the Precepts of the Gospel ; by shewing
that they were not design'd merely to draw
People into the Profession of the Christian Religion,
and then to be laid aside •, except where they serv'd
the Interest of the local Orthodoxy : But that
they are Rules in their own Nature obligatory,
which, from their internal Excellency, always
bind Mankind ; and consequently all Men, even
tho' of the meanest Abilities, must have been ca-
pable of knowing them ; and out of danger, were
it not their own fault, of being misled by any Pre-
cedents whatever.

If what has been already said, may not be suf-
cient to shew, that it can't be imputed to want of
Wisdom, or Goodness in God \ or to any Defect in
Reason, which he has at all times given Mankind
for the Discovery of his Will : that the Nature of
Religion is so little understood, and so many
things, which do not (hew themselves to be the

W1U
Will of God, are mix'd with it; let me ask you, whether God has a greater kindness for the Brute, than the Rational Creation?

B. That, certainly, must be a needless Question.

A. If God, then, in the very Frame and Make of those Animals we term irrational, has implanted the Sense of every thing necessary to answer the End of their Creation; can we imagine, he has not as great a Care of his Creatures endow'd with Reason, and made after his own Image *, and for Ends infinitely more noble than the brute Creation? When we fee with what Skill and Contrivance, Birds, without being taught by any, but the God of Nature, build their Nests; and how artfully the Spiders frame their Webs; the Bees their little Cells \ and the Beasts avoid all noxious Herbs; and not to multiply Instances, how all Animals are endow'd with sufficient Sagacity* for preferring themselves and Species — y must we not own, that what we call Inftinct, is a certain and infallible Guide for inferior Animals? And can we doubt, whether Man, the Lord of the Creation, has not from his superior Reason, sufficient Notices of whatever makes for his greatest, his eternal Happiness?

If we can't charge God with acting thus partially, must we not be oblig'd to own, that Reason is as certain a Guide for rational Creatures, as Inftinct is for irrational? And consequently, that those Men are below Brutes, who, wanting Inftinct, will not govern themselves, nor suffer others to be govern'd by Reason? And

Tho' they place the higheft Value on themselves for being rational, and by virtue of it Religious *, yet are ever contriving how to hinder the free Exercise of Reason in religious Matters, as if Reason and Religion were irreconcileable; and that the Method God. proposes for this Discovory of all other Truth, was a moit certain Way to

con-
Exercife of Reafon ♦, yet now, God be thank'd, there are thofe among them, who dare do it juftice.

That eminent Divine, Mr. S. Nye, tho' writing in defence of Revelation, fays, " 'Tis obvious to #> of Nat. every one, that natural Religion intimates to us, and Rev. Re* this done by us, is declar'd and comprehended in na-
*tural Religion *, God has inftucted all Men every where, in the whole of their Duty, by a connate
* c Light, even by the Talent of Reafon common to all." And,

The judicious Mr. Butler fays, " That nothing Serm. preach. can be more evident, than that exclusive of Re-
velation, Mankind can't be confider'd as a Crea-
ture left by his Maker to acl at random — but from his Make, Conftitution, or Nature, *
he is in the irrefleft and proper Senfe a Law to
"himfelf. There are as real, and the fame kind of *
Indications in Human Nature, that we were made *
for Society, and to do good to our Fellow-Crea-
tures, as that we were intended to take care of our Life, Health, and private Good."

B. If what you, and thefe reverend Authors fay, be true *, the Principles, on which all Religion is founded, muft be fo obvious, that all Men, even of the meaneft Capacity, may from thence difcern their Duty both to God and Man.

A, You fhall confefs there are fuch Principles, by my afking you a Queftion, or two : Is not the Foundation of all Religion, the believing there's only one felf-exiftent Being, to whom all others owe their Being, and their Continuance in Being ? And is it not as certain, as there is fuch a Being, that he did not create Mankind to fupply any Wants of his own ; or give them Rules for their Conduct, but to oblige

2 £2 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

oblige them to act for their common Good ? If then an Action is for their Good, is not that alone arr in-
fallible Teft of its being approv'd by God ? And if it tends to their Hurt, is not that as certain a Mark of its being difapproved by him ? But if it tends to neither, does not that sufficiently mew it to be neither approv'd, or difapprov'd ? Since it is as infconfient with the Goodnefs of God, to punifh Men for not doing an indifferent thing, as it is with his Wifdom, to reward them for doing it.
B. Tho' all rational Creatures, who, to their utmost, imitate their great Creator and Benefactor, in communicating Happiness to each other, do all that God requires of them *, yet 'tis on supposition, that they do not judge wrong in relation to their common Good.

A. If Men, according to the best of their Understanding, act for their common good, they then govern themselves by the same Rule God governs them *, their Will is the same with his, and they concur in the same Design with him: And should they, in some nice and difficult Cases, mistake in applying the Rule; yet in being entirely govern'd by it, they have done all that God requires *, who, having made Men fallible, will not impute to them want of Infallibility. And the best way not to mistake, in applying this Rule is to consider duly all Circumstances, and follow what upon the whole seems best. As this is the Rule both of God and Man, so it is in common to the Unlearned as well as Learned; for have not all alike Faculties given them by God, to distinguish between Good and Evil *, Right and Wrong i and to know, that, as they would not suffer wrong themselves, so they ought not to do wrong?

B. The common People may have sufficient Abilities to know their Duty to Man; but can they as well know what they owe to God?

J. In what Point is it, that Men of the meanest Abilities may not know their Duty *, whether it relate to God or Man? As to the first, can't they tell what Sentiments inspire them with Love and Reverence for the Deity? And need they much Reflection to know, that the more any Sentiments do this, the more they ought to be cherished? And that every Notion, which tends not to raise in them the higher! Conceptions of the divine Being, is derogatory to his Perfection; and that the higher! Honour and Worship they can render him, is solemnly to own him to be what he is? And that as they ought themselves to have the highest Ideas of Love and Veneration for their Creator and Benefactor, so they would on all proper Occasions endeavour to excite the same in others? And that as they cannot but feel, it would be in them affronting God, to offer him a Worship, which they believe he abhors? fo they must think it the fame in others?
As to their Duty to one another, can't they perceive, that 'tis fit in the nature of things, and agreeable to the Mind of their Creator, (who has endo w'd them with Reafon for this end) to introduce into his Creation as much Happinefs as they can by being ready to affiit, and prevent one another in all good Offices? And indeed, the reciprocal Duties are fo very evident, that even Children are fenfible of doing as they would be done unto; and the Mind, with the fame eafe, fees the Agreeablenefs or Difagreeablenefs of moral and immoral Actions; as the Eye discovers Agreeablenefs and Difagreeablenefs in outward Objects. And,

The meaner People are, and the lower their Station, the fewer are the things their Duty confifts in \ and thofe fo very plain that they cannot well midake, with relation either to God, or Man, were they not impos'd on by artful Men —, who, in all Ages and Places, have mixed with pure Religion, things tending, indeed, to their own Honour, and their own Good 5 but far from being -conference with the Honour of God, and the Good of Man •, and then pretended they were neceffary to influence the common People, who wpd not be fatisfy'd with plain,

2£4 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. i ji

plain, fimple Truths: And from this Source have ifTu'd out moft of thofe Abfurditites, which, to the Scandal of human Nature, have over-run Man-kind 5 and which, for the moft pft, were too sub-til and metaphyseal for the common People, if left to .themselves, ever to have thought of -, much lefs to have rais'd Commotions about them: They, it muft be own'd, Peace and Quiet being their Inte-reft, are naturally good Subjects and good Neigh-bours; and upon all Accounts moft ufeul MembrS of the Community; except when their Priests, on pretence of the good of the Church, work them up to Tumults, Mutiny, Sedition, and Rebellion •, be-cause their Governors presume* without their Leave, to give equal protection to all their Subjects, notwithstanding their different Opinions. And if we confult Ecclefiaftical Hiftory, we mall find the worft of Princes have been moft fure of their Aflif-tance, even in carrying on the vileft Defigns; pro-vided the Church found their Intereft m fo doing i And the beft, of their Oppofition, when they de-fign'd the Intereft of pure Religion, free from Priefftcraft and Superftition. And the Laity, cer-tainly, can't be too much upon their guard, when they find extraordinary Favours, (such as thofe in
a former Reign,) are design'd for the Clergy.

I do not wholly confine this Remark to the Priests of any one Religion; since by the Influence they have on the multitude, they have at all times done. Grotius de sufficient (Vitchefs. Hence Grotius says, "That Imper. fum. as Qnrtius obferv'd of old, the Multitude, en-Sacra ' c lr " ** nar ' d b y Superftition, are more apt to be go-

Sec. 13. " vern'd by their Priests than Princes; and that cc the Kings and Emperors have learnt this at their " coft --, infomuch that to produce Examples of <c this kind, wou'd in a manner be transcribing " the Hiftory of all Nations."

They, I think, wou'd do no small service to Mankind, who wou'd improve this Hint of Grotius, and mew how the Priests in all Religions, and in 2 all

Ch. 13. Chriftianify as-OM as the Creation, fjí all Times, have impos'd on the Credulity of the People; nor cou'd it but be very acceptable to a Clergy, who abhor all fuch vile Methods.

B. You all along argue, that the Rule of Action, in order to human Happinefs, being every where the fame; as founded on the Nature of God and Man, and the Relation we ftand in to him, and one another: True Religion, in all Places and Times, muft be ever the fame; Eternal, Univerfal and Unalterable: And fuch as every intelligent Creature, muft have fuflcient Underftanding to difcover, and Abilities to comply with, except we fuppofe a Being perfectly wise, and infinitely good, requires of his Creatures, things which he has not enabled them to know, or perform. And hence you chii-

A. I m order to mew the Abfurdfity of fuch Complaints, let me afk you, Had Mankind, before any traditional Religion commenc'd, any Religion, or not?

I t muft be own'd, that they had a Religion, which, as coming from the Author of all Perfection, muft, as worthy of its divine Original, be wholly perfect; nor cou'd there be a greater Mark of its
Perfection, than that of its being universal, unchangeable, and indelibly implanted in Human Nature.

A. I will not ask you, whether any Religion, that wants those marks of Perfection, can come, from a Being of infinite Perfection; but desire to know wherein the Perfection of this universal, and unchangeable Religion consists?

B. It can't be deny'd, that the End for which God implanted this Religion in human Nature, was to make Men happy here as well as hereafter - t (God's Will in relation to Man and human Nature).

5. We say, there was need of a new Religion, tho' the old was ever so perfect 5 because Men did not observe it.

A. If that was a Reason for a new Religion, we might expect new Religions daily. "But, as the Sherekh Ser-" "Referent Bishop of Bangor observes, tho' the World was the worse for abusing the Religion of Nature, an( * m *g nt want to ^ e reform'd by a di-reign Parts, " v * ne Jnfructor j yet the Religion of Nature was p. 14. " not the worfe for being abus'd, but still retain'd 46 its first Purity and Simplicity," and consequent-ly, its native Efficacy to make us happy. But Men not paying a due regard to this most perfect Reli-
gion, but mixing with it human Inventions, it might, then, be agreeable to the divine Goodnefs, to Tend Persons to recal them to a more strict Ob-
servation of it *, which, had it been observ'd, must have destroy'd all Contentions, but of outvying one another in all good Offices *> as the corrupting it has done the contrary.
Which Hypothecs, think you, is moft for the Honour of God, and the Good of Man; (thofe cer- 
tain Tefts by which we are to judge of the Truth of all Matters relating to Religion \) that all God's Laws fhou'd carry with them fuch evident marks of Goodnefs and Kindnefs for the whole Race of Mankind, as that Men of the meaneft Capacities, even tho' they can't read in their own native Lan-
guage, may know their Duty? Or that their Reli-
gion, and the Proofs on which it depends, ihou Id 
be originally writ in Languages they underftand not which, by putting all traditional Religions on a level, obliges them in every Country, to pin their

Ch. 13. Chrifiianky as Old as the Creation, 257

their Faith on Men, who are but too apt to abufe the Peoples Credulity to their own Profit?

B. There can he no doubt, but 'tis for the Ho-
nour of God, and the Good of Man, that all his Laws mould have fuch a Signature imprefs'd on them, as may fhow his infinite Wifdom and Good-

A. Yes, if they are all of a piece: And fince God has no other End in creating Mankind, but 
their Good; or in giving them Laws, but as they conduce to that Good; and has given, and requires 'em to ufe their Underftanding to diftinguifh be-
tween Good and Evil \ Men, in doing all the good they can, whether they know any thing of the In- 

Men, in doing all the good they can, whether they know any thing of the In-
fHtutions, which prevail in this, or that Age or Country, or not, fully anfwer the End of their Creation; and do in the beft manner recommend themselves to the Favour both of God and Man.

Without the common People are govern'd by thofe plain, obvious Principles I contend for, they would always be in a State of Uncertainty; fince, as Bifhop Taylor juftly obferves, and all Hillory con-

B. Is there nothing in'Theology, but what Divines

firms, " There's no Church that is in Prosperity, Dedication to " but alters her Doctrine every Age*, either by Liberty of 
" bringing in new Doctrines, or by contradicting Prophefy, p. 
*« her old *, which mews they are not fatisfy'd with 32 ' 
«c themfelves, nor with their own ConferTions." 
" Let none of the Heathen, fays an ancient Church- Evag. Ecclef. 
" Hiftoriant, deride us, becaufe the latter Bifhops" Hift.l . i.e. u. 
" depofe the former, and always find out fomthingP- 26 7- **• 
H which they add to the Faith."

B. Is there nothing in'Theology, but what Divines
Whatever Noise Ecclesiastics make about Creeds, or other Fundamentals, there's very often

S some-

258 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Something else at the Bottom; as whoever is conversant in Church-History must know: However to Expos. of 39 give one Instance, "When the Eastern and Western em Art. p. 70. « Churches in the ninth Century, fell into an Humour of quarrelling upon the account of Jurisdiction, after some time of Anger, in which they seem'd to be searching for matter to reproach each other with: they found out this difference. The Greeks reproach'd the Latins, for adding to the Faith about the Proceffion of the Holy Ghost; and corrupting the ancient Symbol; and that too contrary to the Decree of a general Council. The Latins', on the other hand charg'd them for de-tracking from the Dignity of the Son. And this became the chief point in Controversy between them." I can't but mention Bishop Burnet's Remark on this Dispute, "We of this Church, says be, tho' we abhor the Cruelty of condemning the Eastern Churches for such a difference, yet do receive the Creed according to the usage of the Western Churches." Which is in effect, damning that Creed which damns the Eastern Churches.

And it's plain from Church-History, that Creeds were the spiritual Arms, with which contending Parties combated each other; and that those who were the majority invented such unscriptural Terms, as they thought their Adversaries would most scruple, in order to the dripping them of their Preferments; and it would have been well if they had stuck there, and not made use of more cruel Methods.

None, who consider how differently the Circumstances of human Affairs, which are continually changing, affect Men; but must fee 'tis fcarce possible, that the Doctrines which were originally taught, or the Practice originally us'd in any Institution, shou'd long continue the same; nothing being more easy than to vary the Signification of Words: The
infinite Divisions which prevail'd, even in the primitive and apostolical Times, sufficiently prove this
without

Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 259

without having recourse to those Alterations and Additions, which the Clergy have since been continually making in Christianity •, especially in the Greek and Latin Churches. But we need go no further back than the Reformation: Did not the who^ Body of the People, Laity as well as Clergy, in the compass of twelve Years, change their Religion three times? And it wou'd make no small Book, to shew how since that time, our Clergy, tho' their Cat- vinistical Articles continue the same, have vary'd, both as to Doctrines and Discipline. What a quick change have we (ttn of those passive Principles, once the Characteristic of the Church? And if we judge by the present Disputes now on foot, the Clergy are not like to be more fix'd for the future. But of all Clergy -men, they, certainly, are not upon any account to be rely'd on; who, tho' by their whole Conduct they shew their great Zeal for Persecution, yet talk against an implicit Faith, and recommend Christianity as requiring no further Favour than a fair and impartial Enquiry into its Grounds and Doctrines. This not only mews their great Hypocrisy, but that they are more cruel than those, that expressly forbid all Examination •, since they firft tempt Men to examine, and then punish them for so doing, if they presume to differ from their Leaders; and those that forbid all Examination can do more. And herein they ad: the part of Satan, firft tempt People, and then punish them for being tempted; fo that, tricly speaking, 'tis not always true, that Priests of all Religions are the same; fuch hypocri-
tical, percuting Priests are worfe than all others; who, while they charge the Papi^ or Mahometan* with a Confciousness of his Religion's being a Cheat, because he will not permit it to be examin'd —, not only practive the fame themselves, but contend 'tis neccessary for the Support of true Religion.

How easily the Sense of Words may be miftaken,

the Apoftles themselves are a fufficient Inftance \ for

had they the fame Ideas of the Words which Jefus

S 2 fpake.
zto Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

fpake, as Jefus himfelf had, 'tis impoflible that after three Years con verfe they fou'd be ignorant of the End of his Minion : And if his familiar Friends, who daily canvou'sd with him in the fame Lan- guage, and had every minute an Opportunity of being fatisfied of their Doubts, cou'd yet fo grofly mistake \ well may we at this diftance of Time, if we are to be govern'd by Words, and not by the unalterable Reafon of things : And how long was it, till they understood the meaning of Teach all Na- tions ', Preach the Go/pel to every Creature ? And St. Peter himfelf needed a Miracle to open hisUnder- standing, to comprehend a moft evident Truth.

Afts 10. 34, cffce n Peter opened his Mouth , and faid, Of a truth ,

35 ' I perceive that God is 710 Re f peeler of Perfons : But

in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Right ecufnefs, is accepted with him. Till this hap- pen'd, he, tho' fill'd with the Holy Ghoft, confin'd Salvation to the Name of a Perfon -, viz: the Name of Chrift. There is none other Name under Heaven

Aih 4. 1 2. given amongfi Men, whereby we muft be faved.

Had there been but one Language, and a Book writ in that Language, in indelible Characters, (fo that there cou'd be none of thefe thirty thoufand various Readings, which are own'd to be crept into the New Tenement) and all cou'd have acces to it ; yet even then, considering how uncertain the meaning of Words is, and the interef of designing Men to put a wrong fenfe on them *, it muft be morally impofTible this Religion could long con- tinue the fame. And,

On Qalat. 1. ff If, as St. Jerom fays, a falfe Interpretation of " the Gofpel of Chrift, may make it become the " Gofpel of Men-, nay, which is worfe, of Devils j, how can they, who, not understanding the Original, muft truft to the Interpretation of others, be cer- tain ; had they not a fufficient inward Light to di- rect them, what Doctrines, are from God, what from Men, and what from Devils?

Is it not notorious, that Popiwh Priefts, not to mention

Ch. 13. Chrifiianity as Old as the Creation. 26 l

mention other perfecuting Priefts, have propagated
fuch deftructive Notions, that if the Devil himfelf
had been to contrive a Religion, he cou'd not have
invented more pernicious?

Words are the arbitrary Marks of Mens Ideas,
and the Meaning of Words, as well as the Words
themselves, are perpetually changing -, and 'tis as
impposible to fix one as the other. We fee by the
innumerable verbal Ditputes, which happen even
among learned Men, how different their Ideas are ;
and perhaps, there are not three Perfons, who,
when they talk abftractedly have precifely the fame
Ideas, tho' they ufe the fame Words. No one can
doubt of this, who confiders how much the Divines
of the fame Church differ in explaining what they
mean by Divine Perfon, Efj'ence, Trinity, Meffah,
Incarnation, Hypofitical Union, Original Sin, Sa-
\ntisfaction, Jujlification, Predeftination, Grace, Free-
will, and all other Technical Terms, if* I may fo
call them. Bifhop Taylor quotes Ofiander for fay-
ing, " There are twenty feveral Opinions concern-
\ning Jujlification, all drawn from the Scriptures by P- 45 2 -
" the Men only of the Auguftine Confeffion •, and
" there are sixteen feveral Opinions concerning
" Original Sin , and as many Diftinclions of the
" Sacraments as there are Seels of Men that difagree
" about them."

That excellent CntickDaille fays, " We have,
" indeed, thefe Words Pope, Patriarch, Ma/; , Ob-^tm\r
" lation, Station, Procefdion, Mortal Sins, Penance, c . 5, p . I49 ." "
" Confeffion, Satisfaction, Merit, Indulgence, as the
" Ancients had, and make ufe of an infinite number
" of the like Terms; but underftand them in a
" Age is remov'd from theirs."

To give one remarkable In (ranee of this nature,
the primitive Fathers did not believe a Spirit to be
immaterial -, but only a thinner (bit of Body : And
this they did not only apply to the Souls of Men and
Ahgefeg "'who, tley ilipoos'd, - lav with Women, and
S 3 ' got

262 Chrijliamty as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

got Children in abundance ;) but they thought that
Cotell Not. God himfelf was corporeal. Melito, who was be-

ApoftT 240 liev ' d tobe aPro P het > and Aourifh'd about 170,
• p ' 249 ' wrote a Book about the Imbodied God. And Tertul-
Tertul. adver, H an f avS5 G'i s negabit Deum corpus effe, etti Deus
rax. c. 7. Spiritus eft ? And again, Nihil incorporate nifi quod
non eft. And St. Hilary, even in the fourth Century,
rt ^ arne a ^ rms 9 there's nothing but what is corporeal. And
I n fhort, there are fcarce any Words in any one Language, except of such things as immediately ftrike the Senfes, that are adequately anfwer'd in another, fo as exactly to comprehend the fame Ideas; and if the Ideas, are only fewer, or more, what confufion may not that occafion? How great, and frequent muft the mistakes then be, in tranflating the antiquated Languages of People, who liv'd at a vaft didance of time, as well as in Countries far remote; and affefted hyperbolical, parabolical, myftical, allegorical, and typical ways of expressing themfelves, as oppofite to the ufage in other parts, as Eaft is to Weft? And not only this, but it will be likewife necerary to have an accurate knowledge of their Manners, Cuftoms, Traditions, Philosophy, Religious Notions, Seels, Civil and Ecclefaiftical Polity, of all which the common People know as little, as they do of the original Languages; who having very obfeure, and incompetent Conceptions of the principal Words, and Phrafes us'd in the Verfions, their Religion muft needs be a very odd Jumble of confus'd and inconfiftent Notions, were it to depend on Words, and their precife Meaning; and not on the things themfelves, and their relations, which are plain and obfvious to common Ca-

pacity's, they wou'd be in a manner entirely go-

vern'd by Sounds; fome of which, fuch, as they us'd to hear fpoken of with RefpecT, they wou'd highly reverence*, v/hile others, tho' of the fame fignification, they wou'd as much abhor, till Cu-

ftom had made them familiar.

* [ " Sure lam, fays Mr. Locke, that the Signi- Chap. 9. p: " fication of Words in all Languages, depending 2 7 6 > 2 77-

ft very much on the Thoughts, Notions and Ideas' z ^ of him that ufes them, muft unavoidably be of " great uncertainty to Men of the fame Language, H. and Country. This is fo evident in the Greek
Authors, that he who peruses their Writings, will find in almost every one of them, a distinct Language, tho' the same Words. But when to this natural difficulty in every Country, there may be added different Countries, and different Ages, where the Speakers had very different Notions, Tempers, Customs, Ornaments, and Figures of Speech, &c. every one of which influenced the Signification of their Words then, tho' to us now, they are lost and unknown; it would become us to be charitable one to another in our Interpretations or Misunderstandings of those ancient Writings. We ought to magnify God's Goodness 9 that he has spread before all the World, such legible Characters of his Works and Providence, and given all Mankind so sufficient a Light of Reason, that they to whom this written Word never came, could not (whenever they set themselves to search) either doubt of the Being of a God, or of the Obedience due to him.)

Were Men not to be govern'd by Things, but Words, the Consequence now would be much worse than what happen'd on the Confusion of Languages at Babel, because no written Religion, for want of an universal Language, could become universal *, and People must, without a competent Skill in dead Languages, be obliged to take their Religion on Trust, from Men too, as subject to be deceiv'd, as they are often ready to deceive: Nay, the Universality of Language, could it have persisted, would have done so in the Antediluvian World, and before the Confusion of Language, which happen'd at Babel.

If Skill in Languages could even make the Learned certain, how comes it to pass, that what goes for Orthodox in one Age, shall be Heterodox in another? What is fundamental in one Church, be damnable Error in another? Nay, must not every one, if at all vers'd in Church History, say with Mr. Relig. of Physic's: I see plain, and with my own Sea. 6 C ' E ' 3 ? yeS ' 5 hat tillCre are P P eS a g ainft Po P es > Coun"
"cils againft Councils; fome Fathers againft others •,
"the fame Fathers againft themselves-, a Confent
"of Fathers of one Age, againft a Confent of Fa-
"thers of another Age ; the Church of one Age,
"againft the Church of another Age?" And do -
not the Clergy themselves think there's fuch Un-
certainty in the Scripture-Language, even in Things
of the greateft moment ; when they generally ufe
unfcriptural Terms to exprefs thoife things ? And
that they can't even here agree among themselves,
there needs no better Proof than the Difputes of
our Divines about Fundamentals ; tho' they are, to
prevent all Controverfies of this nature, enacled,
and guarded with penal Laws ; and all the Clergy,
at every turn, oblig'd to fubferibe 'em in the fame
Words. And,

I cou'd name two eminent Bimops, who, if they
were to give a true account of their religious Te-
nents, 'tis thought, wou'd appear to differ very
widely, even in what themselves term Fundamen-
tals. But are Aot fuch Differences utterly unavoid-
able, as long as Men found their Religion on Words
and Phrafes thus dubious •, and not on the eternal
Reafon, and unalterable Relations of Things, ob-
vious to the meaner! Capacity ?

Not-

Ch. 13. Chrijliianity as Old as the Creation. 26$

Not w iTHSTANDiNC the wide Difference there
is between all Chriftian Seels, from the Papifi
down to the Quaker ; I can't help thinking, that an
infinitefly wise and good God has adapted the Rules
and Evidences, of what he really requires from
Mankind, to their general Capacity ; and that the
Certainty of every Command, muft be equal to the
Importance of the Duty. How can we fuppofe
fome of the moif necefiary Duties of Religion, are
only to be found in voluminous Books, which the
greateft Part of Mankind have, perhaps, never
heard of; and of thoife that have, not one in a thou-
fand understanda a Tittle of the Languages they are
writ in ; or is capable of examining into thoife Re-
cords, from which the Authority of thefe Books
are to be deriv'd ?

Is not that an admirable Hypof he/is, which, tho*
it fuppofes God has endow'd Mankind with Rea-
fon to enable them to diftinguifh between Religion
and Superftitition ; yet admits that almoft all Man-
kind are incapable of doing it, but muft alike, in
all Countries, depend on the Authority of Men,
hir'd to maintain the traditional Religion of the Places where they live; who, perhaps, will tell them, that there was a Time (happy thofe who liv'd in it) when Religion was fuitèd to the Capa-
cities of the Vulgar; being preach'd by infpir'd Men in the Languages they underftood, and Miracles for their Conviction wrought in their Sight *

but that now the Scene was entirely chang'd, they had no Miracles, no infallible Men to have recourfe to, to fet them right *, and that their Religion by diftance of Time was not only become obfeure, but that the whole of it, and the Proofs on which its Validity depends, are writ in Languages, of which the People underftand not a Word; and that * the Evidence arifing from particular Types and Bp. of London's Prophecies, is now, by length of Time, and di-


tc

ftance of Place, and change of Cuftoms, become^" obfeure and difficult to the Generality of People,

i4 and

£66 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

*f and cannot be thoroughly difcufs'd without a " great Variety of Knowledge concerning the an-
" cient Jewijh Cuftoms, and the Authority of their * 6 Writings, and the exact Calculation of Time." Which is in effect to fuppofe, that the Religion of the Vulgar muft confift, in taking the Words of their Teachers, however divided among themselves, for the Word of God; and their Translations, for Law and Gofpel; and that believing in them, is having a divine Faith: Tho' one wou'd think, whatever depended on human Traditions and Trans-

fations, cou'd be but a human Faith.

B. Tho' fomething of this nature is unavoid-
able, where Religion is writ in antiquated Lan-
guages; yet in the main, are we not now more certain of the Truth of our Traditional Religion, than thofe who liv'd in former Ages; we having the Authority of every past Age in Confirmation of its Truth ?

A. Mr.W", fpeaking concerning AJJent in
1. 4. c. 16. Matters, wherein Teftimony is made ufe of, fays % Sett. 10. p. " I think it may not be amifs to take notice of a
That tho' the attested Copy of a Record be good Proof, yet the Copy of a Copy never so well attested, and by never so credible Witnesses, will not be admitted as a Proof in Judicature. This is so generally approv'd as reasonable, and suited to the Wisdom and Caution to be us'd in our Enquiry after material Truths, that I never yet heard of any one that blamed it. This Practice, if it be allowable in the Decisions of Right arfd Wrong, carries this Observation along with it y viz. That any Testimony, the fur-cc ther off it is from the original Truth, the lefs Force and Proof it has. The Being and Existence of the Thing itself, is what I call the original Truth. A credible Man vouching his Know-ledge of it, is a good Proof: But if another, equally credible, do witn'es it . from his Report, the

Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 267

the Teftimony is weaker - , and a third that attefts the Hear-fay of an Hear-fay, is yet lefs confi-derable. So that in Traditional Truths, each Re-move weakens the Force of the Proof. And the more Hands the Tradition has rucceflively pafted through, the lefs Srrength and Evidence does it receive from them. This is certain, thatib. p. 383.

cc what in one Age was affirmed upon flight^ p- 563. c Grounds, can never after come to be more va-** 1 l ■. " led in future Ages, by being often repeated, I hope you will pardon me, if I presume to think, that God, at all Times, is fo good and impartial, that his Will, on which the Happinefs of Mankind at all Times depends, is at all Times equally knowable; and confequently, mu ft be founded on what is always alike difcernible ; the Nature and Reafon of Things. Can a Religion, defign'd for every One, not be within the Reach of every One ? Or can That, which above all Things it concerns ALL Men to know, not be knowable by A LL?

id, quod Hor - l '•

Mque pauperibus prodeft, locupletibus <eque \ p * l ' z >

JEque negleclum pueris fenibufque nocebit.
Hoc opus, hoc ftudium parvi proper emus &? ampli\ \> t gp t , 2 $
Si patriae volumus, ft nobis vivere cari.

And certainly, nothing can be a greater Libel
on the true Religion, than to fuppofe it does not contain fuch internal Marks, as will, even to the meane! Capacity, diftinguifh it from all falf Reli-
gions; fo as that a Man, tho* unable to read in his Mother-Tongue, may, without pinning his faith on any Sett of Priests, know what God requires of him.

I have faid nothing of the Plainnefs, Simplicity, and even Univerfality of Religion, but what is a-
greeable to the Decription, which St. Paul, from the Prophet Jeremiah* gives of the Gofpel-Difpen-
tion i the exprefs Terms of which run thus :

will

268 Chriftianity as Old as the Great ion, Gh. 13,

Heb. 8. 10, will put my Laws into their Mind* and write them in V' their Hearts; and I will be unto them a God, and they

j -i '*w*'Jh a il he to me a People: And they (hall ?tct teach every Man his Neighbour, and every Man his Brother, say-
ing, Know the Lord -, for all jh all know me, from the leaft to the great efl. As thefe Words are too plain to need a Comment, fo I mall defer drawing any Con-
sequences from them, till I have firft endeavour'd to free the Scripture from that Obfcurity, in whicji artful Men have involv'd it. And,

I mall, now, by way of Recapitulation, mention what Mr. Barbeyrac> a Perfon of no fm
all Note in the learned World, fays concerning the Practical Science of Morality: " None can reafonably doubt,

Historical and
Critical Ac-
count of the
Science of
Morality, in
his prefatory
Difcourfe to
Mr. Puffin-
dorf y of the
Law of Nature
and Nations,
Engl. Tranfl.
Seel. 1. p. 1.
col. 1, 2.

but that every Man, who will be happy, muft
needs, in order to make himself so, regulate his
Conduct after some certain Manner; and that
God, as the Author and Parent of all human
Race, does prescribe to all Men without Excep-
tion, the Duties which tend to procure them that
Happiness, which they so passionately seek after.
Now, from hence it necessarily follows, that the
natural Principles of this Science are such as may
be easily discover'd; and such too, as are pro-
portionate to the Capacities of all Sorts of Per-
foms: So that to be instructed in this Science,
there will be no occasion to mount up to Heaven,
or to have from thence any extraordinary Reve-
lation for that purpose. It must be own'd,
to the eternal Glory of the supreme Legiflator
of Mankind, as well as to the utter Confusion of
themselves; that none can complain without In-
justice, that God has given him Laws, either
impracticable, or inviron'd with such Obscurity,
as cannot be penetrated by one who really has
his Duty at heart, notwithstanding all his Pains
and Application. This the wisest Heathens have
acknowledg'd; (and) the Stoicks, who make
Morality their principal Study, maintained,' that
their Philosophy was not above the Reach of Wo-
"men

Ch. 13. Chrijlíanity as Old as the Creation. 269
<"men and Slaves: and that as the Way to Vertue
"lies open to all Men without Distinction; fo there
"is no Eflate, or Condition, with peculiar Privi-
icleges exclusive of others, as to the Faculty of
"knowing the Principles and Rules, as well of
16 thofe Duties which are common to all → as of
"thofe which belong to each particular. The
"Idea of a Creator, boundlef in Power, WifdomSeft. 3. p. 10,
t and Goodnefs •, and the Idea of ourfelves, as in- col. 2.
r* telligent, reaforable, and fociable Creatures:
"Thefe two Ideas, I fay, if well look'd into, and
"compar'd together in their whole Extent, will
"always furnifh us with fteady Grounds of Duty,
"and fure Rules of Conduct; notwithstanding it
"may sometimes fo fall out, that, for want of Care and Attention, we may, in some uncommon Cases, not know how to apply them -, or cannot methodically demonstrate the necessary Connexion of some remote Consequences, with the first Principles of Morality. *Tis cer-seft. 32.?.

"tain, that the entire Conformity of the Christians; 88, Morality, with the clearer! Dictates of right Rea-son, is one of the most convincing Proofs of the Divinity of the Christian Religion *, as has been acknowledg'd by all, who have wrote with any Solidity on that Subject. And if we duly weigh, and consider it, we shall find, that this is the Proof, which of all others is the most affecting; and the best proportion'd to the common Capacities of the Bulk of Mankind.

"[Who] When they come at length to consider the Evangelical Morality, and find it entirely conformable both to their true Interests, and to all those Principles, of which every Man has by Nature the Seeds in his own Heart -, they can not then help concluding, that the Author of it 5C muli: necessarily be that very Being, who has given Life, and brought 'em into this World * c only to make 'em happy; provided they will not be wanting to themselves, but contribute on their part, all that lies in their own Power, to wards the Attainment of their own Felicity."

I might here commend to your Perusal, what he, in several Sections, affirms of the "Extreme Neg-" lice of the Publick Ministers of Religion, in cul-
ed. 12. p. " tivating the Science of Morality; which, as he §6. col. 1, 2. <c --fysi being by them almost banim'd out of the World, took sanctuary among the Laicks, or un-
" dignify'd Men of Letters: who gave it a much Sea.n.p.36." better Reception. No sooner did that ad-
and Peace, appear in the World, but the Eccle-
ciafticks, instead of returning Thanks to the Au-
thor for it, every where declared against him;
ct and his Book was not only put into the expurga-
tory Index of the Reman Catholick Inquifitors, but
many, even Prot eftant Divines, laboured to cry
it down. And thus it far'd too with Mr. Puff en-
cidorff's Book of The Law of Nature and Nations;
cc the Jefuits at Vienna caus'd it to be prohibited;
and many Prot eftant Divines, both of Sweden and
Germany, did their beft, to make this excellent
"Work mare every where elfe the fame Fate."

B. I f thefe great Men were thus dealt with, for
fetting the Science of Morality in its due Light; can
you, who place Religion in the Practice of Morali-
ty in obedience to the Will of God, and fuppofe
there can be no other Diffinction between Morality
and Religion, than that the former is acting ac-
cord ing to the Reafon of Things confider'd in them-
elves •, the other acting according to the fame Rea-
fon of Things confider'd as the Will of God: Can
you, I fay, hope to efcape being pelted by fome of
the fame Profeflion for fuch a Crime as This?

A. That, I muft own, wou'd be a Favour I
neither hope, nor wifh for; fince I am fenfibJe,
the fhewing Religion to be no arbitrary Inftitution,
but founded on the Nature of Things, and their
Relations, obvious to the Capacity of all that dare
ufe their Reafon \ muft provoke all Ecclefiafticks of
what

Ch. 13. Chrijlianiiy as Old as the Creation. 271

what Denomination foever, who expect a blind
Submiſſion from the Laity: Tho' was it not for the
Authority, that the High-Church Clergy among the
Reform'd lay claim to, when from Protestant Prin-
ciples they draw Popijh Conclusions; the Pretences
of the Popijh Prients for the Neceflity of an infallible

The Subftance of what the Papifts fay, is, in
ihort, " That if the Principles of Proteftant s, rela-
ting to private Judgment, are true, the Bulk of
Mankind can't go beyond fuch plain Rules of
Religion, as carry their own Evidence with them;
" fince otherwife they vvoou'd be oblig'd to admit
" things, about which they are incapable of judging.

" If the Religion of Peaftants and Mechanicks,
Men and Maid-Servants, the Ignorant and Illiterate, must depend on Books written in antiquated Languages, of which, they understand not one Word; and are incapable of judging of the historical Evidences of remote Facts, on which the Authority of those Books is founded, nor can know whether a Religion thus founded, has been faithfully convey'd down to them:

Must they not either be of that traditional Religion, which obtains in the Country where they live, fas none is without one? Or else must there not be some Persons appointed to judge for them in Matters of Religion, in whose Determination they may safely acquiesce? If this be Popery, there can be no Mean between Popery and Natural Religion.

If, in the earlist Times, Christians were split into many Sects, and each Sect had their particular Scriptures; are the common Christians now (when all the historical Evidence is lost but of one Side only, and that too they understand not) competent Judges in this Matter? Or to condescend to Particulars, are they capable of judging in the Controversies between Catholics and Protestants about the Number of Canonical Books, Oral Tradition.

Tradition.

272 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Tradition, the Authority of the Church, the uninterrupted Succession, and a thousand other Things; especially such as relate to Mysteries about which they are so far from being competent Judges that they are not capable of understanding even the Terms, in which the Learned choose to express themselves, when they endeavour to explain their inexplicable Mysteries?

Ought not the Illiterate, if they had a just Sense of their own Ignorance, to have been frightened upon their pretended Reformation, at the very thoughts of leaving a Church, to which their Ancestors had been so long united, (and which most of their Adversaries own'd to be a true Church, and deriv'd their Authority from her,) upon the Account of Opinions, they were no more capable of judging -, than they were of judging, after they had left the Church, to which of the numerous Sects they shou'd join themselves?

All Protestant Churches have taken the same Methods to make People pay an absolute Sub-
mimon to their Decifion ; as the Church of Rome,
by excommunicating and condemning, when
they had Power, to perpetual Imprifonment j or
otherwise punifhing thofe who wou'd not re-
nounce their private Opinions, when contrary
to their Decifions j which is either condemning
< their own Principles, or their own Practices fo
directly oppofite to their Principles : But if this
Power of judging for the People is, as the Pro-
tefiant Clergy pretend, fo necerTary to prefer ve
+ c Unity, that it muft belong to every particular,
and Proteftant Church, tho' founded on the
*B Breach of Catholick Unity *, how came the
Church itfelf, before the pretended Reformation,
to want this Power fo necerfary to preferve itfelf?
B. Proteftant Divines, when prefs'd on this Head,
ufually diftinguim between a juft Authority, and
an abfolute Authority.

A. Can the Church of Rome, fay its Votaries^
claim a greater Authority, than the Church of Eng-
land does in her Canons of 1600 j where me declares,
" All are ipfo fafto excommunicate, who (hall Can. 3.
" affirm She is not an Orthodox and Apoftolical
" Church j not to be abfolv'd, but by the Arch-
" bimop, after having publickly renounc'd this
" their impious Error : " And after the fame man-
ner excommunicates " All, who (hall affirm the
" Articles of 1562, made to avoid Diverfity of Opi-
" nions, ulla ex parte flip erftitiofos aut erroneos exiftere ;
" All that fpeak againft her Rites and Ceremonies, Can. 6, &c.
" or condemn her Ordination^ and her Diicipline," (though (he herfelf complains of Want of godly Comminution.
Diicipline) " by Bifhops, Deans, Archdeacons, &c.
" All Srhifmaticks, and all Congregations not efma-
" blifh'd by Law, if they aflume to themfelves the
?f Name of a True, and Lawful Church" Does not
this, fay the Papifts, (hew, That tho- the Prin^
ciples of the Church of England were anti-popijh ;
yet that her Practices, her Laws Civil as well asSeeMr.ZorJA
Ecclefiatical, before the Revolution, were Popifh ; 3 d Letter for
fince the Laws againft all Separatifis then extended T "l«« tl0n i> to the Lofs, not only, of Eftate and Liberty \ but '*' " 12
even of Life itfelf ?

From thefe, and fuch like Reafons, the Papifts
concluded, that if the People are oblig'd to go a
Step beyond the plain and obvious Rules of Natu-
ral Religion, there is, in the Judgment of all
Churches whatever, a Neceflity for them to have
recourfe to others to judge for them -, unlefs there
are to be as many Religions as Judges.

5. How did our Reformers answer these Objections?

A. They being chiefly concern'd for the Authority of the Scripture, and withal willing in their Disputes with the Papists to support private Judgment, said, "That the Scriptures themselves, from their innate Evidence, and by the Illumination of the same Holy Spirit which indited them,

T « suffi-

274 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

" diffidently shew'd themselves to be the Will of God."

The Dutch Confession published in 1566, in the Name of the Belgian Churches, after having recited a Catalogue of the Books of Scripture, says

Harm.ofCon-"These we receive as the only sacred and canoni-p. 12, 13. fC n « lca j g 00 } cs . not Decau f e the Church receives

" them as such *, but because the Holy Spirit wit-H. neTes to our Consciencies, that they proceed " from God -, and themselves testify their Au-H thority.

The Galilean Churches, in their Confession, go somewhat further, not only, " declaring their Faith Art of Harm." in the Scriptures, to depend on the Testimony of Confef.p. « the internal Perfuasion of the Spirit; but that IO * " thereby they know the Canonical from the Ec-

" cleftaftical, i. e. Apocryphal Books." And,
The Aflembly of Divines at Wefiminfter main-Chap. 1. tain'd, that cc Our full Perfuasion and Affurance Se&. 5. «. f the infallible Truth thereof (the Scriptures)

" is from the inward Work of the Holy Spirit, " bearing Witnefs by, and with the Words in our « Hearts."

As to foreign Divines, I shall only mention that Infttitut. great Reformer Calvin° who says, " All muft al-Chrift. Relig. AC low, that there are in the Scriptures manifest

1. i.e. 7. Sedt. a Evidences of God's speaking in them. The

*" ^ " Majefty of God in them will prefently appear to ff every impartial Examiner, which will extort our " Affent: So that they a6b prepofterously, who
endeavour by any Argument to beget a solid Credit to the Scriptures. The Word will never meet with Credit in Men's Minds, 'till it be seal'd by the internal Testimony of the Spirit who wrote it."

Our learned Whitaker in his Controversy about the Scripture against Bell armine gives this Account of the Doctrines of the Church: "The Sum, says Controv. de " he" Q f our Opinion is, that the Scriptures have tTi"^fe" all their Authoricy and Credit from themselves; 3 * ' p * ' l " that Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation, 27/J that they are to be acknowledg'd and receiv'd, not because the Church has appointed Or com- manded so, but because they came from God; eC but that they came from God, cannot be cer- tainly known by the Church, but from the Holy Ghost?" And, Indeed, our Church supposes no Man can be a good Christian, without being inspir'd; by say- ing, Works done before the Grace of Christ, and (fo Artie. 13. Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God: yea, — we doubt not, but that they have the Nature of Sin. And, As to the Difenters, I mail only quote Dr. Owen, a Man not long since very eminent among them, who is as zealous in maintaining this Opin- ion as any of the firft Reformers; his Words are, Dr. Owe*** "« The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament"J" * "( the " do abundantly, and uncontrollably manifest the Scriptures to be the Word of the living God; foe. 2. Sea. 5. c that merely on the Account of their own Propo- & c. 4, 5. " fail to us, in the Name and Majefty of God as " fuch, without the Contribution of Help, or Af- Mittance from Tradition, Church, or any thing ** else without themselves, we are oblig'd upon " the Penalty of eternal Damnation, to receive cc them with that Subjection of Soul, which is due to xc the Word of God. The Authority of God mining f* in them, they afford unto us all the divine Evi- dence of themselves, which God is willing to grant
us, or can be granted to us, or is any way need ful for us." And left the Quakers should take it amifs, if while I quote other Seels, I shou'd overlook them - R.Barcklay says, "How neceffary 'tis! P-3-^-70» " to feek the Certainty of the Scripture from the Spiri rit, the infinite Janglings, and endlesf Contelbis of thofe who feek their Authority elfe where, do witnefs to the Truth thereof: " And then proceeds to prove thofe infinite Janglings, and endlesf Confefts.

Ta Ths

276 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. i$*

The Reform'd wou'd have argu'd unanfwera bly, had they contented themfelves with faying, that there are no Doctrines of a divine Original contain'd in the Gofpel-Difpenfation, but what by their innate Excellency are knowable to be fuch • as being writ in our Minds, and put into our Hearts by God himfelf - as is expreffly declared by Jcr. 31. 33. the Prophet Jeremiah, and repeated and re-affer ted

Jo n 6. 45. q ur Divines, it feems, at Jail found out, that the Reformers, and their Succcefsors, had embrac'd Chriftianity on fuch Grounds, as they believ'd wou'd equally ferve any other Religion, where there was a ftrong Perfuafion -, and being zealous for certain things, which do not carry any internal Marks of their Truth; or in other Words, of being taught of God, they fell into ftrange Inconfiften cies; fometimes talking like Hobbits, of the Power of the Magiftrate; fometimes like Papifts, of the Authority of the Church in religious Matters; and fometimes maintaining both, and private Judgment too, in the fame Difcourfe, if not in the fame Section; which made their Adverfaries treat them as a Pack of tricking, chicaning Wretches, who had no regard to Truth, or Conftency, or any thing but their private Intereft.

The Opinion, now, which feems to be efploy'd by fome, who wou'd be thought the only True Church-men, is, what the learned Dr. Roger; maintains; who, tho' he agrees with the Papifts, that the People are incapable of judging for them felves in mort Points of Religion *, yet, to do him Juftice, he puts the Church of Rome but upon a Level with all other Churches of what Religion ever, that chance to be uppermost; for he lays it Pref. to Dr. down as a Principle, " That tho' no Man ought Rogtrfes 8 Sev upon any Authority to believe Contradictions, or mons, p. 53, tc pj. f e f s a n.Aflent to evident Falfhoods, yet in " Queftions, where he muft in the Event be de-
iC. terminated by some Authority or other, he may rea-

«* fonably

Cb. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 277

** fonably prefer the Authority appointed by pub-
44 lick Wisdom, and may justly be requir'd fo to

<c do. " The Bulk of Mankind are manifestly lb. p. 55.

'• unable to form a Judgment either of the Argu-
" ments by which he (his Antagonist) endeavours
iC to subvert our Religion, or establish his own;
" whether they adhere to us, or go to him, they
<c must unavoidably rely on his or our Authority,
" for the Truth of the Suggestions on which their
cc Conclusion depends; and we presume our Word
f4 will go as far as his." This is asserting that Peo-
ple are oblig'd to take their Religion on Trust,
and then to change it as often as there's any
Change in the State—Religion *, or as often as they
change their Residence; and in all these Changes
to be govern'd by Men, who are hir'd not to find
out Truth, but to make that Religion, to which
their Preferments are annex'd, to pass for true.
And if People will not be govern'd, the Legislature,
or in the Doctor's Phrase, Publick Wisdom may justly
require them so to do. Nor is the Matter mended,
by excepting Contradictions and evident Falshoods;
since here too, if private Persons and Authority
differ, publick Wisdom will certainly be on the Side
of the Authority it sets up; and 'tis in such Things
that the publick Wisdom in most Christian Coun-
tries has Exerted itself with the utmost Cruelty.
So that the whole Question between the Papists and
the Doctor (both Sides agreeing that Men can't
believe Contradictions and evident Falshoods; and
that there are Things, which the People are in-
capable of knowing; or if known, can't judge
whether they are true or not; ) is, on whom the
People in these Points must pin their Faith? Whe-
ther" there are certain Handing Judges appointed by
Christian, who shall infallibly lead them into the
Truth? Or whether in every Christian Country,
the People are bound to be of the Religion of those
fallible, not to say, self-interested Guides, Publick
Wisdom has authoris'd. Here it must be confess'd,
T 3 the,

278 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,
the Doctor is against the Pope of Rome* but 'tis
to fet himfelf up in his ftead •, and he accordingly maintains, that thofe who are committed to his Vindic.ofCi-
care, are in Things of which they can’t judge, vil Eftabhih. tọ follow his Judgment •, and fays, " tho’ he may ¥’ 30 5' " miftake, and in confequence of it miflead them \ cc yet they will have this Defence before Chrift, " _ That they have fought his Will in the Methods " which he has directed -, and where they wanted " a Guide, preferr’d one appointed to that Office ** according to his Infitution." But why may not a Parifh -Priest appointed by Publick Wifdom in North- Britain, France, or any other Country, fay the fame to People incapable of judging in thefe Points ? Is not this fuppofing, that the Chriftian Re-
ligion, in many Points, is {o fram’d, that in every Parifh the People mufl: follow the Judgment of their Parifh-Priest ; becaufe they are to feek (and what more can be required of them) Chrift's Will in the Manner the Parifh-Priest tells them Chrift directs ? And is not this Popery, even worfe than Roman Po-
pry, zs it is fetting up a Pope in every Parifh •, and obliing the People, as often as any of them change their Parifh, or he his Parifh, or his Mind, to change their Religion too, in every Thing that is not felf-evident, or a manifeft Contradiction, in compliance with their prefent Parijh-Pope ?

I can’t but remark, how good Wits, tho' they liv'd in very diftant Times, and feem of very dif-
ferent Religions, haye luckily hit on the fame Thought ; I mean Vergerius, who, in Luther’s Days, Father Paul’s ^ s Nuncio to the Pope-, and Dr. Rogers, late Chap-
Hift. of the lain to a Protectant King, at the Head cf the Pro-
cunc of teftant Intereft. The former faid to Luther, If you nnt >£' 75- wou’d have had any thing innovated in the Faith, in which you were bred up for 3 5 Tears, for your Conference and Salvation fake, it was fufji dent to have kept it to Pref. to yourfelf The latter afferts, " That in the Chriftian Scrm.;. 6 5 . « Religion, the Apoftle’s Rule is, Haft thou Faith, W have it to tbyfeif;" And yet ’tis plain, the Apoftle was

Cb. 13. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 2j<)

was perfecuted by the Rogerians of thofe Days, for not keeping his Faith to himfelf.

B. Whatever Vergerius might deferve from PopiJJo Publick Wifdom, for mifapplying this Text, to put a Stop to the Reformation ; a Prietant Divine cou’d deferve nothing but Contempt from Protestant publick or private Wifdom, for fo no-
torioufly perverting its Meaning, and openly banter-
ing our first Reformers; and not only condemning them, for not keeping their Religion to themselves, p. 158.
but averting, that all, who (without a special Com- mision) from the Beginning of the World to this day, have "labour'd by publick Preaching, or p. 125.
"Writing, to withdraw Mens Submiffion to the "eftablifh'd Religion, whether Pagan^ Mahomet an ,
** or Popi/h, and gather Congregations in Oppofi-
4 c tion to it, contrary to the Command of the Ma-
"giftrate *," have been guilty of the damnable Sin of Disobedience and Sedition. So that if Popery had
been eftablifh'd by Law in King James's Reign,
all Proteftants muft have kept their Religion in their
own Breasts \\ fince publickly proferling a Religion
can't but be unlawful, where there is no coming at
it, but by unlawful Means. The Papifts^ fure, need p. 29.
no other Arguments, to fhew the Unlawfulness of
the Reformation in mod Places, than what this
Reverend Divine has furnifh'd them with. And
tho' he declares himfelf an Enemy to all Perfeuation,
and owns, "that if there be no publick Worhip,
"there muft be all the Appearance that can be of
•' abfolute Irreligion; yet the chief Defign of his
"Vindication of the Civil Tiftablifmment is to prove,
"that all Magiftrates, of what Religion foever,
"have a Right to oblige all, but tho'fe of their
"own Communion, to keep their Religion to them-
"felves." Which is declaring for Perfeuation as
well as Irreligion *, fince all Men believe 'tis their
Duty publickly to worhip God, tho' contrary to
all human Commands \ and he himfelf dares not
fay he wou'd obey fuch Commands.

T 4 And

«8q ChriJIiamfy as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

And his Diftinction between Mens acting with,
or without a special Commiflion, is impertinent in
relation to a Magiftrate, who owns no fuch Com-
miflion ; and the whole is inconfitent with that Au-
thority, which in another place, he gives to . the
Church or Clergy, of prefcribing what Doctrines
ihall be taught, and what not : But if the Magi-
frate, for the fake of the State, can forbid the pub-
lick Profeflion of all Religions but one ; why not
that one ? fince I believe, there's fcarce any Inftance
where the Profeflion of but one has been permitted ;
but that Religion fopn degenerated into Prieftcraft,
to the entire Deftruction of Mens Civil Liberties \ and the Magiftrate, as well as his Subjects, has been
forc'd to submit to the arbitrary, and vile Impofi-
ions of his own Priefts.

I n fhort, this noble Scheme, if there's any Con-
fiftency in it, is, that in all Matters of Religion, where People are capable of judging, they must not, if the Magistrate thinks fit, openly profess their Religion; and in all other things, which depend on Book-Learning, they are to be govern'd by their respective Parifh-Popes. And if such a Scheme as this, cou'd recommend the Person that publifht it, to a much larger Parifh-Popedom than he had before 5 'tis high time for the Laity to consider, whether all the Blood and Treasure which have been fpent to keep out but one Pope, has not been fpent in vain; if, in- ftead of that one, we are now to have thoufands f

I do not find, that the Apoftles taught there was any thing in Religion, of which People were incapa- ble of judging, for tho' Men cou'd not well be lower in point of Underftanding, than thofe to whom the Gofpel was firft preach'd; yet even thefe are commanded to judge for themfdves, to prove all things to take heed to zvhat they hear, to try the Spirits; to a- yoidfalfe Prophets, Seducers, and Mind Guides. And if this was their Duty in the Apoftolick Times, it was, certainly, io in all After-Ages; and if there ftfe now any fuch things, by what Authority foever in-

Ch. 13. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 281

introduc'd, as make the Apoftolical Rule impracti- cable, I mall, with Submiflion to Dr. Rogers, ven- ture to affirm, they are no Part of the Chriftian Re- ligion; and that thofe who teach them are falfe Prophets, Seducers and Deceivers; and, as fuch, are to be fhun'd by all Chriftians.

St. Chryfoftom thinks Religion To very plain, that he fays, "Were it not for our Sloth, we had no Horn. 3, on " need of Teachers." And we do not find that even zThef. To. 4. the Fathers thought the People, as not being able?' 2 34- Ed - to judge for themfelves, were to believe in their Parifh-Priefts. Laftantius, for inftance, fays, " ThatInft.1. c.7. 'l in thofe things, efpecially, which concern our Life " eternal, it becomes every Man to fearch, and ex- " mine the Truth of them by his own Senfe and "c Judgment, rather than to expofe himfelf by a " foolish Credu'ity to the hazard of being feduc'd " into other Mens Errors." And St. Bqfil tells us, " It is the Duty of Auditors not to believe impli- Ba/1/Mor. " citly, but to examine the Words of thofe that Re S- 7*- " inftruct them." And all our Divines, I mean fuch To ' 2 ' 3 ? 2 - as are, what they pretend, Protestants *, new they have not fo mean an Opinion of the Underftanding of the People, by frequently exhorting them to judge for themfelves *, and telling them, "They have no
<c reafon to expect Heaven, if they will not be at
" the pains of examining what would bring them
" thither; and that the luckiness of the Accident,
" th' it's they (tumble on Truth, won't not alone
" for the neglect of this great Duty.

A judicious Divine of our Church very justly ob-
" ferves, " That they, who have a good Cause, \( \text{Per-} 
44 \text{ no difingenuous Arts; they will not fright Men ualiv } \) to an
" from considering what their Ad verfaries fay, by \( \text{f}1^\text{10}^\text{0 n-} 
" denouncing Damnation againft them; nor forbid nions in Re-
" them to read their Books, but rather encourage lig. p. 25.
" them \{o to do; that they may fee the Difference
* c between Truth and Fal/mood, between Reafon
" and Sophiitry, with their ov/n Eyes. And

*■ whensoever Guides of a, Party do otherwife, they
« si ve

282 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 1 3.

c give juft caufe to thofe that fallow them to exa-
" mine their Doctrines (o much the more carefully,
** by how much they are unwilling to have them
" examined. 'Tis a bad fign, when Men are loth
46 to have their Opinions feen in the Day, but love
" Dargncfs rather than Light" 

Trr& of The Fault of the People, even from the Begin-

Scrafai. ning, has been, as the memorable Mr. Hales obferves,
that " They, thro' Sloth and blind Obedience, ex-
cc amin'd not the things they were taught-, but like ct Bealts of Burden, patiently couch'd down, and t< indifferently underwent whatever their Superiors
'* laid upon them."

Happy would the Laity have been, if they had
given no juft occafion for this infamous Character *,
tho' if they had followed the Example of their Cler-
gy in this one thing, of being as true to their com-
mon Interel, as thefe have always been to the fe pa-
rate Interel of their own Order; that alone would
have preferv'd Religion in its native Simplicity, as
being a thing wholly defign'd for their general good;
and then it would feem to be out of the Power of the
Priefts to corrupt it.

J?. Is not this fuppofing, mod, if not all, the
Corruptions of Religion, which have prevail'd in
any Church, are owing to their Impofitions, and
the blind Deference of the Laity ?

A. If you think I fpeak this without juft grounds,
examine into the present, and past State of Christendom, and see whether all those gross Depravations, and Perversions of Religion, which have prevail'd in most Places, were not contriv'd to advance the separate Interests of the Ecclesiastics; and Religion been corrupted, in an exact Proportion to the Number, Riches, Influence, and Power of those reverend Gentleman? Now those Corruptions being calculated for their Interest, could a Majority without a Misleading to ract * c f as Bishop Burnet says, in relation to our Re-his Expostition of formation) agree in correcting those Abuses? And I the Art. p. 5. may add, that in all Countries, where People have not

Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 283

not had the Liberty to judge for themselves in religious Matters, no other Liberty has been prevall'd; but Men have been Slaves both in Body and Mind: Such Power has the united Force of Ecclesiastics!

A judicious Author says, "It was not unreasonable of the true able in the Beginning of the Reign of Edward VI. Grounds of 66 and Queen Elizabeth to think the Lords and Com- EccL Reg! - <c mons better Judges of Religion than the Bishops men ' p ' 4 ' *' and Convocation. The whole Body can have no " finifter Interest to blind them; but the whole " Clergy, which is but a Part of the whole Body, iC may - , and therefore the whole Body is to judge." of this. The meanest Man is as much interested, > c and concern'd in the Truth of Religion, as the " greatest Prieft; for tho' his Knowledge thereof be * c not in all respects equally easy, yet in some respects it may be easier. For want of Learning " does not so much hinder the Light of the Layman, * c as worldly Advantage and Faction sometimes does *' the Prieft *, and the Examples of these are infinite. " Corruption in the Church before our Saviour, and * c in our Saviour's Days, and ever since *, has oftner < c begun among the greater!: Priefts, Rabbies, and * c Bishops, than among the meaner!: Laity."
What St. Paul says to the Christians of Corinth, in relation to false Apostles, has been verified in all ages:—

Te suffer Fools gladly, seeing ye yourself are 2 Cor. 11* ig, wise. — Te suffer if a Man bring you into Bondage; if at any Man devour you, if a Man take of you, if a Man exalt himself if a Man afflict you on the Face. And, indeed, the Laicks have so seldom thought of averting their natural Rights in religious Matters, that they have generally sacrificed to the Malice of the Priests, all, who have endeavour'd to maintain these Rights and if the People threw off one Set of Ecclesiastical Tyrants, 'twas only to be Slaves to another; and were ever ready to join against any one, that endeavoured to fet them free from all Ecclesiastical Tyranny, under which the whole Christian World would still have groan'd, had not so many Accidents concurred at the Reformation. We

284 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. i 3.

We pray against being led into Temptation; but do we not lead the Clergy into almost irresistible Temptation, to impose what they please on the People? What may not Men, who, in a manner, engulf the teaching of the Young, and intruding the Old; and have great Powers, and vast Revenues, and those too daily encroaching, bring about by their joint Endeavours —, and that much more easily, than when they had nothing to depend on but the Alms of the People? What is it, that such a Confederacy, so model'd, may not effect; especially where they are cared for by all Parties? nay, even by that, which is by too many of them despis'd and hated for their unpardonable Crime of being against Persecution? Are the Clergy less selfish, and designing, than they were in those Times some call the purest? Or, are the Laity grown wiser, and by the Experience of so many Ages, more upon their Guard?

People abroad were surpriz'd to find a Nation, in former Times so miserably oppressed by the Ecclesiastics, capable, even under a Whigg Administration, of repealing that Statute of Mortmain, with which their Predecessors thought absolutely necessary to prevent an all-devouring Corporation from swallowing everything *, and at the same time to see the First Fruits and Tenths, granted at the Reformation to the Crown, as a just acknowledgment of the Regal Supremacy, to be given for ever to this insatiable Corporation *, and at a time too, when their Revenues were daily encroaching: These surprising Favours made Foreigners very inquisitive to know, how the Conduct of the Clergy had merited more since the Revolution, than it did at the Reformation; or any other time since the Reforma-
tion? But begging Pardon for this necessary Digreftion, I mail now fhew, from the Confeflion of that great Divine and Philofopher, Dr. H. More, how little Reafon the Laity, tho' of the meaneft Capacity, have to depend upon the Authority of Church- men: His Words are,

Ci There's

Ch. 13. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 285

" There's scarce any Church in Chriftendom atMyfteryof *' this day, which does not obtrude not only plain Godlincfs, p- *< Falfhoods, but fuch Falfhoods as will appear to* 9 "< any free Spirit, pure Contradictions and Impof-
" Abilities ; and that with the fame Gravity, Au- *' thority, and Importunity, as they do the holy " Oracles of God." If this be true, what a mifereable Condition mud the People be in, if they are to depend on this Gravity, Authority, and Importunity of their repective Priefts *, who, 'tis poftible, may not believe the Creeds and Articles they fubferibe, and yet be againft making the leaft change; for fear of putting the People upon examining into other things, wherein the Intereft of the Clergy is more nearly concern'd *, which may occasion them to af- fume to themselves the unpardonable Crime of fee- ing with their own Eyes, and judging with their own Underftandings. That Convocation very wellSee Dr. knew what they did, which in 1689 with fo muşi clar ) e " s Indignation rejected thofe Propofals, that fome of'^" '" our m oft eminent Divines were by the Crown au- p . 45 o. thoris'd to offer them, for making Alterations in the Liturgy, particularly in leaving the Clergy at liberty with relation to the Atbanafian Creed.

In fhort, whoever in the leaft reflects, muft needs fee, that in moft Churches, many of their funda- mental Articles are defign'd to impofe on the credul- lous Laity; and that the Priefts themselves can't believe them. Can the Pope of Rome any more be- lieve himfelf infallible, than the Tartarian Pope, or Lama, believes himfelf immortal? Or than Proteftant Priefts (whofe Churches are founded on private Judgment) can believe they have a Right to make Creeds and Articles for the People? Can even the Ro- mi/h Priefts any more believe they can pardon Sins, than the Bonzees believe the Money they borrow in ' this World, fhall be repaid to their Creditors in the next? Or can the Popifh Priefts, tho' they made the Laity for many Ages renounce their Senfes, have different Ideas of the Bread and Wine r after they
have mumbled over certain Words, than they had before? Or can the Lutheran Priests believe they have the Power of Confubstantiation? Or the Calvinistical Priests think, they can make the Body and Blood of Christ to be not figuratively, or, not indeed; but verily', and indeed, taken by the Faithful? Or can any of those Priests believe they give the Holy Ghost? Or that they have an Indelible Character? Or that there can be Imperium in Imperio? Or can the Popish Priests any more believe their Legendary Traditions, than the Pagan Priests did their Oracles? Or some other Priests the Doctrine of Passive Obedience? Or the Calvinistical Articles they so solemnly subcribe? Or that Awes on one hand, and Bribes on the other, is the way to promote the Protestant Principle, of every Man's being oblig'd to judge for himself in all religious matters, without Prejudice and Partiality? Or an hundred other things, which, with this same Gravity, Authority*, and Importunity*, they impose on the People?

If Men, notwithstanding they pretend to be inwardly mov'd by the Holy Ghost, go into Orders as they take to a Trade, to make the best of its Mysteries (and all Trades have their Mysteries*), and are bound for the sake of their Maintenance, to maintain those Doctrines which maintain them; and lest they should not do so, are shackled with Subscriptions upon Subscriptions: Can these Men, I say, under all the Prejudices this World affords, be proper Persons for the Laity to depend on in the Choice of their Religion? Or, are they, who are not permitted to choose their own Religion, fit to choose a Religion for others? In this Case, would not the Blind lead the Blind into the Bitch of Popery, &c. And I think, I may venture to say, that Men may as safely trust the Choice of their Religion to the Chance of a Dye, as to the Chance of Education; considering who, for so many Ages, have had the cooking up of Religion. And every one rhuft fee, that those things, which are brought into Religion, contrary to the End of

* it*

Ch. 13. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 287

it, as they are inconflituent with the Intereft of the People, fo they favour more of Art and Learning, than to belong to fimple Men; especially in thofe Times they were introduc'd. And as Adam faid to God, The Woman y whom then gaveft to be with me, Gen. 3. 12. Jhe gave me of the Tree, and I did eat; fo might the
People say of their Priests, did they believe them jure divino; "The Priests thou gavest us, deceived us, and we have been deceive'd.

B. This is too severe.

A. You know, that those few good Men among the Ecclesiastics, have said as much of their own Body; and therefore, I shall only mention what Picus Mirandula had the Courage to say to Leo the Tenth, and the Later an Council: He, after having complained, that all Orders of Men were debauch'd by the Clergy, says, Nee fane mirum, quando majitmus SeePafcl.'R*-omne prodire de Templo Johannes Chryfcftomus cenfet ; rum Expet. Hieronimus fcribit, fe inveniffe neminem qui Jedux-^ u ^ iend ' erit Populos, prxterquam Sac er dotes. Tho' twas rld 149. P ' 41 always the could corrupt them *, for they celebrated St. Ambrof¢ fays, Plerumq Clerus erravit, SacerdotisAmho. Serm. nutavit Sententia, Divites cum feculi iftius terreno rege l 1- To -4- fenferunt, Populus fidem propriam refervavit. P- 7 2 5-

This can be no Reflection on the Ecclesiastics among us, who abhor all these Principles, by which their Predecessors enslave'd Men both Body and Soul \ and who maintain no Opinions, however advantageous to the Order, that are against the publick Good; and are so far from promoting Persecution, that by their Example as well as Waitings, they have highly contributed to that Humanity, Charity, and Benevolence, which, to the great Grief of others, is daily increaing among Men of the most different Persuasions. Thus, where the Clergy are good, the People of course will be so *, and therefore, fuel Clergymen (of which, perhaps, we now have more,' than have ever been in the Church since Conftantine** Time ;) can't be too much esteem'd for conquering the strong Prejudice of Education and the ftronger

of

288 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. \\.

of Intereft. And they, certainly, ought to be as much valu'd by the Laity for so unusual a Generosity, in defending the common Rights of Mankind; as they are hated by their Brethren, for giving up those Claims, by which they have at all Times commanded the Purfes, as well as the Conferences of the People; when too, they could not but be ("n-fible, what they were to exped from their restless Enemies --, whenever they would be permitted to exert themselves.

And here I can't omit saying, that, if he, who best defends the Church, bed deserves to rule it;
Juftice has eminently appear'd in the Promotion of that Perfon, now happily prefiding over it; who fo early put a ftop to the boafted Triumphs of the ableft Adverfy our Church ever had; and has- 
fiince protected it againft its worft, its domeftick 
Enemies, treacheroufly undermining the Confitu-
tion; who, as he treats all with that condefcending 
Goodnefs ineparable from true Greatnefs, fo he 
encourages Piety and Virtue, without Diffinction of 
Parties: And tho' he has with equal Prudence ex-
pos'd both Popijh and Protestant Perfe&ion; yet 
WMs Serm. both the Sorbonne and Geneva, however differing in 
Vol. 3. p. 4. moft other Things, agree in owning fo illuftrious 
a Merit. And I may callenge all Church-Hiftory 
to mew three fuch Bifhops, as to the Honour of the 
Revolution, have, fince that blefled Time, fucceeded 
one another at Lambeth.

I mufl beg your Patience for adding, on this in-
exhaustible Subject, one Reason more, for Mens 
being govern'd by Things rather than Words: It 
has been a general Practice with the Introducers of 
Civil Tyranny, tho' they chang'd the Form of Go-
vernment, to retain the old Names; the better to 
hinder the People from being fenfible of the Change: 
And may not this have happen'd in Church-Matters? 
And may not Ecclefiaftical Tyranny be brought in, 
and fupported by the fame Means? Has npt this 
very Term Church, had a different Meaning put on, 
it.

Ch. 13. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. 289

it, from what it has in the Original? And is not the 
Greek Word fometimes tranflated Affsmbly, 
fbmetimes Church -, the better to confound the Rights 
of the Church ', or People, as that Word in Scripture 
always signifies? In one of our Articles, the Church 
is defin'd to be a Congregation of the Faithful, &c. yet 
is it not every where elfe taken for the Clergy? When 
'tis faid in the very next Article, " The Church has 
" Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Au-
" thority in Matters of Faith; " is it meant of the 
Congregation of the Faithful? And is it not a conftant 
Practice with fome Men, to talk of the Power and 
Authority of the Church, when they only mean their 
own; in hopes to make that, which otherwife People 
might dart at, go down under its falced Name?

Are the People now taught to conceive the 
fame thing by the Word Bifhop, as it means in the 
Original; where Bifhop and Prefhyter are fynony-
mous Terms? Is it not to prevent their feeing it, 
that we tranflate the Greek Word fometimes by
Overfeer, fometimes by Bifhop ? For the firft three or four Centuries, every Congregation had its own Bifhop, who was constantlty oblig'd to reside, and to officiate in the Parifh Church: And as among the Jews, the Ruler of one Synagogue had nothing to do in any other; fo among the primitive Chriftiana (whofe Discipline was accommodated to that of the Jews,) it would have been thought highly antichriftian, and invading the Rights of his Brethren, for one Bifhop to have more than 6nt Altar, or Communion-Table. But things continually changing, a Parifh-Bifhop, maintain'd by the Alms of his Congregation, commenc'd a Bifhop, not only of many Parifhes, but of a whole Province 3 nay, of many Provinces, with the Titles, Pomp, and Grandeur of Princes; and at lad, to an Univerfal Bifhop^ Pope, or Vice-God.

The only Church that has now any Pretence to primitive Epifcopacy, is that of North-Britain; where since the BUfJ'td Revolution, a Parity of Pari/h-Bifhops U has

290 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

has been etabliffrVd: If you want fully to under- ftand the Conftitution of the primitive Church, in this, and all other Points, you need only read the Inquiry into the Conftitution, Discipline, Unity and Worjhip of the Primitive Church, &c. written by the greater! Critick, Divine, and Lawyer of this, or, perhaps, any other Age.

*[Is not Deacon a new Office under an old Name, and are not Overfeers of the Poor the true Scripture-Deacons ?] And what other Reaon can be affign'd, why c/Wxov®, Rom. 16. 1. is notrender'd Diaconefs, as well as el fe where Deacon *, but Servant of the Church *, except it be to hinder the People from per- ceiving, that there was in the Days of the Apo- ftles, an Order of Women, who had fomething more to do in the Church than to fweep it; and who, even at the Council of Nice (Can. 1g.) are reckon'd among the Clergy? Did Eerefy, or Schiff, (thofe religious Scare Crows, as the memorable Mr. Hales calls them ;) signify any fuch thing in the Days of the Apoftles, as afterwards, to the infinite Prejudice olChriftendom, they were made to mean?. Why do we give the Name of Priefft to the Jewish Sacrifice,", as well as to the Chriftian Elder (Things fo widely different;) but to make People believe the latter have a Divine Right to every thing, which, under the
"Theocracy, belong'd to the former? And as in the New Testament the Preachers of the Gospel are never \textit{UaWgerana}. term'd 'I\textsuperscript{c}Y?\textsuperscript{a}, or \textit{Priest}s *, fo Scaliger remarks that the \textit{\textsuperscript{v i\text{\textsuperscript{p\textsuperscript{c}}}k\text{\textsuperscript{a}}}}, Word fo apply'd, is not to be met with till after Justin's Time.

Has the Word Clergy the same Meaning now, as in the New Testament, where 'tis taken in opposition to those we now call fo? And did not Ecclesiastical Tyranny, and the ingrossing that Name by the Ministers of the Church, commence together? * Nor is it difficult to see the Reason, why the Word \textit{\textsuperscript{fiaT. r ii\textsuperscript{u}}} was not translated but naturaliz'd; since the People would then have perceiv'd, that, not Sprinkling, but Dipping, or Immerfing\textsuperscript{a} was meant by

by it; but shou'd any now (To much Custom has prevaiFdJ say John the Dipper, instead of John the Baptist, People would think it profane.

If Words have been thus artfully manag'd in relation to things; have not People much more reason to suspect the same Management in relation to speculative Points, where Words allow a greater Latitude? If Zeal had had the same Meaning in After-Times, as in the Scripture, it had never occasion'd so much Mischief. And what Mischief have not those two misinterpreted Words, Zeal and Church, by the artful Management of designing Men, occasion'd? Nay, Is not Religion made to Signify something very different from what it does in Scripture? How few, when they hear that Word, think of the Description given by St. James, of pure and undefil'd Religion? What Absurdities have not People brought into Religion, by fixing a Sense on the Word \textit{Myftery} unknown to the Scripture? Nay, have not some People, if the Univerfity of Oxford is a good Judge, advance'd false, impious* and heretical Doctrines concerning the Godhead, in declaring the three Perfons, are three distinct, in- Oxford De-finite Minds, or Spirits; tho', now reviv'd by Dr. cree made by

IV d, with the Applaufe of thofe who before ^ e ^ s j{

condemn'd it? And did not they, who efpous'dj^jj^L^ thofe Doctrines, reprefent their Adverfaries as ab-furd Sabellians -, in either making the three Perfons in the divine Being, to be analogous to three Pof-tures in a human Being -, (Tor this was the utmoft Dr. South's Divinity could reach to:) Or with Dr.
Wallis, three Someivhats § of which they themselves had no Idea! Good God! what pains Men take to deface the Idea, which the Light of Nature as well as the Scripture gives of God; and which every one conceives, when he hears him mention’d on either a natural, political, or religious Account! In short, was it not running too far from our present Purpofe, it would not be very difficult to mew, that there are very few Terms in Scripture, U 2 which

292 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,

which have Things of Moment depending on them, but what have loft their original Meaning to become orthodox.

If they, who have the tranflating any old Book capable of vaftly different Senfes, make it speak what is moft for their Intereft; muft not others be very good Men indeed, who will find fault with a Tranflation in fuch Points as make for their com-
non Advantage *, or be at the pains in fuch Cafe, to discover any favourable Additions, Subtractions, or Alterations that might have been made in the Scriptures, or other ancient Writings? especially,

Postscript to if it be true w^t jy[ r. Wbifton complains of, " That ProceedbgJ, " k is fre qently in the Mouths of the Writers for p. <j 0> "'" the Church, that fome Things are to be con-
seal'd for fear they gratify A thrifts and Drifts -, " and fays. Certainly, nothing prejudices them " more than fuch Procedure and Exprelfions, while " they thereby perceive Remains of pious Frauds " every where, and fufpect it has been fo from the " Beginning. They fee they are not to be let " plainly into the Truth of Facts, but to be ma- " nag'd with Cunning, and worldly Prudence, for " fear of being difgufted at Chriftianity."

Must not the People be at a lofs, when they fee how differently the Texts in the moft momen-
tous Parts are interpreted? Dr. S. Clark has rec-
kon'd more than 1250 Texts relating to the Doctrine of the 'Trinity ♦, and how few of them are interpreted alike by the contending Parties? 'Tis chiefly owing to these different Interpretations, that, where Force has not interp$'d, it has from Age to Age been disputed, whether we have but one, or more than one Object of fupreme Worhipp. A Point, which, was Reafon allow'd to be a competent Judge, would not meet with the leaft Difficulty; and had we a Bible tranflated by Unitarians, many Texts would be very differently tranflated from what they are at present ♦, and fome left out as forg'd. When fo judi-
cious a Divine and Critick as the now Bifhop of
Cb. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 293

A says, "We should have more of the true Clergyman*!

"Text by being less tenacious of the printed one "p. t0
must not that give great Uneasiness to those who
have nothing to trust to but the printed Text?
And will this Uneasiness be abated by his affirming,
"that it may with great Truth be said of Chilling-
"worth (the greatest Champion the Protestant" rm - againft
"cause ever had) that he was abler at pulling "p ; of
"down than building up "*, towards which little can *

"be expected from one, who is by his own Argu-
"ments pum'd so hard in the Defence he would
"make of Protestants", that he has nothing left
"but to cry out, The Bible, I say, The Bible is the
"Religion of Protestants." Nay, must not that Un-
easiness be very much increas'd by Divines, perpe-
tually endeavouring to mend by their Criticisms fe-
veral capital Places in the sacred Writers ; nay, who pretend daily to make new and momentous
Discoveries ? How must their Hearers be edify'd,
when they tell them 'tis thus or thus, in such an an-
tient Manuscript, Father, or Assembly of Fathers \ or
cry, His rendered more agreeable to the Mind of the
Holy Ghost in the Septuagint, Vulgar Latin, Syriack,
Chaldaick, Ethiopick, Coptick, Gothick, or some
other Version ?

If no Court of Judicature, tho' in a Thing of
small moment, will admit of a Copy, tho' taken
from the Original, without Oath made by a defin-
terefted Person of his having compar'd it ; because
the leaf Mistake, a various Pointing, a Parenthefis,
a Letter misplace'd may alter the Sense 5 how can
we absolutely depend in things of the greatest Mo-
ment on voluminous Writings, which have been fo
often tranfcrib'd by Men, who never saw the Ori-
"inal 5 (as none, even of the moft early Writers pre-
tend they did :) And Men too, who even in the
earliest Times, if we may judge by the Number of
forg'd Passages, and even forg'd Books, would
scruple no pious Frauds. And tho' there have been
innumerable Copies of the New Testament loft,

Whifton's Essay, p. 10.

Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. i*,

which, no doubt, had their different Readings, yet, as it stands at present, we are told, there are no less than 30000 various Readings.

B. Tho' there are so many various Readings, yet does not that great Critick, Dr. Bentley, in his Proposal for printing by Subscription, a new Edition of the New Testament, allure the World, that out of a Labyrinth of 30000 various Readings, which crowd the Pages of our present best Editions, all put upon an equal Credit to the Offence of many good Persons, that his Clue, as he calls it, so leads and extricates us, that there will be scarce 200 out of so many Thousands, that can deserve the least Consideration?

A. Has this Critick lost his Clue, and so forced to drop the noble Design of ascertaining the Text of the New Testament, and let the 30000 various Readings remain on an equal Foot to the Offence of many good Persons? who will now as much despair of seeing it done, as they do of Mr. Whifton's restoring the true Text of the Old Testament; which he says, <6 has been greatly corrupted both in the Hebrew and Septuagint by the Jews, to make the Re reasonings of the Apostles from the Old Testament inconclusive and ridiculous."

Dr. Bentley, certainly, ought to go on with his Proposal; because the World will hardly take the Doctor's Word, that in a Book, where most things are own'd to be of the greatest Moment, there would be so many various Readings of no Moment; tho' one or two may be of that Consequence, as to destroy the Design of the whole Book. In a Prefcrip-
ticii where there are ever fo many wholesome Prugs, yet if a poiSONous one happens to be mix'd, it may turn the whole into rank poison. If the Poyrine of the Trinity is of the greater moment, was not the Church highly concern'd to prevent various Readings in that important point, as well as some forg'd Texts?

Had the Scripture been better guarded in many

Ch. 13. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation, 29

other matters of consequence, there could not have been so many Texts seemingly clafhing with one another; that there are fuch, is deny'd by none: Dr. Scott lays it down as certain, that "That Chriff. Life, " Opinion is falfe, or of little moment, that hasp- 2. vol. 1. " but one, or two Texts to countenence it; and Ch - 6 -P- 3-4-<c That very dubious, which has none but obscure cc Texts to rely on; but when there are more, and " much plainer Texts for it than against it, it muft " be falfe."

And another judicious Divine fays, that "Our G. Gumct\ " Faith is not to be built on single Texts, becaufe Anwer to " they may have been corrupted; tho' we have^f 1 ^' f^ ?* " no Manuscript to point out to us, that the other ty ', ° n " *' Manuscripts have been fo corrupted in thefe Paf- " fages." But,

If we can't depend on fingle Texts; and where there are feveral, the plainer!: are to carry it; the Difficulty will be to know which are the plaineft; since the different Seels of Chriffians have ever pretended, that the plaineft Texts are on their Side; and wonder'd how their Adverfaries cou'd miftake their Meaning.

The plain Texts from St. Auftin's Days, at lead in the Weft, were all in favour of Predeftination 5 and upon thofe plain Texts the Articles of our moft excellent Church, and all other Protestant Churches are founded: It's true, in Queen Elizabetb's Reign, there were fome few among the inferior Clergy for Free-will', but then tho'Ye incorrigible Strype'^ Ann, Free-will Men, as they were call'd, were, by the c - x 7-
Direction of the Bishops, sent to Prison; there to live on hard Labour, till they repented of their Errors. But since the Court in Charles I's Reign, help'd to open the Eyes of our Divines, they, no longer blinded by their Articles, clearly see, that all those plain Texts (and what a Number are muster'd up on both Sides) are all for Free-will; against which, now, there are none but are look'd on as incorrigible.

2g6 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

B. Those Books, which contain the traditional Religions of other Nations, have, notwithstanding all the Care taken to prevent it, been mix'd with Fables and monstrous Tales: yet we say, that the Scripture, especially the New Testament, tho' there are ever so many various Readings, must needs be free from all Errors of Consequence; because that being design'd by God for a plain, and unalterable Rule, for the Actions of Mankind, cannot but be guard'd by Providence, as to hinder any Mistakes of Moment.

A. Your Reasoning, I grant, holds good in relation to the Law of Nature, which equally obliges, at all Times and Places, the whole Race of Mankind but then that depends not on the Knowledge of any Language dead, or living; or on the Skill, or Honesty of Transcribers, or Translators; but on that, which as it is apparent to the whole World, fo it is not in the power of Mortals to alter; viz. the unchangeable Relation of things, and the Duties resulting from thence.

De ufu Patr. "The Transcribers of Books (as that learned p. 1. 1. i.e. 3. and judicious Critick Dailiti observes) " have been " guilty of innumerable Mistakes;"" and that S. Epift. 28. ad J erom (the most learned of the Fathers) complains, Lucam.p.247. u they wrote not what they found, but what they " understood:" and he gives Instances of Attempts made on the New Testament by the Orthodox 1. 1. c.4. themselves *, particularly St. Epiphanius^ for faying, " that in the true, and mod Correct Copies of St. Luke^ it was writ, that Jesus Christ wept " and that this Passage had been alledged by St. Irenaus^ but that the CathoUcks had blotter out the Word, fearing that the Heretieks might abuse it. The fame St. Jerom fays, the last twelve Verces in the last Chapter of Mark were left out in most Greek Bibles; Omnibus Gratia hibris pene hoc capiulum non Jib. Queft. ^.habentibus. Gr otitis imputes this Omission to the dot. 111 loc. Transcribers: But Maldonat will not allow of Grotius's Reason, because he fays, Luke and John dif-
fer more with Matthew than Mark does. Major Mzldomt. in enim inter illos & Matthasum, quam inter Matthaeum loc * 13 Marcum apparat repugnant ia.

Hilary, speaking of Chrifl's bloody Sweat, and the Angel sent to comfort him, says, Nee fane igno-H^yy l- «o- randum nobis eft, in Gratis & Latinis codicibus co- e m ' pluribus, de adveniente Angelo, vel de fudore fanguineo nihil scriptum reperiri. This S. Jerom feems to con- Lib, 2 . advw. firm. Pebb.

For my part, I think, that at teaft, till we are extricated by Dr. Bentley's Clue, the bell Way not to be miftaken, is to admit all for divine Scripture, that tends to the Honour of God, and the Good of Man i and nothing which does not. This Clue, I think, will extricate the Learned as well as Un- learned out of many otherwife infuperable Difficul- ties -, and make the Laws of God, which way fo- ever reveal'd, entirely to agree; and deftroy that abfurdf Notion of God's acting arbitrarily, and commanding for commanding-fake: And does not St. Paul fuppofe no Scripture to be divinely inffpir'd, 2 Tim. 3. 16. but what is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof for^c Grotius m Correction > for Inffruction in Right eoufnfs ? A nd if Letters about this be the Teft, ought we to admit any thing to beinfpiration, writ by Inffpiration, tho' it occurs ever fo often inp- 190, &c Scripture, till we are certain it will bear this Teft ? En S- Tranfl. And, indeed, was it otherwife, we mould be in a fad Condition, fince there's fcare any Opinion, tho' ever fo abfurdf, or ridiculous, but has its Vouchers, who quote Texts on Texts, for its Sup- port. Good Lord! what a Load have the different Parties laid on it, by their not obferving this Rule? But,

Cou'd we fuppofe any Difference between Na- tural and Traditional Religion ♦, to prefer the latter, wou'd be acting irrationally -, as that Prophet did, who went contrary to what God had commanded him by an immediate Revelation; becaufe a known 1 King? 13. Prophet aiTur'd him, he had afterwards a different Revelation for him. A Crime fo heinous in the

Eyes

298 Chrijlia-rtiiy as Old as the Creation, Ch. 13,

Eyes of the Lord, that he deftroy'd this Prophet after a molr. fignal Manner; tho' he had to plead
for' himself, that the Prophet, who spake to him in the Name of the Lord, cou'd have no interest in deceiving him; and that there was nothing in the Command, but might as well come from the Lord, as what himself had receiv'd. And 'tis worth ob-serving, that the lying Prophet was fo far from being puniYd, that the Lord continued to him the Gift of Prophecy -, nay, pronounc'd by his Mouth the Doom of the Prophet, he fa fatally deceived.

B. Why is this more worth obferving than the Case of Abimelech, who, upon both Abraham's and Sarah's lying to him, took Sarah, as the Lord him-

Gen. 20. 6. felf owns, in the Integrity of his Heart; and tho' he fent her back untouch'd, and gave considerable Pre-fents both to Wife and Hufband; yet neither He, nor His, were to be pardon'd, till Abraham (the offending Perfon) being a Prophet, was to pray for him: So

lb. vcr. 17. Abraham pray'd unto God, and God heal'd Abime-lech, and his Wife, and Maid-fervants; and they bare Children. And yet this holy Prophet was soon after guilty of a very barbarous Action, in fending out

Gen. 16. 3. Hagar, whom Sarah had given him to Wife, and his Son Ifhmael, to feriflo in the Wilder nefs; for no other rea-

Gen. 21. 9. fon, but becaufe^Hagar mock- ing-, and 'tis likely they had both perifh'd, had not an Angel calling oat of Heaven, directed Hagar to a Well of Water: And perhaps, the fame Angel, who,

Gen. 16. 6. when me before fled from Sarah, who had dealt hard-

Ver. 9. ly with her; bid her return, and submit: But in this lail domeftick Quarrel, God himfelf miraculoufly

Gen. 21. 12. interpofes, and fays, In all that Sarah hath faid unto thee, hearken unto her Voice. But begging pardon for this Interruption, pray go on.

A. We, certainly, ought to adhere ftrictly to the Light of Nature •, if, (as a Learned and Reverend

AVofNat. Critick obfa-ves) " It mud be allow'd by the judi-

and Rev. Re-" cious and impartial, that many Corruptions are lig. p. 198, <} fo un d in our pre&it Copies of the Holy Bible ;

1 99> •• " and

- v. 19.
"and that we have not now this bleffed Book in that Perfection and Integrity, that it was firft written. It is alter'd in many Places, and in fome of the greater! Moment. – I cou'd prove, I think, by undeniable and unavoidable Inftances, what Mr. Gregory of Oxford fays in his Preface to fome critical Notes on the Scripture, that he u. publifVd. There's no Author whatsoever, fays "this learned Critick, that has fuffer'd fo much "by the Hand of Time as the Bible has." If this, I fay, muft be allow'd, ought we not, in order to prevent all Miftakes, in the firftc place, to get clear Ideas of the moral Character of the Divine Being; and when by Reafons much flronger than any drawn from human Tradition, we have difcover'd his Char-
acter, ought we not to compare what we are told of him, by what we already know of him, and fo judge of what Men teach us concerning God, by what God himfelf teaches us -, for we are all taught of him: And then we mall be as certain, as there is a God perfectly wife, and infinitely good, that no Doctrines can come from him that have not thefe Characters ftamp'd on them. Thus were there more falfe Readings crept into the Scripture than thefe Divines fuppofe, yet we might ftill know our Duty; and be certain that by doing our beft to promote our mutual Happinefs, we anfwer the End of our Creation \ and that if we deviate from this Rule for the fake of what depends on human Tradition, we quit Certainty for that, which is not pretended to amount to more than Probability.

And it is no fmall Encouragement for us to ob-
ferve this Rule, iince we find, that Men, if like Pedants, or School-Mafters, they read Books, not to examine the Force and Cogency of the Argu-
ments they meet with *, but for the fake of Words and PhrafeS, without confidering the Nature, Rea-
fon and Tendency of things *, underrtand very little of things. Have not great Numbers from Age to Age, tho' Men of good natural Parts, had their Un-
derstandings confounded by thus injudicioufly em-
ploying them j and inftead of clearing Doubts in-
creafed them; and fill'd the World with ufelefs Criticifms, and trifling Difputes? While they, who made W r ords give place to Things, and argu'd from
the relation things bear to each other, have fhewn themselves able Cafuifs *, and inrich'd the World with moft ufeful Difcourfes, for promoting the Ho-
our of God, and the Good of Man. And therefore, we are often caution'd by the belt Authors,
not to flick too clofe to the Letter in reading the Scripture; fince they fay the Style of Holy Writ is far from being exact; and that the laying too great
ftrefs on Words, has been the Occafion of moil of the Diiputes among Chriftians.

lb mew how little we are to depend on Words

and Phrafes; they fay, a number of 'Texts might be

produc'd to prove Mofes to be a God: " For he is

a Exod. *\ 1. <c call'd (a) God and Lord-, and prayM to, under

lb. 4. 6.' " that Appellation, to forgive Sin (b;) has attri-

£Num. 1 2. 1 1. << buted to him the fame miraculous Work of bring-

Exod. 10. i6, et in g t ^ e cfoij ren ^yfrael out of Egypt, as is afcri-

f Exod. 32. 7." bed to God (c-,) that the Ifraelites did believe

lb. 33. 1. " in him, as well as in the Lord (d,) and were re-

</Exod. 14.uk. « quir'd fo to do; that he promised Rain in due Seafon

Deut* n M to f uc b as kept his Commandments (e j ) and to JoJhua y

1 3, 1 4, 1 c,&c. " that be woiCd be with him in carrying the People into

/Deut.31. 23." Canaan (f-,) altho' as a Man, he was to die be-

" fore: That he did great Works \ yea, Miracles in

" the fight of the Ifraelites, on pnprufe that they might

Deut -q " c know thai he was the Lord their God (g ;) that Aaron

5, 6. " is faid to be his Prophet (h,) which is proper to the

h Exod. 7. " true God only; and in fine, that the Ifraelites

i 1 Cor. 10. t< were baptized unto* or into Mofes (l.)

These Authors tell us, that in the Ethicks of
Ariftotle, in the Offices ofTully, in the McralTreatifes
of Grotius\Puffendorf &c. the Nature and Reafon of
our Duties, the Connexion between them, and the
pependance they have oft one another are plainly
5i; but in the Scripture, Things, fay they\ are;
not so generally treated, as that Men may precifely know the Nature and Extent of their Duty. Are they not, say they, for the most part, deliver'd in such a general, undetermin'd, nay, sometimes parabolical and hyperbolical Manner, as, did we not consult our Reafon, and learn our Duty from thence, the Letter might lead us wrong; nay, the Apoftle himfelf fays, the Letter killeth.

B. I can't believe things of any Moment are thus repreffented; becaufe, as God could have no other End in giving us a Revelation, than the rightly directing our Minds, fo that End could not have been answer'd, except it was deliver'd in a way moit plain, and easy to be understood in all Times and Places: For if there are Proportions in Scripture, which naturally tend to mislead us; or if the Ufe of Languages is perverted in fome Inftances, how can we be certain, but it may be in others?

A. Is not the New Teftament full of Parables, nay, is it not faid, that Without a Parable Jefus /pake Mat. 13. 34. not to the Multitude, and for this remarkable Reafon, That feeing they might fee, and not perceive; and hear-M?jk 4. 12. ing they might hear, and not underftand \ left at any time they fhouid be converted, and their Sins be forgiven them? Is not St. John's Gofpel, for the moft part, writ after an obfcure, allegorical Manner, efpecially in relation to the Perfon of Chrift? And do not Commentators own, we labour under much the fame Difficulties in interpreting St. Paul? The honourable Mr. Boyle fays, " That fometimes in St. %/?'sStyleof u Paul's Writings many PaffTages are fo penn'd, as Scn P- P- 6 4- " to contain a tacit kind of a Dialogue; and that \ unfkilfully by Readers, and even Interpreters, taken for an Argument, which, indeed, is an " Objection. It's faid it was the way of the Eaft y " to make ufe of dark, and involv'd Sentences, " figurative and parabolical Difcourfes, abrupt, " and main'd Ways of exprelifg them felves, with " a Neglect of annexing Tranfmons."

As

A s for hyperbolical Expreffions, it was cuftomary among the Eastern Nations to exprefs themfelves after a pompous and moft high-ftrained Manner. This way of fppeaking was a main Part of Learning,
taught in the Schools of the Prophets among the Jews; and happy was he, who cou'd most excel in this elevated, romantick Way, and both the Old and new Testament abound with Exprefions of this Nature. Ijaiah, in prophefying the Deftucti-

jfa. 13. 10. on of Babylon, fays, The Stars of Heaven Jh all not 1b. Ver. 13. give their Light, the Sunjhall be darkned— I will

jhake the Heavens, and the Earth jh all remove out of her Place, in the Wrath of the Lord of Hofts, and in the Day of his fierce Anger. And the Deftuction of the City of Jerufalem in the New Teftament is de-

crib'd after fuch a Manner, as if Nature was unhing'd, and the Univerfe diftbliving.

Thankfgiv. B p . Fleetwood, on Pfalm xviii. fays, ' * That without Serm. June 7," remembering David's Hiftory, one wou'd imagine 1716. < c Heaven and Earth were mov'd on his Behalf;

" and that the Courfe of Nature had been over^
" thrown, and his Life cover'd by continual Mi-
" racles:" And he there obferves, " that the Jewijh
" Expreffions, and the Expreffions of all People
" that dwelt Earlward are full of Pomp, and Am-
" plification of Fancy and Hyperbole." And, I
think, under this Head we may reckon thofe Texts,
2Chron. 9. that All the Kings of the Earth fought the Prefence of 23. Solomon. That If the Things which Jefus did were

John 21. 25. r rr j Ucn ^ the V/wld itſelf could not contain the Books. And are not moft of the Expreffions of St. John as figurative, as Eating the Flejfh, and Drinking the Blood of the Son of Alan ? And what monſtrous Practices did thofe Words taken literally, produce, even in the primitive Times ; .and what fenſeſfs Diſputes iiſnce ? And,

Must v/e not put under this Head a Number of

John 14. 13. other Texts? What fever you /hall ajk in my Name,

Mat. 18. 19. that will I do. If Two ofjoufhall agree on Earth,
touching any thing they jhall ajk, it (hall be done for
2 them

Cb. 13. Cbrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 303

them of my Father ', which is in Heaven. If you haveMzt. 17. 20,
Faith as a Grain of Muftard-Seed, you Jhall remove Mountains, and nothing Jhall be impojſible to you. And you may fay to this Sycamine Tree, Be thou pluck* 'd up Luke 17.6. by the Roots, and be thou planted in the Sea, and it Jhall obey you. Whatsoever thou jh alt bind on Earth,Mzt. 16. 19.
Jhall be bound in Heaven. He that is fpiritual, judg- 1 Cor. 2. 15, 
eth all Things \ (which the Papijls fay is the Pope)
yet he himfelf is judged of no Man. Things prefent, « Cor. 3. 22.
and Things to come *, all are yours. St. John's little I John *• 20.
Children are faid to have an Unclion, and to know all 
Things. And what more cou'd be faid of the A-
ointed, or Chrifi. himfelf? Men are bid to be Par- zPet - 4-takers of the Divine Nature ; and to be as perfect as^•it. 5. 43.
their heavenly Father is perfett. What Beflings are 
not Chriftians promis'd, even in this Life ? Is it not 
faid, Chrift has made us Kings and Prlefts unto God ; Rev - 6-
and we Jhall reign on the Earth? And are not 1b. 5. 10.

the Meek to inherit the Earth f And, is not every one Mat. 5. 5.
that hath forfaken Houfes, or Brethren, or Sifters, or Mat. 19. 29.
Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children^ or Lands,
for my Name fake, to receive an hundredfold, and to in-
herit everlafting Life? What one is fent to declare 
is to be done, That he is faid to do: So Jeremiah Jer, 1. 10.
is faid to htjet over the Nations, and over the King-
doms, to root out, pull down, and deftrroy. What is 
defign'd to be done, mail be faid to be actually 
done: As, the Lamb Jlain from the Foundation of the Rev. 13. S.
World. Before Abraham was, I was; or as we (to John. 8. 58.
make it more myterious render it, / am: Nay, a 
Creature not born long before, is faid to be thecdl. 1. 15.
Firft-born of every Creature. Advice is called Sub-
miffion, Subjection, and Obedience - , Te younger, fub- 1 Pet. 5. 5.
mit yourfelves to the Elder; yea, befubjeft to one ano-
other. Obey them that have the Rule over you % andueb. 13. 17.
Compel them to come in. And what rooting Work 
have not the Papifts made from this Text: Every p^ at ^.13.
Plant my heavenly Father hath not planted Jhall be rooted 
up; and fuch other mifapply'd Places? Is not God's 
permitting

304 Chrifiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Amos 3. 6. permitting Evil, call'd doing it? Shall there be Evil 
in a City, and the Lord has not done it? Nay, is not 
Ifaiah 45. 7. the Lord faid to have created Evil? And to have 
hardened Mens Hearts; and then topunifh them for 
their being harden'd? And to tempt Men? Are we 
not to pray again ft God's leading us into Temptation? 
-Nay, is not God, if the Words are to be taken li-

terally, reprefented as an arbitrary Being, hating 
Rom. 9. 1 1. Children not yet born; neither having done any Good, 
- Ver. 13. or Evil? Jacob have I loved, but Efau have I

-- Ver. 1?4 hated Therefore hath he Mercy on whom he will 

have Mercy; and whow he will, he hardeneth: Hath
Ver. 21. not the Potter Power over his Clay?

Are not Things in Scripture absolutely con-
demn'd, which are only fo conditionally? As the
Jewish Rites and 'Sacrifices are, in the Old Tefta-
ment, reprehended as an Iniquity, and an Abomination
to the Lord. Things commanded are positively said
Jer. 7. 22. not to be commanded - , As I /pake net to your Fathers,
nor commanded them in that Day I brought then out of
the Land f£ Egypt, concerning Burnt Offerings and
Sacrifices. What can be more figurative than Je-
Lukc 14. 26. fus's faying, If any Man come to me, and hate not
his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children,
and Brethren, and Sifters, yea, and his own Life
also, he can't be my Disciple ? Things fpoken in an
Mat. 5. 34. unlimited, are to be taken in a reftained Sense:
Eph. 6. 1,5. Swear not at all. Children and Servants, obey your
Mat. 6 I0 ' P arents and Masters in all Things. The Love of
iTheff. c.16 Money is the Root of all Evil. lVhatfcover the Pha-
17,21. rife.es bid you do, that do, and ob/erve. Rejoice ever-
more. Pray without ceasing. Prove all Things. And
fometimes a short Duration is exprf'd by the
Words for ever - , or for everlafting \ or for the End
of the Wcrld. So Jonah, after he came out of the
Jonah 2. 6. Fi(h> s Belly, fays, The Earth with her Bars was
about me for ever ; and an hundred other fuch Texts.
So that, whether any Duration is to be everlafting,
in the Sense we take that Word) can't be known
from the Words in Scripture \ but it mud bejudg'd
of

Ch. 13. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. ia$

of from the Nature of the Things which are said
thus to endure. But,

What can be more furprizing, than drift's de-
claring in moft exprf'd Terms, he came to do That,
which we muft fuppofe he came to hinder : Think
not, (fays he) / am come to fend Peace ; I come not toMzt. 10. 34."
fend Peace, but a Sword. For I am come to fet a Man
at variance with his Father, &c. And, Suppofe ye> /Luke 12. 513
am come to give Peace on Earth, I tell you nay, but
rather Divifion. And again, I am come to fend Fire - V er 49-
en Earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?
And has not that Fire burnt outrageoufly ever fince,
being blown up by thofe, whose Bufinefs it was to
have extinguifh'd it ? And have they not fo acted as
if this was a Prophetick Saying, they were at all
Times bound to fee fulfill'd ; tho' to the Deftuction
of all moral Duties whatever?
Another Difficulty in understanding both the Old and New Testament, is, that most Things, tho' owing to second Causes, are referred immediately to God. In the New Testament, Pilate is John 19. uj faid to have his Power from Above i even while he was condemning Jesus. And there is no Power but of God: Rom. 13.1. the Powers that be, are ordain'd of God: Take heed, A< s 20 * 2 &* therefore unto your elves-, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers. Nay, every good Motion is imputed to the Spirit, whether with, or without Understanding. / will pray with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also: I will t Cot. 14. 15, sing with the Spirit, and with the Understanding also.

Or, if a Man talk'd in an unknown Tongue* and cou'd not interpret what he said; or any of the Congregation understood him -, yet it was Prophecying, and the Gift of the Spirit. And St. Paul calls See Tradht. a Heathen Poet a Prophet. And is not Spirit & nay, the Theol - Polit * Spirit of God, taken, at least, in twenty different?* l ^ &c * Senfes in the Scripture ?

I n short, the Words of Scripture , on which things of the greatest Consequence depend, are, as is shewn by a learned Author, sometimes taken, not on-

X ij

306 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Stapleoft of only in a 'different ', but contrary Sense. However, to Controv. 1. 4. gj ve one Instance, Nature mRom. 2. 14. and Nature iiiEph. 2. 3. if rightly translated, are taken in op-
pofite Senfes ; and that Word in 1 Cor. 11. 24. is taken in a Sense different from both.

How can we know from Scripture, what Things are owing immediately to God, or to second Causes, since every thing that was thought to be good, not only the Powers and Faculties of Mens Minds* but voluntary Actions themselves, are immediately ascrib'd to God. For instance, Bezaleel is faid to be Exod. 31.3, 4. fit 3 &d w itb the Spirit of God in Wisdom, and Under ft anding -, because he cou'd devife cunning Works of Gold^
and Silver^ &c. And the Prophet Ifaiah, after he
"had describ'd the whole art of Plowing and Sow-
Ifaiah 28. 26. ing, fays of the Plowman, His God does inftrucl him
to Difcretion, and teach him. And fpeaking of
— Ver. 29. the Art of Threfhing, he fays, This alfo comes from
the Lord of Hofts, which is wonderful in Counfel, and
excellent in working. Can the Clergy have a better
Pretence to Kjure-divino-fhip^ than the Plowman
and Threfher ? Where is it faid of them, that their
God inftrucl s them to Difcretion, and teaches them ? Or,
that their Art c ernes from the Lord ofHofts, which is
wonderful in Counfel^ and excellent in Working ?
t Sam. 24. As fome Things are immediately referr'd to God,
1 ^ hron - 2I ° fo others are as immediately referr'd to Satan 5 nay,
the fame Action is imputed both to God and Satan.
Thefe few, among numberlefs Inftances, I men-
tion, to fhew, that the Scripture fuppofes, that
from our Reafon we have fuch infallible Tefts, to
judge what is the Will of God, that we are fafe
from being mifled by any ExpriTions of this
Nature.
B. Surely, the moral Precepts deliver'd by
our Saviour, are not exprefs'd thus obfcurely.
A. These, no doubt, are the plaineft ; yet
even Thefe, generally fpeaking, are not to be taken
in their obvious and literal Meaning : As for In-
Luke 6. 35, -fiance, Lend^ hoping for nothing again. He that takes
away

Ch. 13. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 307
away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alfo. Of himMzt. 5. 40.
who takes away thy Goods, ajk them not again. And Luke @* 3**
fhould we not, without having recurfe to the Rea-
on of Things, be apt to think, that the Poor, as
fuch, were the onJy Favourites of Heaven: Bleffed^uke 6. 20,
be ye Poor -, for Tours is the Kingdom of God. Blejfed 2 ! *
are ye that hunger, for yejhall be filled. And fhould
we not be likewise apt to imagine, that the Gospel
was an Enemy to the Rich, as fuch *, and confe-
quently, to all thofe Methods which make a Na-
tion rich : As, Woe unto you Rich ; for you have re-- 24.
ceiv'd your Confolation. It is eaier for a Camel /0-- * 1 1. 23.'
pafs thro 9 the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to
enter into the Kingdom of God. And that no Man
might be rich, it was a general Precept, Sell what ye have, and give Alms. Nay, the Woman that cast her two Mites into the Treasury is commended, because she cast in all she had, even all her Living. And to mew that none were exempt from this Precept, Jesus says to the Man, who had observ'd all Precepts from his Youth, One Thing thou lackest, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor. This Precept is impracticable in a Christian State, because there could be no Buyers where all were to be Sellers, and so is a Community of Goods, tho' in use among the Essenes, and the Christians at first.

'Tis certain, that such Passages, as Blessed are, they that mourn, you that laugh now, ye shall mourn and weep: Woe unto you that laugh now, ye shall mourn and weep: And take no Thought for your Life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink. Take no Thought for the Morrow, Consider the Ravens, for they neither sow, nor reap. Consider the Lilies, how they grow, Luke 11.24, they toil not, they spin not, and yet, I say, Solomon, lb. ver. 27, in all his Glory, was not array'd like one of these. 'Tis certain, I say, that such like Texts have, by being interpreted literally, run Men into monstrous Absurdities,

X % From

303 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Mat. 5.39. From this Text, Refist not Evill but whoever pall finite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also; and some others of the like nature: Not only the primitive Fathers, but a considerable Sett, even now among the Protocols, think all Self-de-scence unlawful.

Mat. 19.12. From these Sayings of our Saviour, There are some Eunuchs, which were born from their Mothers' Womb; and there are some Eunuchs, which were made Eunuchs of Men; and there be Eunuchs, which have made themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven 9 s-fake: The primitive Fathers, who thought they ought not to put a different Meaning on the Word Eunuch in the latter End of the Verse, from what it had twice before; believ'd it a piece of heroick Virtue for Men to castrate themselves: And tho' by the Roman Law, no One could be castrated with-

Apol. Sea.37. out Leave of the President, as Justin observes; yet he commends a Youth, who perform'd this Operation on himself without it. And you know that the
Bifliop of Alexandria highly approv'd this Atfion m Origen, as an Inftance of heroick Virtue; tho' afterwards, when he became his capital Enemy, he as much condemn'd it. Do not thefe things suffi- ciently ihew, that we muft not deviate one Tittle from what our Reafon diclates in any of thefe im- poent Points? Nay, even the Precept of fornv

Mat. is. 22. ing Injuries, not only f even, but feventy Times fev en, except interpreted confidently with what the Light of Nature diclates to be our Duty, in preferving our Reputation, Liberty, and Property; and in doing all we can in our feveral Stations, to hinder al Injury and Injuftice from others, as well as our- (elves; would be a Doctrine attended with fatal Confluences: So that the Expediency, or even Lawfuluel of forgiving Injuries, depends on fuch Circumftances as human Difcretion is to judge of.

As I am a Member of the Common- wealth, I cant be a Judge in my own Caufe; and tho' I may legally prolate a Man who has injur'd me,

yes

Cb. 13. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 309

yet if the Injury be but flight, and by my over- looking it, he may become my Friend; common Prudence will oblige me to forgive him: But if he, taking Advantage of my Good Nature, injures me the more, anymore frequently, becaufe he may do it with Impunity, the Precept of forgiving, tho' it forbids me to punifh for Punifhment-fake, does no more in this Cafe bar me of a legal Remedy, than it does Nations of refenting National Injuries: And all good Governments oblige People, for the fake of the Common Good, to profecute thofe who have injur'd them by robbing, ftealing, or any other ways of cheating or defrauding them. So that 'tis the Reafon of things, which in all Circumftan- ces, muft determine us how to act; and confe- quently, when this Precept is truly ftated, there is nothing new in it: But if it be not truly ftated, it is fuch a new Doctrine, as may be attended with fatal Confluences.

Celfus fays, that " the Doctrine of forgiving In- Origen contra "juries, was not peculiar to the Chriflians, tho' c e " um - h 7- " they taught it after a groffer manner." And p ' 373 " Confucius thus expreftes this Doctrine, " Acknow-Max. 23. in " ledge thy Benefits by the Return of Benefits 5 but** f atcd < 4 never revenge Injuries." _ ^ Confucius.

B. Confucius, tho' he forbids the revenging Inju-
ries, yet he did not carry things to that State of Perfection, as to teach the loving our Enemies but on the contrary maintains, " We may have an Max. 63. ' ' A version for an Enemy without desiring Revenge; " And 'tis only the good Man, who can love, andMax. 15. " hate with Reason."

1. Are not the Passions of Love and Hatred given us by God, to be exercised on proper Objects? Actions, abstractedly consider'd, are not the Objects of Love and Hate,' but Persons for the sake of their Actions: And are not the Actions of some Men too detestable to create in us any Sentiments, but of Aversion; so as to oblige us to bring

X 3 them

310 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

them to condign Punishment? Nay, must we not learn to hate ourselves, before we can learn to love those that hate us?

If we ought not, nay, cannot love the Devil, because our Enemy; how can we love those Devils incarnate, those Enemies of God and Men, who hate, and persecute Men for mewing their Love to God, in following the Dictates of Conscience? If Love carries with it Complaisance, Esteem, and Friendship, and these are due to all Men; what Distinction can we then make between the best, and worst of Men? Tho' God, it's true, makes the Sun to shine, and the Rain to fall on the evil and the good \ and, indeed, how could it be otherwise in the present State of Things? Yet, certainly, he does not love evil Men, tho' he bears with them for a time.

I am so far from thinking the Maxims of Confucius, and Jesus Christ to differ; that I think the plain and simple Maxims of the former, will help to illustrate the more obscure ones of the latter, accommodated to the then way of speaking. Our

Mat. 5. 43. Saviour's saying, 'Te have heard that it hath been said, tfloGii /hail love thy Neighbour, mid hate thine Enemy -,

Divines, have, in vain, puzzled themselves to find out that Text in the Old Law -, for could they find it as they do other Texts, that our Saviour in the same Chapter, by this Way of speaking refers to it would only mew, that the Divine Precepts were not consistent with one another. Indeed, St. Paul Rom. 12. 2p. says, If thy Enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him Brink; for in so doing thou fhalt heap Coak of Pfalm, 18. 8, Fire on his Head: But treating him thus, can't fure
J 3. be an Argument of Love; since 'tis in order to
- 120. 4. k ave divine Vengeance fall on his Head.

B. Commentators agree, that these Precepts
of our Saviour are not to be taken in the plain, ob-
vious, and grammatical Meaning of the Words;
but are to be so explain'd, limited, and restrain'd,
as beft ferVe to promote human Happinefs.

2 A. Sup-

Ch. 13. Chrifitianity as Old as the Creation. 311

A. Suppose thofe Precepts are capable of be-
ing thus paraphras'd, yet how do we know this
was the Design of the Preacher? The Effems (a
Sect our Saviour never found fault with) had, as
is plain from Philo and Jofephus, Rules much the
fame; which they interpreted according to the
plain and literal Meaning: And the Chriftians, as I
mall fhew hereafter, for fome Centuries, under-
ftood moft of thefe Precepts after the fame manner;
believing that the Nature of moral Rules requir'd
they mould be thus interpreted; efpecially fuch as
are defign'd to govern the Actions of the moft ig-
norant and illiterate; and taught too by a Perfon,
whose infinite Knowledge muft enable him fo to
exprefs himfelf, as that his Words mould not be
liable to the leaft Mifconftruction.

B. However Chriftians at firft depending on
the Grammatical, and obvious Meaning of the
Words, might miftake; yet Reafon taught them
afterwards how they were to be interpreted.

A. Reason, then, muft be our Guide; and we
muft know our Duty from the Light of Nature,
antecedently to thofe Precepts; otherwife we cou'd
never know it was our Duty to put fuch Senfes
on Words, as they otherwife feem not to bear.
Befides,
Shou'd not Rules concerning Morality, be
fuiited to Mens particular Circumftances, plainly
defcribing that Conduct which they require? Is
not this the Design of the Municipal Laws in every
Country? What Benefit cou'd Subjects have,
from Laws written in fuch a loofe, general, and
undetermin'ed manner; as Lend, hoping for Nothing
again: If any Man wittfue thee at Law, and take
away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak alfo: Of him
who takes away thy Goods, ajk them not again; Or thofe
other Texts which feem to condemn the Rich as
fuch, and require, not the fetting the Poor at Work,
but the felling All, and giving to the Poor; Or thofe other Precepts, which feem to forbid Self-defence;

312 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,

Or require us to take no Thought for your Life; Or for the Morrow f And that too by Arguments drawn from Lilies, neither toiling, nor [pinning? The fame may be faid of all general, and undetermin'd Rules in the New Teftament, tho' more plainly deliver'd:

Cpl. 3. 23. As for instance, tho' 'tis faid, Servants, obey your Tups 2. 9. Mafters in all Things-, and pleafe them well in all Things-, yet is the Meafure of Obedience due from Servants to Mafters any otherwife to be learnt, than from the Agreement of the Parties, or the Cuftom of the Country? 'Tis faid, We are to render to Csefar, the Things that are Csefar's *, but muft we not learn from the Laws in every Nation, who is Cefar? And what is his Due? Otherwife we fhpu'd act like thofe wicked Priefts, who, not long iince, from general Words of Obedience, wou'd have def hoy'd our happy Confitution, and treach'roufly inverted the Prince with an Abfolute Power. We are to render all Men their Dues; but what thofe Dues are, we are to learn from the Reafon of Things, and the Laws of the Country.

In a word, 'tis the Tendency of Actions, which makes them either good or bad; they that tend to promote human Happinefs are always good *, and thofe that have a contrary Tendency, are always bad. And 'tis the Circumfiances Men are under, by which we are to judge of the Tendency of Actions. As for Instance, the killing a Man, confeider'd without its Circumfiances, is an Action, neither good or bad 8-, but by the Magiftrate, when* the publick Good requires; or by a private Man, when neceflary for Self-defence, is an Action always good: But done when the publick Good does not require it, when there is no fuch Danger, and with Malice pronefe; 'tis always evil. Taking up Arms againft a Perfon entrusted with the Protection of the Common-wealth, can't be determin'd to be good, or bad, without confidering Circumfiances: If he has not abus'd his Truft, it will be Rebellion, the higheft of Crimes; but if he has

betray'4

Ch. 13. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 313

betray 'd that Truft, and opprefs'ed the Community,
then a juft and neceffary Defence. Injoying a Wo-
man, or lufting after her, can't be faid, without
considering the Circumstances, to be either good, or
evil; that warm Defire, which is implanted in
Humane Nature, can't be criminal when perfu'd
after fuch a manner, as tends moft to promote the
Happinefs of the Parties; and to propagate and
preferve the Species. What we call Inceft, is now
for many good Reafons not to be allowed of; yet
it was a Duty in the Children of Adam and Eve:
And if the neareft of Kin were now thrown on a
defert Ifland, I fee no Reafon, but that they might
act as the firft-born Pair did.

Tho' there were ever fo many Texts in the
New as well as Old Teftament againft Ufury, and
thofe too back'd by the unanimous Authority of
all the Fathers; yet the forbidding it, especcially in
trading Nations, wou'd now be immoral; fince
without it Induftry wou'd in a great meafure be
difcourag'd, Arts unimprov'd, and Trade and
Commerce, confiffing chiefly in Credit, deftroy'd.
Belides, what Reafon can be affign'd, why a Man
fhou'd any more lend his Money, than let his Lands
for nothing? And when that common Rule of
doing as we would be done *, or at leaft, without any ill
Tendency. Nay, to go a little farther j was not
the Command of abftaining from Blood, given after
the Deluge to the then whole Race of Mankind,
and often repeated in the Law? And in the New
Teftament, is not this fame Precept enjoyn'd the
Gentile Converts, by the unanimous Decree of the
Apostles, and by the Holy Ghoft too, as neceflary?
nay, equally fo with the abftaining from Fornica-
tion; and thought by all Chriftians, for many
Ages, to be of perpetual Obligation? Yet who is
now fo ridiculous, as out of Religion to abftain
from Black-Puddings? Who now, to give another
Inftance, thinks it a Duty to wafh his Neighbour's
Feet?

3 14 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13.

Feet? tho' a Thing not only commanded by a
dying Saviour, after the moft folemn Manner, and
under no lefs Penalty than having no Part in him;
but enforc'd, and inculcated by his own Example.
Mat. 5. 34. Our Saviour commands Men not to /wear at al\nJames 5. 12. fln d St. James imprefles the fame Precepts, by fay-
ing, Above all Things /wear not *, and by the Man-
ner of its being introdue'd by our Saviour, it feems
chiefly to relate to Oaths taken on folemn Occa-
fions: It is /aid of Old, thou Jh alt not for/wear thy-
Mat. s- 33> felf but Jh alt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths \ But

3 ** I fay unto you, fwear not at all.-- And yet, who

now, befides Quakers, refuse to fwear at all ? By thefe, you fee, tho* several other Inftances might be produ'e'd, how Chriftians have, in the main, taken the Tendency of Actions to be the Rule, to judge of their Lawfulness or Unlawfulness, Goodness or Badness: And in thofe few things Superftition has made them judge otherwife, has it not always been to their Prejudice ?

B. Is there no Exception to this Rule ? Muft Men, at all Times, make their Words and Thoughts agree; and never fpeak, but juft as they think 1

A. The Rule I have laid down holds even here; for tho' Speech was given to Men to communicate their Thoughts, and 'tis generally for their common Good, that Men fhou'd fpeak as they think, yet this common Good prefcribes certain Restrictions: Deceiving an Enemy in a juft War, either by Words or Actions, if it tends to bring about the End of War, Peace; is certainly a Duty: And the fame Reafon obliges People not to keep thofe Promifes, tho* sworn to, which they have been fore'd to make to Robbers and Thieves. And fome go fo far, as to think, that thofe who wou'd force others to declare their Opinions to their own prejudice, in fuch Matters where the Government has no Concern; have no more Right to Truth than Robbers, and other publick Enemies.

Friend-

Ch. 13. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 315

Friendship will fometimes oblige Men to deceive People, when it manifeftly tends to their Good, and none are prejudic'd by it *, and all praclife it with relation to Children, fick People, and Men in Paflion: Muft not he be an ill Man, indeed, who would not fave an innocent Person, by telling his Perfuer a Falhhood ? This is a Duty he owes to both, the Perfuer and Perfu'd. And if Men, (as none fcruple it) may bid their Servants fay, They are not at home \ and do feveral other Things of this nature: Why may they not, when Silence will be interpreted to their Prejudice, deceive impertinent People, in fuch Matters where they have no Concern? Thus, you fee, there are certain Exceptions to this Rule, which, as well as the Rule itself, are built on the Good of Mankind --, and yet
these Exceptions will by no means justify mental Reservations, or Equivocations.

The Children of Israel, in the time of the Judges, were certainly none of the best Cursists; who, when in a Quarrel (the oddest that ever was,) having [worn before the Lord at Mizpah, not to give any of their Daughters to Wife to Benjamin; and, in pursuance of this Quarrel, destroyed them with their Wives and Children, except 600, who escaped by flying into a Cave—, and then reflecting that a whole Tribe would be lost, if they did not give them Wives; and their Oaths, accompany'd with a Curse, violated, if they did •, found out these two Expedients: The Men of Jabesh Gilead, not concerning themselves in this Quarrel, nor coming to the general Assembly, they destroyed with their Wives and Children, except 400 Virgins—, whom they gave for Wives to these Benjamites: But these not being a sufficient Number, they advis'd, nay, commanded them to seize on some of their Daughters as they were dancing, and to carry them off. Thus these merciful and religious People preserved their Oaths, and their Brother Benjamin.

B. The

316 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 13,

B. The Hebrew Midwives, no doubt, acted according to your Rule in deceiving Pharaoh, by not destroying the Hebrew Male Children; because they said, "They feared God, and God dealt well with them, 20, 21. and made them houses; but there's another Precedent in the same History, which Teems very surprising:

Exod. 1. 17, said, "They feared God, and God dealt well with them, 20, 21. and made them houses; but there's another Precedent in the same History, which seems very surprising:

Exod. 3. 8. The Lord, the he told Moses, and the Elders of

—Ver. 18. Israel, his real Deliverer bringing his People out of Egypt into the Land of the Canaanites; yet bids

Exod. 5. 3. them say to the King of Egypt, Let us go three Days Journey into the Wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God •, lest he fall upon us with Pestilence, or with the Sword: We can't sacrifice in the Land, for we must sacrifice the Abomination of the Egyptians:

—Ver. 26. Our Cattle must go with us, for thereof we ?nuft serve the Lord. And at last, when Pharaoh, whole Heart God had frequently harden'd, com'd with their
- 12. 31. Request, he bids them go serve the Lord as ye have said, and upon this Occasion, they borrow'd of

- 12. 35, the Egyptians, as the Lord order'd them, Jezvils of Gold and Silver, and Raiment, even to the spoiling of them -, and when Pharaoh (who all along seem'd jealous of their Design, and bids them not go far away ") found that this solemn Sacrifice was a meer Pretence; and that they really fled with all they had borrow'd of his People, he perfu'd the Fugitives -, the Consequence was, that the Egyptians, instead of obtaining Restitution, were miraculously destroy'd, and Pharaoh loft his Life as well as his Subjects; and those who had dealt thus treacherously with them, were as miraculously preserv'd.

A. As to this Point, I can only advise you to consult our learned Commentators, who will satisfy Grn.35. 5. you in this Matter, as well as why the terror of the Lord hinder'd Justice to be done upon the two Sons of Jacob, for the vilest Piece of Cruelty and Treachery they committed on the Shechemites. But not to meddle with things foreign to our purpose,

Ch. 13. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 317

I will venture to say, that this Rule of acting according as the Circumstances we are under, point out to us to be for the general Good, is a Rule without Exception; whereas all other general Rules are of little use, when apply'd to particular Cases, because of the many Exceptions to them, founded on other Rules, equally general: And further, that this universal, and unexceptionable Rule is highly necessary, in explaining all the Precepts of our Saviour; especially those relating to loving of Enemies, and forgiving Injuries. And the rather, because

The Ecclefiastics, tho' they cry up the Precepts of Mens loving their own Enemies; yet they effectually evade this, and all other moral Precepts, by telling them 'tis their Duty to hate God's Enemies; and those to be sure are God's Enemies, who refuse blindly to submit to their Dictates; especially in Matters relating to their Power and Profit: And have too found out many Ways of making the Precept of forgiving Injuries ufeless 5 more particularly by telling Men, that 'tis for the Correction of Manners, for the Good of their own, as well as their Neighbours Souls, that the Spiri-
tual Courts are erected; where People, for such hafty and angry Words, as no Action (there being no real Damage) will lie for at Common Law, are to be cenfur'd. And thus Numbers of ordinary People are, on this pretence, to the great Benefit of thofe Courts, frequently undone; and fpiteful Perfons gratify their Malice, without any Satisfac-
tion, but that of ruining their Neighbours, and very often themfelves.

I might mew you, in support of my never- fail-
ing Rule of judging of Actions by their Tendency, that we are carefully to diftinguifh between the A ctions of Jefus himfelf •, fince in fome (thefe being no otherwife to be accounted for) he, as Divines them-
ffelves own, acted by virtue of his Prophetical Of-
ifice y thefe, confequently, can be no Precedent for us: But of this hereafter.

B, Yov

3 18 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Cb. 13.

B. You have already, I muft own, taken a great deal of pains, to fhew, that God, in creating Mankind, had no other Defign than their Happ-
inefs •, and that all the Rules he gave them (it being repugnant to his Nature to have any arbi-
trary Commands) cou'd have no other Tendency; and that by making them moral Agents, he made them capable of knowing wherein their Happinefs conffits •, or in other Words, of difcovering what-
ever the Relations they ftand in to God, and their Fellow-Creatures, make fit to be obferv'd. And from thence you conclude, Mens Happinefs, at one time as well as another, confirming in the fame things; that the Gofpel (which can make no Al-
teration in the Relations Men ftand in to God, and one another, or the Duties that flow from thence 5> ) cou'd only be a Republication, or Reftoration of that Religion, which is founded on the eternal Rea-
on of Things: Which, you fuppofe, is what we are (till govern'd by; fince we are oblig'd to recede from the Letter tho' the Words are ever fo plain, if that recedes from the Reafon of Things •, as all own the Letter does, in innumerable Places relating to God himfelf; by imputing human Parts, human Infirmities, and human Paffions, even of the worft kind, to him •, and making thofe the Caufe of many of his Actions: And that as in the Old Teftament there are feveral things, either commanded, or ap-
proved, which wou'd be criminal in us to obferve, becaufe we can't reconcile our doing them with the Reafon of things •, fo in the New Teftament, its Precepts are for the moft part deliver'd either
fo hyperbolically, that they would lead Men aftray, were they govern'd by the ufual Meaning of Words, or elfe exprefs'd in fo loofe, general, and undetermin'd a manner, that Men are as much left to be govern'd by the Reafon of things, as if there were no fuch Precepts: And the Scripture not diftinguifhing between thole Precepts which are occaional, and which are not, we have no ways to

Ch. 14. Chrijli unity as Old as the Creation, 319
to diftinguifh them, but from the Nature of Things j which will point out to us thofe Rules, which eternally oblige, whether deliver'd in Scripture, or not. Thefe Sentiments you fo ftrongly inforce, that I would find it difficult not to yield, had I not fo able a Combatant as Dr. S. Clark, for my Second; who, in his Excellent Difcourfe of the un- alterable Obligation of natural Religion, and the Truth, and Certainty of the Chriftian Revelation; not only fhews, that they are diftinct Religions 5 but the in- finite Advantage the latter has above the former: And tho' this Good, as well as Great Man is dead, whereby the Church has fuftain'd an irreparable Lofs, yet he will for ever live in this immortal Work.

CHAP. XIV.

Dr. Clark's Difcourfe of The Unchangeable Obligation of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Chriftian Reve- lation, confider'd; and from thence 'tis jhewn, how inconjiftent foever with the Defign of that Difcourfe, that nothing can be a Part of Religion, but what is founded on the Nature, and Reafbn of Things.

A, T Own, the Doctor got immortal Honour by that Difcourfe; how 'tis admir'd, the sevenih Edition fhews: And we may well imagine, an Author, who ufually exhausts the Subject he writes on, has here omitted nothing that makes for his purpofe. And, therefore, fince 'tis your Pleafure, I will fully confider this Difcourfe, and begin with the Character he gives the Law of Nature; and fee whether he does not reprefent it fo abolutely per- fect, as to take in every thing that God requires of Mankind: And then examine what he fays in behalf
Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14

behalf of Revelation, in contradiction to the Re-
ligion of Nature.

Edit. 4. p. 82. The Doctor not only maintains, that " the Law
of Nature is eternal, universal, and absolutely
unchangeable," but has two Sections to prove,

pag. 47. m That the Will of God always determines itself to
act according to the eternal Reason of Things y

pag. 48. c Rational Creatures are oblig'd to go-
vern themselves in all their Actions by the same
eternal Rule of Reason:" Which supposes, that
all rational Creatures are not only capable of know-
ing this eternal Rule of Reason, but likewise of
knowing there can be no other Rule, for the Acti-
ons both of God and Man. In his previous Dis-
course of the Being of a God, he affirms, that .

pag. 131. ct They, who are not govern'd by this Law, are
for setting up their own unreasonable Self-will*
in opposition to the Nature, and Reason of

Things acting contrary to their own Rea-

Order, by which the Universe is, and by
consequence, offering the higher! affront imagi-
able to the Creator of all Things, who himself
governs all his Actions by these Rules, and can-
not but require the same of all his reasonable
Creatures." And in this Discourse he says,

FS»49* " e All-powerful Creator and Governor of
the Universe, who has the absolute, and uncon-
troublable Dominion of all things in his own
hands, and is accountable to none for what he
does, yet thinks it no Diminution of his Power,
to make this Reason of Things the unalterable Rule,
and Law of all his own Actions in the Govern-
ment of the World, and does nothing by mere
Will and Arbitrarinefs," And indeed, if God
does nothing by mere Will and Arbitrarinefs, 'tis
impossible there can be any other Rule but the Rea-
pag. 113. fon of Things. And accordingly he says, " The
eternal and unchangeable Nature and Reason of
the things themselves are the Law of God *, not

** only
Ch. 14. Chrijliahity as Old as the Creation. 321

" only to his Creatures, but alfo to himfelf ; as be-
ing the Rule of his own Actions in the Govern-
ment of the World." And, as a learned Pre- P*3- 87, 88.
late of our own has excellently fhewn, " net
barely his infinite Power, but the Rules of this
eternal Law, are the true Foundation, and the
ct Meafure of his Dominion Over his Creatures.
" Now, for the fame Reafon, that God, who hath
no Superior to determine him, yet constantly di-
<fc reds all his own Actions by the eternal Rule of
" Juftice and Goodnefs j 'tis evident all intelligent
-" Creatures in their feveral Spheres and Proportions,
" ought to obey the fame Rule according to the
" Law of their Nature.'* Which is fuppofing it
wou'd be Tyranny in God to have any arbitrary
Commands, or give Man any other Rules, but the
Rules of this eternal Law ; the true Foundation, and
Meafure of his Dominion over his Creatures. And
again, " God who is infinitely felf Sufficient to hispag. uu
" own Happinefs, cou'd have no Motive to create
" Things at all, but only that he might communi-
cate to them his Goodnefs and Happinefs." If
fo, They, who do all the Good they can to them-
selves, and Fellow-Creatures, anfwer the End of
their Creation. " And he fays,, that in Matters P*§ 86,87.'
" of Natural Reafon and Morality, that which is
ft holy and good is not therefore holy and good,
* becaufe it is commanded to be done ; but it is
" therefore commanded by God, becaufe it is holy
" and good # Which fuppofes that all God's Com-
mands, if they are all holy and good, (between which,
I think, the Diftincion is only verbal ;) are found-
ed on the Nature, and Reafon of Things. And ac-
cordingly he fays, " that God has made (his intel-pag. 48.
" ligent Creatures) fo far like himfelf, as to en^
" due them with thofe excellent Faculties of Rea-
'* fon and Will, whereby they are enabled to diftin-
guiſh Good from Evil, and to choofe the one, and
" refufe the other." Which fuppofes thoſe are
the only Things which God commands, or for-
Y bidsj

122 Chrijljanity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

bids; otherwife theſe excellent Faculties wou'd
only enable them to know but Part of the Will of
God ; tho' God can will nothing but what is for
their Good, that being the fole End of his creating
them.

And he fuppofes, That " this Law of Nature
" is not founded in the pofitive Will of God, but
arifes from the different Relations and Respects
which Things have to one another, which makes
some Things fit, and others unfit to be done:

pag. 89. And says, that "the Law of Nature has its full
obligatory Power, antecedent to all Considerations of any particular private and personal Reward
or Punishment annex'd either by natural Consequence, or by positive Appointment, to the Ob-ic fervance, or Neglect of it. This also is very
evident: Because if Good and Evil, Right or
Wrong, Fitnes or Unfitnes of being practifed,
be (as has been fhewn) originally, eternally, and
necelfarily, in the Nature of the Things themselves;
'tis plain, that the View of particular Rewards or
Punishments, which is only an After-Considera-
tion, and does not at all alter the Nature of
Things, cannot be the original Caufe of the Ob-
ligation of the Law, but is only an additional
Weight to enforce the Practice of what Men
were before oblig'd to by right Reafon." And to

pag. 53. prove this he says, that "the Judgment and Con-
science of a Man's own Mind, concerning the
'reaflonable, and Fitnes of the Thing, that
his Actions mould be conformed to fuch, or fuch
iC a Rule, or Law; is the trueft, or fmormaffed Ob-
igation, even more properly, and ftrictly fo, than
any Opinion whatsoever of the Authority of
iC the Giver of a Law, or any Regard he may have
its Sanctions by Rewards and Punishments.
4 For whoever acts contrary to this Sense, and
'Conflance of his own Mind, is necelfarily felf-
condemned and the greateft, and ftrongeft of
all the Obligations is That, which a Man cannot
break through without condemning himself."

Ch. 14. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation, 323

break through without condemning himfelf."

And,

He likewife affirms, that "thefe eternal moral pag- 114.
Obligations, as they are really in perpetual Porce,
merely from their own Nature, and the abftract
u Reaflon of Things; fo alfO they are moreover the
M exprefs and unalterable Will, and Command of
God to his Creatures, which he cannot but ex-
peel: mould, in Obedience to his supreme Author-
ity, as well as in Compliance with the natural
Reaflon of Things, be regularly, and confantly
obser'ved thro' the whole Creation." Which not
only fuppofes, that the Reaflon of Things, and the
divine Commands are infeparable *, but that 'tis the
Reaflon, or the Fitnes of the Thing, that makes a
divine Law *, and consequently, that they who never heard of any external Revelation; yet if they knew, from the Nature of Things, what's fit for them to do, they know all that God will, or can require of them; since his Commands are to be measured by the antecedent Fitnes of things; and Things can only be said to be fit, or unfit, but as they are for, or against the common Good. And if the Creator will do every thing, the Relation he stands in to his Creatures makes fit for him to do *, and expects nothing from them, but what the Relation they stand in to him, and one another, makes like-wise fit for them to do; how can they be ignorant of their Duty? Especially, if, as the Doctor demonstrates, " All the same Reasons and Arguments, pag. n 2. " which discover to Men the natural Fitnes of Things, or Unfitnes of Things, and the necesslary Perfec-tions, or Attributes of God prove equally at " the same time, that That, which is truly the " Law of Nature, or the Reafon of Things, is in " like Manner the Will of God." And, 

H E juftly observes, that tho' " This Method of pag. 1 1$, " deducing the Will of God from his Attributes, 

'*' is of all other the beft and cleareft, the certaineft " and most univerfal, that the Light of Nature af-

Y 2 " fords i

324 Cbrifiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14. " fords; yet there are other collateral Confidera-
tions, which prove, and confirm the fame." And that,
p»g. i2T . u The fame may be prov'd from the Tendency, 44 and Practice of Morality, to the Good and Hap-
" pines of the whole World :" Which, indeed, wou'd be no proof, were any thing commanded that had no Tendency - 9 for fuch things, according to the Penaltys they were to be enforc'd by, would be more or lefs to the hurt of Mankind. To fhew the natural Connection there is between pag. 34. all the Parts of Religion, he fays, " Who believes 44 the Being, and natural Attributes of God, muft 44 of neceflity confefs his moral Attributes alfo. 44 Next, he who owns, and has juft Notions of the 44 moral Attributes of God, cannot avoid acknow-
44 ledging the Obligations of Morality, and Natural 44 Religion. In like manner, he who owns the Ob-
44 ligations of Morality and Natural Religion, muft 44 needs, to support thofe Obligations, and make
them effectual in Practice, believe a future State of Rewards and Punishments" And he "s
pag 8, that the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, is in general deducible, even
demonstrably, by a Chain of clear, and undeniable pag, 125. 44 able Reasoning :" nay, he says, 44 'tis a Proposition in a manner self-evident." And speaking of some Argument he had before mention'd, he pag. 154. says, " Thse are very good, and strong Arguments for the great Probability of a future State •, but 44 That drawn from the Consideration of the moral Attributes of God, seems to amount even to a pag.14©, 141." Demonstration ; Nay, to a compleat Demonstration.

In Short, the Doctor's Hypothesis, that upon God's framing Mankind after the Manner he has done, there are certain Things resulting from thence, which naturally, and necessarily conduce to their Good or Hurt • and that the way to know the Will of God, is to know what those Things are, in

Cb.-i4- Chrilianity as Old as the Creation. 325

in order to do the one, and to avoid the other. For which reason God gave Man Understanding, which (without blaspheming the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God) must be allowed to be sufficient to answer the End for which it was given. . And that a Being infinitely wise and good, as well as wholly disinterested, can require nothing of Men, but what they, for the sake of their own Interest, tho' there were no positive divine Commands, were oblig'd to do 5 and consequently, that whoever acts for his own Good, in Subserviency to that of the Publick, answers the End of his Creation. As this Scheme of Things, to do the Doctor justice, gives us the highest Idea of the Goodness, Wisdom, and Perfection of the divine Being •, so to compleat his moral Character, the Doctor represents the Laws of God, by which Mankind are to govern all their Actions, most plain and obvious, and even impressed on human Nature. And therefore says, that

*\ All rational Creatures are oblig'd to govern P a g- 4 8 - " themselves, in all their Actions, by the eternal " Reason of Things, is evident from the Sense, all y "»^p. 52 " even wicked Men, unavoidably have of their be- " ing under such an Obligation ; and from, the cc Judgment of Mens Confidences on their own V Actions." And that " the most profligate of all lb. p. 54, " Mankind, however indifferently they endeavour
to conceal, and deny their Self-condemnation, yet pag. 57.
cannot avoid making a Difcovery of it fometimes
when they are not aware of it." And that no
Man, but " by the Reafon of his Mind, cannot pag. 53.
but be compell'd to own, and acknowledge, that
there is really such an Obligation indifpenfably
incumbent upon him." And " They who do^g- 6c.
Evil, yetfee^ and approve what is good, and con-
demn in others what they blindly allow in them-
felves ; nay, very frequently condemn even them-
felves alfo, not without great Diforder, and.Un-
" eainefs of Mind in thofe very Things wherein
f they allow themfelves." And herein, give me

Y 3 leave

326 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.
leave to fay, confids the Excellency of the Law of
Nature, that tho' a Man is fo brutih as not to ob-
ferve it himfelf, yet he would have all others religi-
oufly obferve it ; and no Rule can be calculated for
the general Good, but what is fo fram'd : And if
Men wou'd make this a Teft of the Will of God,
how happy wou'd they be?
p. 58. Th e Doctor more fully to prove his Point, fays,

That " the Mind of Man naturally, and nec efarily
" afients to the eternal Law of Righteoufnecs, may
cc ftill better, and more clearly, and more univer-
" ally appear, from the Judgment that Men pafs
tc on each other's Actions, than what we can difcern
" concerning their Confciooufnecs of their own." p. 61. And there he fhews, That " the unprejudiced Mind

" of Man as naturally difapproves Injuftice in
" moral Matters, as in natural Things it cannot but
" difsent from Falhhood, or diflike Incongruitics." And again,
p. 54. "The Cafe is truly thus, that the eternal Dif-
Cl ferences of Good and Evil, the unalterable Rule
" of Right and Equity, do nec efarily, and un-
" avoidably determine the Judgment, and force the
£ Affent of all that ufe any Con fi deration, is unde-
P a g- 55- <c n'ably manifeft from the univerfal Experience of
" Mankind. For no Man willingly, and deliberately
" tranfgrefTes this Rule in any great, and confides
<c able Inftance ; but he acts contrary to the Judg-
* c ment, and Reafon of his own Mind, and fecr etly
" reproaches himfelf for fo doing : And no Man
" obferves, and obeys it fteadily, efpecially in
EC Cafes of Difficulty and Temptation, when it in-
" terfere with any prefent Intereft, Pleafure, or
<e PafTion ^ , but his own Mind commends, and ap-
"plauds him for his Resolution, in executing what
his Conscience cou'd not forbear giving its Affent
to, as just, and right. And this is what St. Paul
means, when he says, (Rom. 2. 14, 15.) that
When the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by
Nature the things contained in the Law" And in

another

Ch. 14. Chrilianity as Old as the Creation. 327
another Place he says, " No Man does good, pag. 152.
" brave, and generous Actions, but the Reason of
" his own Mind applauds him for his so doing;
" and no Man, at any Time, does Things base,
"' vile, dishonourable, and wicked; but at the
" fame Time he condemns himself." And he says,
" that the eternal Rule of Right ought as indif-
cc penably to govern Mens Actions, as it cannot
w but necefTarily determine their Affent."

One would be apt to think, that the Doctor be-
liev'd that Man without Reflection, cou'd not but
know the Law of Nature, and be in love with it;
fince he says, " That in reading Hiftories of far,P a S- 61 -
" and distant Countries, where 'tis manifeft we can
<c have no Concern for the Event of Things, nor
" Prejudices concerning the Characters of Perfons ;
ct who is there that does not praife and admire;
<c nav, highly efleem, and in his Imagination love,
" as it were, the Equity, Truth, Juftice, and Fi-
4t delity of some Perfons ; and with the greater!
" Indignation and Hatred, deteft the Barbarity,
" and Injustice of Others ? Nay further, when the
" Prejudices of corrupt Minds lie all on the fide of
" Injuftice, as when we have obtain'd fome very
" great Profit or Advantage, thro' another Man's
cc Treachery, or Breach of Faith ; yet who is there,
" that upon that very Occasion does not (even to
** a Proverb) diflire the Perfons, and the Aftion^'
" how much foever he may rejoice at the Event?"

These Reafons fhew the infinite Goodnefs of
God, by not only thus deeply imprefiing that Law
on human Nature, by which God expects all Men
fhould govern all their Actions; but in making the
very obferving this Law, to carry with it, diftincl:
from the Good it produces, the higheft Satisfaction, and rational Enjoyment; and the contrary, that Sorrow, Remorse, and Self-condemnation, which are the unavoidable Consequence of acting against it: And of this the Philosophers of Old, and I believe, all since, who do not adulterate Religion with things

328 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14,

things that are not moral*, and consequently, carry no Satisfaction with them, must be fenfible: But as it would be endless, to mention all the Doctor fays of the irrefutable Evidence, as well as the absolute Perfection of the eternal, and immutable Law of Nature; I mall recite but one Paffage more, which he fuppports by the Authority of Bi-

§§ fhop Cumberland. "This, fays he, is that Law of " Nature, to which the Reafon of all Men, every " where, as naturally, and necefTarily affTents, as " all Animals confpire in the Pulf, and Motion " of their Heart and Arteries; or as all Men agree " in their Judgment concerning the Whitenefs of " Snow, or the Brightnefs of the Sun."

B. This, indeed, is fo full and home, that no ancient or modern Deift cou’d have faid more in praife of the unlimited Wifdom, and univerfal Goodnefs of God; than in fuppofing the common JPareqt of Mankind, has given all his Children, even thofe of the lowed Capacities, and at all Times, fufficient Means, of discovering whatever makes for their prefent, and future Happinefs \ and that no Man can plead Ignorance of a Law as evident as that the Sun is bright, or Snow white; and as infeprable from rational Nature, as the Pulf of the Heart and Arteries are from animal Nature.

A. If this be talking like a Deift, all who write on this Subject; talk thus, fince they all maintain, that " there muft be a Law of eternal cc Rectitude flowing from the Nature of Things, " other wise there could be no Actions good, or " lovely in themfelves *, no real Diftinction between " Virtue and Vice; Good or Evil; and that God " can’t difpenfe with his Creatures, or with him- « c felf, for not obferving it \ other wise an arbitrary < c Will, which might change every Moment, would *< govern everything;" and that " this Law of « c eternal Rectitude is implanted in Man at his ** very Creation; and that no Man can act coji-

** trary
Ch. 14. Chrijii unity as Old as the Creation. o 2 g

*? trary to it, but does Violence to himfelf, and " fins againft his very Make, and Conftitution. " And can it be otherwife, when the only innate Principle in Man is the Defire of his own Happi-

nens i and the Goodnefs of God requires no more than a right cultivating this Principle •, in prefer-
ing a general, or publick j to a particular, or private Good ? And where there are two Evils, and both can't be avoided, to choofe the lefs fub

raticne boni.

The latter part of the Doctor's Difcourfe is chiefly levell'd againft thofe he calls the True Deifts ; and that you may know what fort of Men they are he combats, he gives you their Creed.

" These Deifts, fays he, did they believe what p. t y. " they pretend, have juft, and right Notions of " God, and of all the divine Attributes in every " Refpect •, who declare they believe there is one " Eternal, Infinite, Intelligent, All-powerful, and cc Wife Being ; the Creator, Preferver, and Gover-

Ci nor of all things ; that this fupreme Caufe is a " Being of infinite Juftice, Goodnefs and Truth, " and all other moral as well as natural Perfec-
cc tions ; that he made the World for the Manifefta-

tion of his Power and Wifdom, and to commu-

cc nicate his Goodnefs and Happinefs to his Crea-
" tures ; that he prefer ves it by his continual all-

u wife Providence, and governs it according to the " eternal Rules of infinite Juftice, Equity, Good-

nefs, Mercy and Truth ; that all created, ratio-
" nal Beings, depending continually upon Him, are " bound to adore, worfhip, and obey Him •, to " praife Him for all things they enjoy, and to " pray to Him for every thing they want ; that " they are all oblig'd to promote in their pro-
<c portion, and according to the Extent of their fe-
"veral Powers and Abilities, the general Good " and Welfare of thofe Parts of the World where-
" in they are plac'd : In like Manner, as the di-

#t vine Goodnefs is continually promoting the uni-

" verfal

330 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

" verfal Benefit of the Whole \ that Men, in parti-
44 cular, are every where oblig'ci to make it their 44 Bufinefs, by an univerfal Benevolence, to promote
the Happinessof all others; that in order to this,
every Man is bound always to behave himself fo
towards others, as in Reason he would defire
they mould in the like Circumstances deal with
him -, wherefore he is oblig'd to obey, and
submit to his Superiors in all juit, and right
things, for the Prefer vation of Society, and the
Peace and Benefit of the Publick; to be jufit and
honest, equitable and fincere in all his Dealings
with his Equals, for the keeping inviolable. the
everlafting Rule of Righteousness, and main-
taining an universal Trufthood and Confidence,
Friendship and Affection amongst Men; and to-
wards his Inferiors to be gentle and kind, eafy
C and affable, charitable afid willing to aflift as
many as ftand in need of his Help, for the Pre-
fervation of universal Love and Benevolence
amongft Mankind, and in imitation of the Good-
ness of God, whopreferves, and does Good to
all his Creatures, which depend entirely upon him
for their very Being, and all that they enjoy *,
that in reftpect of himfelf, every Man is bound
to preferve, as much as in him lies, his own
Being, and the right ufe of all his Faculties, fo
t long as it fhall pleafe God, who appointed him
his Station in this World, to continue him there-
in *, that therefore, he is bound to have an exacl:
* 4 Government of his Paffions, and carefully to
abftain from all Debaucheries and Abufes of<br>himfelf, which tend either to the Destrudion of
his own Being, or to the Diforders of his Facul-
ties, and difabling him from performing his
Duty, or hurryng him into the Practice of un-
reafonable and unjuft Things: Laftly, that ac-
cording as Men regard, or neglect thofe Obliga-
tions, fo they are proportionally acceptable, or<br>difpleafting unto God j who being fupreme Go-
vernor

Ch. 14. Chrifiianity as Old as the Creation. 331

" vernor of the World, cannot but teftify his Fa-
vor or Difpleafture, at fome Times, or other;
" and consequently, fince this is not done in the
" prefent State, therefore there muft be a future
" State of Rewards and Punifhments in a Life to
" come."

The Deifts, no doubt, will own, that the Doc-
tor has done them Juflice; fince all their Principles,
as he repreffents them, have a direct Tendency to
make them good Men; and contain nothing to
diverft them from intirely attending to all the
Duties of Morality, in which the whole of their
Religion consists; and which leaves them no room for those endless Quarrels and fatal Divisions, which Zeal for other Things has occasion'd among their Fellow-Creatures, and whom they pity upon the account of that infupportable Bondage, which Superstition has, in most Places, laid them under: And must not a Religion, which the Doctor has prov'd to be demontrably founded on the eternal Reason of Things, have a more powerful Influence on rational Beings, than if it was laid on any other Bottom? How can a Religion, which, as the Doctor describes it, carries in all its Parts, such evident Marks of Wisdom and Goodness, fail to make Men in love with their Duty; when they must plainly fee, That, and their Interest to be in-separable? If Princes requir'd no more of their Subjects, and private Men of their Neighbours, than to be govern'd by these Principles, how happy wou'd the World be, thus govern'd?

I do not perceive the Doctor himself finds any Defect in their Principles; but only objects to their Manner of taking them as they are discoverable by the Light of Nature, and the Reason of Things,

B. Is not that a very just Objection?

i. Not from one who supposes, that "the eternal Reason of things ought to be the Rule by which all Men ought govern all their Actions;" and who, among other things of the like nature, affirms, that "the original Obligation of all is the eternal Reason of Things; that Reason, which God himself, who has no Superior to direct him, or to whose Happiness nothing can be added, or any thing diminished from it, yet constantly obliges himself to govern the World by: And the more excellent and perfect his Creatures are, the more cheerfully, and steadily are their Wills determin'd by this supreme Obligation, in Conformity to the Nature, and in Imitation of the most perfect Will of God."

B. Why do you think This favours Deism?
A. Because, if the eternal Reason of Things is the supreme Obligation, must not That, if there's any difference between It and External Revelation,
take place? And must not that Rule, which can
annul any other, be not only the supreme, but the
sole Rule? For as far as Men take any other Rule,
so far they lose of their Perfection, by ceasing to
be govern'd by this Rule, in Conformity to the
Nature, and in Imitation of the perfect Will of
God. And if this mod perfect Will of God is to
be thus known, can things that have another Ori-
ginal, and are of a later Date, be any Part of the
most perfect Will of God? Or, can the eternal
Reafon of things extend to things that do not be-
long to Reafon? or, as Divines love to fpeak, are
toemonftration above Reafon? Or, can the Doctor fuppofe, there's

"{ndji^ e 'b g f 2 ^ Other Rule ' t * lan the Nature, or Reafon of
*God, pf'i i i Things, when he makes no Medium between Mens
being govern'd by it, and by their own unreafonable Will?

In fhort, 'tis the View with which an Action is
done, that makes it moral: He, who pays his
Debts out of a Principle of Honesty, does a moral
Action; while he that does the fame for fear of
the Law, can't be faid to act morally: And can
he, who does a thing to avoid being punifhed, or'
in

Ch. 14. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 333

...in hopes of being rewarded hereafter; and for
the fame Reafon is ready to do the contrary; me-
rit, at leaft, equally with him, who is in love with
his Duty, and is govern'd, not by fervile Motives,
but by the original Obligation of the moral Fitnefs
of things; in Conformity to the Nature, and in
Imitation of the perfect Will of God. This the
Doctor will not deny to be true Deifm; and that
they who do not act thus, defer ve not the Title of
True Deifts.

The Doctor, after he has himfelf given us a
confident Scheme of Deifm, fays, " There is now?*Z- 33-
" no fuch thing, as a confident Scheme of Deifm:

" That which alone was once fuch ceafes now

" to be fo, after the Appearance of Revelation." If
Chriftianity, as well as Deifm, confifts in being
govern'd by the original Obligation of the moral
Fitnefs of Things, in Conformity to the Nature,
and in Imitation of the perfect Will of God; then
they both mull: be jthe fame: But if Chriftianity
confifts in being govern'd by any other Rule, or
requires any other Things, has not the Doctor
himself given the Advantage to Deity?

These True Christian Deists, as, I think, the Doctor ought to call them, say; that tho' the Doctor's Discourse is chiefly level'd against them, yet he can't differ with them, without differing from himself; and condemning in one Part of his elaborate Treatise, what he has approv'd in the other. For,

If Christianity has not, say they, destroy'd Men's moral Agency, or forbid them to act as moral Agents; they must now, as well as formerly, judge of the Will of God, by that Reason given them by an All-gracious God, to distinguish between Good and Evil; the only things to which the Precepts of a Being, who, as the Doctor owns, is incapable of acting arbitrarily, can extend; and these Deists agree with the Doctor in his two first Propositions, upon which, the whole of his Reasoning is built: "That from the Ceternal, and necessary Differences of Things, there naturally arise certain moral Obligations; which are of themselves incumbent on all rational Creatures, antecedent to all positive Institution, and to all Expectation of Reward and Punishment." And, "That the fame eternal moral Obligations, which arise necessarily from the natural Differences of Things, are moreover the express Will and Command of God to all rational Creatures:" And accordingly they judge of the positive Will of God, from those eternal moral Obligations, which arise necessarily from the natural Differences of Things; which being incumbent on all rational Creatures, antecedent to all positive Institution, can't but be known by them •, and having, agreeable to the Doctor's Direction, thus chosen their Religion, they say, 'tis impossible for them (since there can't be two Originals of the same thing) to choose that Religion* from external Revelation, which they have already chosen from internal Revelation: And if external Revelation can't alter the Nature of Things, and make that to be fit, which is in itself unfit •, or make that necessary, which is in itself unnecessary •, it can only be a Transcript of the Religion of Nature; and for every thing it says, is to bejudg'd of by the Reason, and Nature of Things; otherwvise, say they, we might be oblig'd to admit things, which, for ought we know, are as necessarily false, as God is true; fince "all Doctrines inconfistent with Mo-
Besides, if these moral Obligations, which of themselves are incumbent on all rational Creatures, and which likewise shew themselves from their internal Excellency, to be the Will of God; are as evident, as the Sun is bright, how can Men, say these Deists, believe on leffer Evidence, what they know before to be certain on the greatest? In this

Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 33

this Cafe, muft not Faith be fhallow'd up by Knowledge, and Probability by Demonstration?

These Deists intirely agree with the Doctor, when he afferts, that " Some Doctrines are in their own nature neceflarily and demonftrably true; fuch as are all thole which concern the Obligation of plain moral Precepts t, and thefe neither need, nor can receive any ftronger Proof from Miracles, than what they have already, (tho' not, perhaps, fo clearly indeed to all Capacities,) from the Evidence of right Reafon. Other Doctrines are in their own nature neceflarily falfe, and impoffible to be true; fuch as are all Absurdities and Contradictions and all Doctrines that tend to promote Vice, and thefe can never receive any Degree of Proof from all the Miracles in the World." But as to what the Doctor adds, " That other Doctrines are in their own Nature indifferent, or poffible, or, perhaps, probable to be true; and thofe cou'd not have '* been known to be pofitively true, but by the fc Evidence of Miracles, which prove them to be certain," Here thefe Deists beg leave to differ with him, as to any Doctrines, in their own nature indifferent, being the Will of God; for that would be to fuppofe, what the Doctor has prov'd to be impoffible, that God acts arbitrarily, and out of meer Wilfulnels. And here they wou'd aik him, fince, as he owns, " Evil Spirits can dop Miracles, and the Nature of the Doctrine to beP 3 12 - prov'd to be divine, muft be taken into Conification, how the Miracles can prove a Doctrine, relating to indifferent Things, to be from God? Or, how there can be any fuch Doctrines in the Christian Religion, if what he fays be true; '* That every one of the Doctrines it teaches, asp. 184. a Matter of Truth, has a natural Tendency, and cc a direct powerful Influence to reform Mens
"Lives, and correct their Manners." This, adds be> "is the great End and ultimate Defign of alltrue

336 Chrijlianly as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14*

"true Religion: And 'tis a great and fatal Miftake to think that any Doctrine, or any Belief what-
ever, can be any otherwife of any benefit toMen, than as it is fitted to promote this main " End."

This fuppofes Men, by their Reafon, are notonly able to know, that it is repugnant to the Na-
ture of God, to require any thing of them, exceptit has a natural Tendency, and a direct powerful
Influence to reform their Lives, or correct theirManners; but likewife to difcern what Doctrines
have this Tendency: And that, if, upon Examina-
tion, they find every Doctrine contain'd in Scrip-
ture has this Tendency, they may, then, fafely pro-
nounce them all to be divine. This previous Exam-
ination, therefore, is highly neceftary to prevent whathe calls a. fatal Miftake.

The Difference between thofe, who wou'd en-
grofs the Name of Chriftians to themfelves, and thefe
Chriftian Beijls^ as I may juftly call them; is, thatthe former dare not examine into the Truth of
Scripture: Doctrines, left they fhould feem to queftion
the Veracity of the Scriptures: Whereas the Latter,
who believe not the Doctrines, becaufe contain'din Scripture; but the Scripture, on account of the
Doctrines j are under no fuch Apprehenfion: For
having critically examin'd thofe Doctrines by thatReafon, which God has given them to diftinguifh
Religion from Superftition; they are fure not to
run into any -Errors of moment; notwithstanding
the confefs'd Obfcurity of the Scriptures, and thofe
many Miftakes that have crept into the Text, whe-
ther by Accident, or Deiign.

p. 314. The Doctor fays, "The moral Part of our Sa-
viour's Doctrine would have appear'd. infallibly"true, whether he had ever work'd Miracles, or"no. The reft of his Doctrines was what evi^"dently tended to promote the Honour of God,"and the Practice of Righteousnefs amongft Men."Therefore That Part alfp of his Doctrine was

" poftible
Ch. 14. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. $ff

*< poflible, and very probable to be true *, but yet it <c cou'd not from thence be known to be certainly  
" true j nor ought to have been receiv'd as a Reve-
" jation from God, unlefs it had been prov'd by  
" undeniable Miracles."

Here the Beifts can, by no means* come into  
the Doctor's Distinction, between the moral Part of  
our Saviour's Doctrine, and that Part which evi-
dently tends to promote the Honour of God, and  
the Practice of Righteousness -, it being manifeftly  
a Distinction without any Difference : And if the  
whole of Religion conflits in the Honour of God, and  
the Good of Man, which he is far from denying *,  
nothing can more effectually ftrike at the Certainty  
of all Religion, than the supposing, that Mankind  
cou'd not be certain, that whatever evidently tended  
to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice  
of Righteousness, was the Will of God, 'till they  
were convinc'd of it by undeniable Miracles.

*T l s poffible, fay they, a Man may doubt, whe-
ther there is a God ; but none fure, who believe  
one, can doubt, but that 'tis demonftrably fit,  
juft, and reafonable for Men, to do every thing,  
that evidently tends to promote the Honour of God,  
and the Practice of Righteousness. And, if the  
" Mind of Mart, as the Bettor fays, can't avoid pag- 6 >«  
" giving its A (Tent to the eternal Law of Righte-
" oufness, " can the Mind of Man avoid aTenting  
the Practice of Righteousness as his indifpenfable  
Duty? But if it be but probable, that whatever  
evidently tends to promote the Honour of God, and  
the Practice of Righteousness, is from God ; it can't  
be more than probable, that Miracles done in their  
Behalf are from God. Does not the Doctor here de-
stroy the Certainty of thefe Doctrines, which he  
had before demonfrated ; and this too only to prove  
their Probability ?

These ChriftianBeifts own the Doctor is in the  
right, for contending, that the necerTary Relation  
that is between Things, makes fome Actions moral,

2 and

338 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14,

and others immoral ; but then they wou'd afk,  
Whether there be any other Way to diftinguiwh  
them, but from their Nature and Tendency *, for  
they can't but conclude, that thofe which evidently  
tend to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice
of Righteousness, are plain moral Duties, and perpetually oblige. And,

If no Miracle, as the Doctor owns, can prove a

" Doctrine that's vicious in its Tendency and Consequences, to be from God " must not, say they, that Doctrine, which has the contrary Tendency and Consequences, be from God; tho' ever so many Miracles are done in Opposition to it? And,

They like wise say, As evidently as God is not only a good and perfect, but also the only perfect Being; fo evident is it, that every Doctrine, that carries any Degree, much more the highest Degree of Goodness and Perfection in it, has the Character of Divinity impressed on it; and therefore, can't pag. 221. agree with the Doctor, " That neither can any Degree of Goodness, and Excellency in the Doctrine itself, make it certain, but only highly probable " to come from God."

If no Miracles can prove any different Thing to be the Will of God -, and all that evidently tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Practice of Righteousness, are plain, moral Duties, as the Doctor contends; and all such Duties neither need, nor can receive any stronger Proof from Miracles, than what they have already from the Evidence of Right Reason: how can Miracles, say these Beis, have any other Use, than to make Men consider the Nature, and Tendency of a Doctrine *, and judge from thence whether it be from God? But,

A lo w the Doctor what Hypothesis he pleases, in relation to Miracles; yet if the Doctrines themselves, from their internal Excellency, do not give us a certain Proof of the Will of God, no traditional Miracles can do it *, because one Probability sided to another will not amount to Certainty.

B.

Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 339

B. I thought the Doctor had built his Arguments in favour of Revelation, upon the Obscurity of the Law of Nature; and wou'd not have declar'd, that " the Reafon of all Men, every where, as na-pag. 83. " turally, and neceffarily affents to it, as all Animals confpire in the Pule and Motion of their " Heart and Arteries; or as all Men agree in their cc Judgment concerning the Whitenefs of Snow, " or the Brightnefs of the Sun."

A. Have patience, and you mail fee, that Snow is no longer white, or the Sun bright \\ and in
order to it, I'll mew you, that the Doctor's New
Scheme confifts in fuppormg, that tho' " in the origi-
nal uncorrupted State of Human Nature, right
" Reafon may juftly be fuppofed to have been a fu-
cient Guide ; and a Principle powerful enough
" to have prefer v'd Men in the conftant Practice
" of their Duty: yet upon the FaH, Mankind were
" in a very bad State-, as wanting greater Help,
" and Affiftance, than the Light of Nature could
" afford them. And That there was plainly want-
" ing fome extraordinary, and fuper- natural Af-
" fiftance, that was above the Reach of bare Rea-
" fon and Philofophy to procure. There was plainly
" wanting a divine Revelation to recover Man-pag. 197.
" kind out of their univerfally degenerate State,
" into a State fuitable to the original Dignity of
" their Nature." And again, " There was plainly
" wanting a divine Revelation to recover Man-pag. 193.
" kind out of their univerfal Corruption and De-
" ** generacy." And in the Margin, u A divine Re-
" velation abfolutely neceflary for the Recovery of
" Mankind." But if a divine Revelation was ab-
" solutely neceflary to this End, Men were under an
abolute Impoffibility of recovering without it.

This is fuppofing, God had left all Mankind
for 4000 Years together, and even the greater! Part
to this Day, deftitute of fufficient Means to do their
Duty, and to preferable themfelves from (inking into
a corrupted and degenerate State j and that it was
impoiffible

340 Chrifliantty as Old as the Creation, Ch. 14/

impoiffible for them when thus funk, to recover
themfelves ; and yet that God (their Duty being,
the fame after, as before the Fall) expected Im-
pdffibilities from them; viz. either to preferve them-
elves from thus falling ; or if fallen, to recover
themfelves. But if they had not Power to do This,
and it was not their Fault, that they at firft were
in, and after remained in what he calls a State of
univerfal Degeneracy and Corruption *, this muft
then be the State God defign'd they fhou'd be in :
And it wou f d feem not only to be in vain, but a
Crime in them, to endeavour to change that State*
which, God, of his infinite Wifdom and Good-
hefs, thought fit to place them. But,

If Men alike, at all Times, owe their Exiftence
to God, they at all Times mufl be created in a State
of Innocence, capable of knowing, and doing all
God requires of them -, and we mufl conclude from
the Wifdom and Goodhefs of God, that he will, at
no time, command any thing not fit for him to com-
mand, or for Man to do; and therefore, cou'd we fu-
poffe fome Things commanded by external Reve-
lation, which were not commanded by the Light
of Nature; we mufl conclude, that 'till then it was
not fit for God to command them, or for Man un-
commanded to dp them.

The Doctor, to mew the Fault was not In Man-
kind, but in the Guide God gave them *, fays,
faq. 2?S. " The Light of Nature, and Right Rea-
fon, was " altogether insufficient to ref tore true Piety:"
and as tho' this was not enough, he adds, " that
fl the Light of Nature no where appear'd:"
Which Sentences feem inconfiftent, fince the ridir.
up-
poses a Light, tho' inelficient, apjfiearing to Mens
Minds *, but the Doctor does not feem to know
f\g, 214. whether they had no Light at all ; or " a Light,
** which, he fay s^ has undeniable. Defects in it:"

B. May not the Law of Nature be very clear,
tho* the Light of Nature may be lb very dim, as
to have undeniable Defers?

A

Cb. 14. Chrijljanity as Old as the Creation. 341

A. Can the Law of Nature be clear, and the
Light of Nature dim; when the Law of Na-
ture is nothing, but what the Light of Nature,
or Reafon dictates? Or, as Dr. Scott expreffes it, Chrift. Life,
" Right Reafon pronouncing fuch Actions good,P- 2 - Vol. 1.
" and fuch evil, is the Law of Nature *, and thofe Ch * 2 ' p ' 7 ^
" eternal Rea fons, upon which it fo pronounces
" them, are the Creed of Nature; both which to-
" gether make Natural Religion"

Th e Doctor, to perfue this Point, and to mew
that the Fault was not in the Creatures, but the
Creator; fays, that " Even thofe few extraordinary pag. 176.
*' Men of the Philofopher s, who did fincerely enr
" deavour to reform Mankind, were themfelves in-
tirely ignorant of fome Doctrines, absolutely ne-
* c cellary for bringing about this great End of the

* c Reformation, and Recovery of Mankind :

" Their whole Attempt to difcover the Truth of
" Things, and to in instruct others therein, was like
* c wandring in the wide Sea, without knowing
<c whither to go, or which way to take, or having
<c any Guide to conduct them."

And that you might be fure, that the Fault was
in the eternal, univerfal, and unchangeable Law of
Nature •, he calls those Philosophers, who thus wander'd in the wide Sea, "wise, brave, and good 2g, 5-46 Men, who made it their business to study, and practice the Duties of Natural Religion themselves, and to teach and exhort others to do the like:" nay, one would imagine he thought them, notwithstanding their unavoidable Ignorance, inspir'd; since he says, "There never was a great S! 97 " c Man, but who was inspir'd; Nemo unquam mag-"nus Vir fine divino afflatufuit:" And for this he quotes the Authority of Cicero, who, if the Doctor's Reasoning is just, was certainly inspir'd.

The Doctor's Scheme outdoes that of the most rigid Predestinarians •, for that at all times faves the Elect: But here are no Elect; but all, for many Ages^ 3

342 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

Ages are inextricably involved in a most deprav'd, corrupted, and impious State.
pag. 241. The Doctor justly says, "Let none on pre-

tence of maintaining Natural Religion, revile, 46 and blaspHEME the Chriftian ¥ left they be found "Lyars unto God:" And for the fame Reason, may not I say, let none blaspHEME Natural Religion? Tho' if Natural and Revealed Religion can differ, it must be a greater Crime to revile a Religion, that is eternal, universal, and unchangeable; than a Religion that is not fo. And,

Tho' I pay a due Deference to the Doctor's deep Penetration in matters of Religion, I dare not fay, there's the least Difference between the Law of Nature, and the Gospel-9 for that wou'd suppofe fome Defect in one of them, and reflect on the Author of both; who, certainly, was equally good, and equally wise, when he gave the one, as when he gave the other (if it may be call'd another) Law. Nor dare I be fo ram, as to charge the Light of Nature with undeniable Defers, as the 'Doctor presumes to do; fince, if that Light was sufficient to anfwer the End defign'd by God, which was to be a competent Guide to Men, in relation to their prefent, and future Happinefs; there cou 5 d be no deficiency: If not, then' there must have been an undeniable default in the Giver of it, in appointing Means not fufficient to anfwer their defigirtl Ends; tho' both Means and Ends were entirely in his Power. Nor dare I fay, "There are "several neceffary Truths, not porlible to be dif-
"cover'd with any Certainty by the Light of Na-
"ture ;" becaufe God's Means of Information will,
and muft always bear an exact Proportion to the
Neecefity of our knowing what we are oblig'd to
know ; efpecially touching the Nature, and Attrig.
P*g. 178. butes of God—, which, he fuppofes, " were very diς
" ficult for the wifteft Men to find-out ; and more
" fufficient for them to explain." But here I muft
do the Doctor that Juftice, as to obferve, that he, in

pDg. 214.

Cb. 14. Chri/iia?jity as Old as the Creation. 343

in another Place, is fo far from finding any fuch
Defect in this Light, even with relation to the Na-
ture and Attributes of God ; that he fays, " Allpag. 161.
" the heathen World had certain Means of know-
cc ing God ; for, That which may be known of God,"™. x fo,
u was manifeft enough unto Men in all Ages."
And if no Age can know more of God, than that
which may be known *, and if that which may be
known of him was manifeft enough in all Ages ;
what Advantage can one Age in this grand Point
have above another ? And, therefore, I muft con-
clude,

It can't be imputed to any Defect in the Light
of Nature, that the Pagan World ran into Idola-
try *, but to their being intirely govern'd by Priefts,
who pretended Communication with their Gods ;
and to have thence their Revelations, which they
impos'd on the Credulous as divine Oracles :
Whereas the Bufinefs of the Chrifitian Difpenfation
was to deftruy all thofe traditional Revelations ;
and reftore, free from all Idolatry, the true primi-
tive, and natural Religion, implanted in Mankind
from the Creation.

The Doctor, however, feems afraid, left he had
allow'd too much to the Light of Nature, in re
tion to the Difcovery of our Duty both to God and
Man ; and not left room for Revelation to make
any Addition : he therefore fuppofes, " there
" are fome Duties, which Nature hints at only in *
" in general." But, if we can't, without highly re-
fecting on the Wifdom and Goodnefs of God, fup-
pofe, that he has not, at all Times, given the whole
rational Creation a plain Rule for their Conduct,
in relation to thofe Duties they owe to God, them-
felves, and one another; must we not suppose Reason, and Religion (that Rule of all other Rules) insep-parable; so that no rational Creature can be igno-norant of it, who attends to the Dictates of his own Mind; I mean, as far as 'tis necessary for him to know it? An ignorant Peasant may know what

344 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

is sufficient for him, without knowing as much as the learned Redcor of St. James's.

Tho' the Doctor says, <? the Knowledge of the "Law of Nature is in Pad, by no means, uni-
pag. 152. "verfal» yet he afferts, that m Man is plainly in "his own Nature an accountable Creature - 9 " which supposes that the Light of Nature plainly, and un-denially teaches him that Law, for Breach of which he is naturally accountable j and did not the Do&or believe this Law to be uni verfal, he cou'd not infer a future Judgment from the Conscience All Men have of their Actions, or the Judgment they pafs

jpg. 152. on them in their own Minds; whereby " They that c have not any Law, are a Law unto themfehes -, their "Confidences bearing Witnefs, and their "Thoughts ac-"tef f, orecxufing one another:" Which is suppo- fing but one Law, whether that Law be written on Paper, or in Mens Hearts only; and that all Men, by the Judgment they pafs on their own Actions, are confcious of this Law. And,

The Apoftle Paul, tho 5 quoted by the Doctor^ is fo far from favouring his Hypothees of any invin-cible Ignorance, even in the Weft, and Bell: of the

Kom. 2. 14. Philofophers; that he, by faying, The Gentiles that have not the Law, do by Nature the Things contained in the Law; makes the Law of Nature and Grace to be the fame: And supposes the Reafon why they were to be punim'd, was their finning againft Light

Rom, 1.19, and Knowledge: That which may be knovjn of God

* x - was manifcft in them,, and when they knew God, they

glorify 9 d him not as God: And they were likewise guilty of abominable Corruptions, not ignorantly 5

r-Vcr. 32. h r ut 7 fef^SS the Judgment of God, that /hey who do fuch Things are worthy of Death. Had the Dotfor but connder'd this fell- evident Proportion, that
There can be no Tranfgrejjion where there is no Law > t
and that an unknown Law is the fame as no Law j
and confequently, that all Mankind, at all Limes,
mutt be capable of knowing all (whether more or
lefs,) that God requires : It would j^ve prevented
his

Ch. 14. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 34J

his endeavouring to prove, that 'till the Gofpel-
Difpen fation, Mankind were intirely, and unavoida-
bly ignorant of their Duty in feveral important
Points ; and thus charging the Light of Nature
with undeniable Defects.

I think it is no Compliment to External Revela-
tion, tho' the Doctor defign'd it as the higheft ; to
fay, it prevail'd, when the Light of Nature was,
as he fuppofes, in a Manner extinct ; iince then an
irrational Religion might as eafily obtain, as a ra-
tional one.

The Doctor, to prove that Revelation has fup-
ply'd the Infufficiency, and undeniable Defects of
the Light of Nature, refers us to Phil. iv. 8. which
he introduces after this pompous Manner . ; " LetP a g- 229.
" any Man of an honeft and fmcere Mind confi-
der, whether that practical Doctrine has not,
" even in itfe/f the greatest Marks of a divine Ori-
ginal, wherein Whatfover Things are true, wbat?-Xil 4. 8.
" fovever Things are honeft, whatfoever Things are juft,
" whatfoever Things are pure, whatfoever Things are
" lovely, whatfoever Things are of good Report, if
< c there be any Virtue, // there be an) Thing praife-
" worthy ; all thefe, and thefe only, are the Things
iC earneftly recommended to Mens Practice."

I wou'd afk the Doctor how he can know what
thefe Things are, which are thus only earneftly re-
commended to Mens Practice ; or, why they have,
in themfelves, the greatest Marks of a divine Ori-
ginal i but from the Light of Nature ? Nay, how
can the Doctor know, there are Defects in the
Light of Nature, but from the Light itfelf ? which
fuppofes this Light is all we have to truft to ; and
confequently, all the Doctor has been doing, oa
pretence of promoting the Honour of Revelation,
is introducing univerfal Scepticifrh : And I am con-
cern'd, and griev'd, to fee a Man, who had fo
great a Share of the Light of Nature, imploving it
to expofe that Light, of which before he had given
(lie higheft Commendation ; and which can have
no other Effect, than to weaken even his own Demonstration, drawn from that Light, for the Being of a God.

I shall mention but one Text more, which, had not the Doctor thought it highly to his purpose, for shewing the Insufficiency of the Light of Nature* he would not have usher'd it in after this most pag. 341. solemn Manner: "When Men have put themselves into this Temper and Frame of Mind, let them try if they can any longer reject the Evidence of John: 17. " the Gospel: If any Man will do his Will 9 he shall know of the Doctrine *, whether it be of God."

Is it not strange, to see so judicious a Divine write after such a Manner, as if he thought the best Way to support the Dignity of Revelation, was to derogate from the immutable, and eternal Law of Nature r*. and while he is depreling it, ex- to Revelation for those very Things it borrows from that Law ? in which, tho' he afferts there are undeniable Defects, yet he owns, that God governs all his own Actions by it, and expects that all Men fhou'd fo govern theirs. But,

I find the Doctor's own Brother, the Dean of Sarum, is entirely of my Mind, as to those two Texts the Doctor quotes *, viz. Rom. 2. 14. and Phil. 4. 8. As to the first, viz. Rom. 2. 14. he fays, * h " The Apoftle fuppofes, that the moral Law is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things - y gtn of Moral" that every Man is endu'd with fuch Powers and £1///, p. 154," Faculties of Mind, as render him capable of J 55 » »56> it f eem g 9 anc [ taking notice of this Law : and alfo " with fuch a Stn(t and Judgment of the Reafon- blenefs, and Pitnefs of conforming his Actions ** to it, that he cannot but in his own Mind ac- " quit himfelf when he does fo ; and condemn <c himfelf when he does other wife. 5 ' And as to the fecond, viz. Phil. 4. 8. where the fame Apoftle recommends the Practice of Vertue, upon the fore-mention'd Principles of Comelinefs and Reputa- tion : " Thefe Principles, fays he, if duly attended « to,

Ch. 14. Chriftimit as Old as the Creation. 34.7

" to, were fufficient to instruct Men in the Whole " of their Duty towards themselves, and towards * c each other : and they wou'd alfo have taught
"them their Duty towards God, their Creator and
"Governor, if they had diligently pursu'd them:
"For according as the Apoftle exprefles it, Rom. 1.
"20. The invisible things of God from the Creation
"of the Worlds are clearly feen & being understood by
"the things that are made, even his eternal Power

46 and Godhead. The fame Fitnefs and Decency

"that appears in Mens regular Behaviour towards
"each other, appears also in their Behaviour to-
"wards God: And this, likewise, is founded in
"the Nature and Reafon of Things; and is what
"the Circumfiances and Condition they are in, do
"ct absolutely require. Thus we fee wherein Moral
"Virtue, or Good conflicts, and what the Obliga-
"tion to it is, from its own native Beauty and
"Excellency."

B. If God, as the Doctor aferts, does abhor all
arbitrary Commands, and Natural Religion compre-
hends every thing that is not arbitrary; and withal,
is so deeply impreft'd on Mens Mind, that they can't
violate its Precepts without Self-condemnation: I
can't apprehend how thefe Philofophers, who made
it their Bufinefs to ftudy, and practife Natural Re-
ligion, cou'd be entirely ignorant of any Doctrines
abolutely neceffary for the Reformation of Man-
kind: Nay, that " their whole Attempt to difcover
"the Truth of Things, was like wandering in the
"wide Sea, without any Guide" and therefore, I
fhould be glad to know, what are thefe abfolutely
neceffary Doctrines, they were thus entirely igno-
rant of.

A. " These Philofophers, the Doctor fays, had pag. 176,
"no Knowledge of the whole Scheme, Order, and
"State of Things." This, I think, may be al-
"low'd jince I believe there's none at prefent, who
"have, or pretend to have fo extenfive a Knowledge.
** But they had no Knowledge of the Method of God's

348 Chrijlienity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

"governing the World." Then they mud be blind;
if living in the World, they did not fee how the
things of this World were govern'd by Providence.
"Then they did not know the Ground and Cir-
"cumftances of Mens prefent corrupt Condition." If fo,
"they did not understand Human Nature, and
how Prejudices and Paftions work on Mankind.
"They did not know, fays he, the Manner of the
"divine Interpolation neceflary for their Recovery,
"and the glorious End, to which God intended fi-
"nally to conduct them." It must be own'd, they
were not in the least acquainted with the Doctor's glorious Scheme, of all Mankind's being for four thousand Years together, and the greatest part too, at present, by the very Frame of their Constitution, and the Condition of their Being, plac'd by God in a most deprav'd, degenerate State, without possibility of recovering from it. ** But they had, it seems, no Knowledge of God's Design in creating Mankind." Sure, the Doctor had forgot what he quotes from Cicero to this Purpofe; " Ad tuendos, confer van dofque homines hominem nalum ejfe. Homo-c nes hominum caufa funt generate ut ipfi inter fe aliis aliis prodeffe pojfint. Homincm, nature obedient-c tern, homini nocere non poffe" And does not the pag. 121. Doctor maintain the fame thing, in faying, that God cou'd have no Motive to create Things at hrit, but only that he might communicate to them his Goodnefs. and Happinefs."
pig. 17. " These Philofophers, he fays, were ignorant of the original Dignity of Human Nature:" And becaufe he frequently infifts on it, I fhall fully confider this Matter; and will confefs, 'tis probable, they thought that Human Nature, Men, at all times, having the fame common Faculties, was always the fame. Had they known the sacred Story of Adam and Eve, that wou'd have confirm 'd them in their Sentiments. The moif: they cou'd perceive by it wou'd be, that the firft Pair came into the World in every Saife miked, deftrurte of all that Knowledge, Experience gave their Po iter it y •, and therefore, God, the better to support them in this State of univerfal Ignorance, planted a Garden for them; that they might live on the Fruit of it: How weak was their Reafon, how strong their Appetites! when they cou'd not abftain (the fole Command given them) from the Fruit of but one Tree •, in a Garden too, where muft needs be an infinite Variety, and the choiceft Fruit!

These Philofophers wou'd have been at a loss to conceive, how Eve cou'd entertain a Conference with a Serpent (incapable of human Voice) evert before Consent had given any Meaning to Sounds. And they wou'd be apt to afk, Why, tho' Cuftom had made it fhameful to go without Cloaths in thofe Places where Cloaths are worn; the firft Pair fhou'd

Ch. 14. Ckriftianity as Old as the Creation. 349

Experience gave their Po iter it y •, and therefore, God, the better to support them in this State of univerfal Ignorance, planted a Garden for them; that they might live on the Fruit of it: How weak was their Reafon, how strong their Appetites! when they cou'd not abftain (the fole Command given them) from the Fruit of but one Tree •, in a Garden too, where muft needs be an infinite Variety, and the choiceft Fruit!

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nevertheless, tho' they knew not what Cloaths were, be ashamed to be seen uncloth'd by one another, and by God himself? So that, when They heard the Voice of God walking in the Garden, in the Cool of the Evening (a strange Representation these Philosophers would think of God!) they hid themselves from his Presence: Nay, God himself, their Fig-leave Aprons, which they (having, it seems, all things needful for wearing) few red together, not being suffcient to hide their Shame, made them Coats of the Skins of the Beasts, newly created in Pairs. And they would, likewise, desire to be informed, how Eve, before her Eyes were open'd, saw that the Tree was good [fig^n. 3. S. Food; and that it was palaent to the Eyes, and a Tree to be defir'd to make one wife.

Upon the whole, I grant, that these Philosophers would be fo far from finding out this original Dignity in the first Pair, that they would be apt to think, by the Serpent's so easily imposing on her, that the original Serpentine Nature, was too subtle for the original Human Nature and that there being nothing done by any Serpent from the Fall, which could occasion the Precept of Mens being bid to be as wise as Serpents* ic must allude to this Transformation so Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

between the Woman and the Serpent; tho' they Iren. 1. i. cou'd never come into the Belief of the Ophite, c. 34. (with whom the Marcionites may be join'd) who Tertull. Pr*- thought, that Wisdom herself was the Serpent, which fcnpt. c. 47. t j 1C y p re f err 'j to Chrift, as teaching them to know Good and Evil; and designing for them Immortality and Deity; and foretelling that Adam, tho' threaten'd with certain Death on the Bay he eat the forbidden Fruit, Jhou'd not then die \ who accordingly liv'd after that Sentence about 900 Years: And that Moses's erecting the brazen, healing Serpent, was in honour of this Serpent*, who deMgn'd fo much Good to Mankind.
B. These Philosophers would be grossly mistaken, did they believe this done by a Serpent: We say, it was the Devil, in the shape of a Serpent, that tempted them.

A. These Philosophers, indeed, wou'd fee, that the Chriftians are now aham'd of the literal Inter-pretation of this Story •, tho' St. Paul was of ano- other Mind, who expresfs fays, The Serpent deceived Eve thro 9 Subtlety. And they, perhaps, wou'd afk, Whether it was the Devil, who is faid to be more fubtle than any Beauf of the Field --, fince it was this fubtle Beauf that faid to the Woman, Ye (hall not Gen. 3. 4, s .furely die. And it was upon the Woman's faying, The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat ; that the Lord _ v T3 . faid to the Serpent, Becaufe thou haft done this, thou , art curv'ed above all the Cattle, and above every Beauf of *- ,v. 14. the Field: Upon thy Belly thou jh alt go, andBuft thou Jhalt eat all the days of thy Life. Does this Character agree to an immaterial, immortal Being? Did he all the Days of his Life go upon his Belly, and eat Duft? Does not God, continuing his Difcourfe to the Serpent, fay, / will put Enmity between thee and the Woman--, between thy Seed, and her Seed & it fhall bruife thy Head, and thou ft) alt bruife his Heels. And is not this the Confequence of Serpents going on their Belly? Do they not frequently bite Men by the Heel; efpecially in hot Countrys, where Ser- pents

Ch. 14. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation.

pents are numerous, and Mens Heels bare? Why fhall thy Seed, not dignify thy Seed\ but the Seed of a Being not mention' d in all this Story; and who has no Seed, hut metaphorical Seed: which, fince the Woman's Seed is taken literally, wou'd be im- mediately changing the Meaning of the Word Seed? Does this Text afford the lean: Argument, to ima- gine God did not as much fpeak to the Serpent, as to Adam and Eve? If a Book is to be interpreted thus, efpecially in relation to historical Facts; how can we, thefe Philosophers wou'd fay, be fure of its Meaning in any one Place? Befides, wou'd they not afk, Why the whole Race of Serpents fhould be curs'd for the Crime of a fallen Angel?

B. Th ey might as well afk, Why all other Ani-mals fhould bring forth in Pain, for the Fault of Eve? For had Nature form'd all Females at firft, as they have been ever fince Eve eat the forbidden Fruit, none of them, except by Miracles, cou'd be deliver'd without pain; no more than Serpents, had they at firft been form'd, as at prefent, creep
other wife than they do.

A. Those Philofophers, perhaps, wou'd not think the Matter a jot. mended, by subftituting (did the Story afford room for it) a Devil, inftead of a Serpent - , since they cou'd not fee, how an infinitely good God cou'd permit a moft malicious cunning Spirit to work on the Weaknefs of a Woman, juft plac'd in a new World ; without interpofting in this unequal Conflict, or giving notice of any fuch wicked Spirit ; Angels, neither good, or bad, being mention'd in the Hiftory of the Creation: And yet that after the Fact was committed, God fhould thus revenge it on all their innocent Posterity for ever ♦, by curjing the Ground, &c.

What wou'd feem to them moft unaccountable, is, That God fhould continue to fuffer this fubtle, and malignant Spirit, endow'd with an univerfal Knowledge of what is part, and a deep Penetra-
tion into Futurity j to range about, deceiving, and cir-

*§

352 Chrifiiinity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

cumventing Mankind *, who, having a Capacity vaftly fuperior to them, is continually fowing the Seeds of Mifchief, and (tattering the Poifton of univerfal Difcord ; making ufe of thofe very Men as his Infruments, whose profefs'd Bufinefs it is, to promote univerfal Concord.

The poor Indians, you know, when our Miflionaries give fuch an Account of the Devil, fay, " Is not your God a good God, and loves Mankind? Why does he then permit this Devil, to be con-
u tinually doing them fuch infinite Hurt ? Why is he not put under Confinement, if not deprived of a Being, of which he has made himfclf unwor-
thy ? With us, one, who does not hinder a Ci Mifchief, when it is in his Power, it thought not " much better than he who does it."

But to return to the Doctor: Where is the Diffe-
rence in relation to the Goodnefs of God, and the Happinefs of Mankind, between God's creating them in a State, as he calls it, of univerfal Dege-
neracy and Corruption; or caufing them by the Folly of Adam, which infinite Wifdom cou'd not but forefce, to fall unavoidably into this bad State ?
What Dignity, what Perfection cou'd Adam's Na-
ture have, that the Nature of his Pofterity has not?
Are they not as much fram'd after the Image of
their Maker? Are not their Souls as much imme-
diately from God as Adam's? And are not their
Bodies exactly made after the fame Manner? Were
net all other Animals at iirft created by God as
well as Men? Had thefe any Dignity, or Per-
fection in their Animal Nature, which the fame
Creatures iince have not? Befides, is not this sup-
pos'd high State of Perfection in Adam, giving the
Lye to the Iliftory r fincc this very perfect Man,
notwithstanding all the original Dignity of his Na-
ture, had no better Kxcufe for his yielding to the
<3en. 3. 12. firft Temptation, than that the Woman, whom I'hott
gaveft to be with me, gave me of the Tree, and I did
eat % How can we iuppofe his Undemanding was
2 in

Ch. 14. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 353

in the leaft impair'd by this Crime, fince God him-
felf fays (tho' to whom, it does not appear) Bebold^ Qn - 3- 22 -
the Man is become like one of us to know Good and Evil,-
and to prevent his being fo, both for Immortality
&s well as Knowledge, God placed Cherubims with a~~ v - 2 4*
faming Swords which turned every way to keep the Way
of the Tree of Life. Wou'd it not be very ftrange,
that his Posterity (while his Underftanding receiv'd
no Hurt) fhould suffer fo greatly in theirs ; as the
Doctor wou'd have it thought ? Indeed, St. Auftin De Civit.Dej,
ruppofes, that Adam before the Fall cou'd haye 1 *H- c - 2 3> 2 4'
erected his Membrum genitale ad voluntatis nutum \
and that Motions of the Flefh were perfectly fu-
ordinate to his Will, like his Fingers. But this No-
tion not being Orthodox at prefent, and the Lofs
of this Faculty no ways infers the Lofs of Under-
ftanding \ I may venture to fay, that the Doctor's
Descripftion of Human Nature in all, but one Pair,
(and that too, perhaps, but for a Day) is a Libel
on the Dignity of Human Nature, and an high Re-
fection on the Wifdom and Goodnefs of its Author ;
in placing them, without any Fault of theirs, in an
unavoidable State of Degeneracy and Corruption
for 4000 Years together ; and continuing the great-
eft Part flill in the fame State.

But let us fee, whether the Doctor has better
Succefs with his other Arguments, by which he en-
deavours to curtail the univerfal Goodnefs of God \ 
and therefore, I fhall take notice of two other
things, which he infifts on, to (hew the grofs, and
unavoidable Ignorance of the Philofophers, in the
moft momentous Points of Religion : The firft is,
" That which of all things the belt, and wifeft of nag. 182.
"the PhiloPophers were entirely, and unavoidably ignorant of; and yet was of the greater! Importance for finful Men to know; viz. The Me
"thed by which fuch as have errored from the right Way and have offended God) may yet reft ore themselves to his Favour." And here he concludes, "That ** there arifes from Nature no fuficient Comfort pag. 183. A a • " to

354 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

"to Sinners, but an anxious, and endlesS Solicitude, "about the Means of appearing the Deity. 5 "

To anfwer the Doctor I need only quote what another able Divine, writing on the fame Subject Nje of Nat. of Natural, and Reveal'd Religion, fays, "I affirm, and Rev. Re- " 'lt s an Article of Natural Religion, that For-
"2'^ 8 S> " givenefs does certainly follow Repentance. If *f God be a merciful and benign Being, he will ac-
"cept the Payment we are able to make; and not "infill on jnufible Demands, with his frail, bank-
"rupt Creatures. No generous Man, but will "forgive his Enemy, much more his Child *, if he <c difapproves the Wrong he has done, is really c< griev'd for it, is defirious to make Amends, even <c by fuffering for the Honour of the Perfon injur'd :
"How much more fhall God forgive all Perfons "thus difpos'd, and reform'd; fince there is no ic Generofly in Man, but what is, with his Na-
"ture, infus'd into him by God ?

"Not only Mercy, but Wifdom will effectual ly "difpofe God to forgive the Penitent, becaufe the "Creature reform'd by Penitence is fuch as it ought ** to be, and fuch as God willeth it; which being <c fo, it can be no Wifdom in God to afflict it un-
<v 6 neceflarily. 'Tis not Juflice, but Rage, to punifh V where the Perfon is already mended. When we "6 argue thus, from any of the known, and certain 4C Attributes of God, we are as fure of the Con-
"clufion, as if the thing was to be difcern'd by "Sense; fince no fenfible thing is more certain than "the Attributes of God."

Reasonablen. * r * Locke has the fame Sentiments, and fays, "God of Chrifiti-ni- " had, by the Light of Reason, reveal'd to all ty,6ff.>.255,*« Mankind, who wou'd make ufe of that Light, S" 2 * " that he was Good, and Mercifull. The fame

"Spark of the Divine Nature, and Knowledge in "1 " Man, which making him a Man, fhewed him "the Law he was under as a Man; fhewed him "also the way of atoning the merciful, kind, com-
"46 pafiionate Author, and Father of him, and his 1 " Being,
Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation, 355

"Being, when he had transgressed that Law. He that made Use of this Candle of the Lord, so far as to find what was his Duty, cou'd not misfind also the Way to Reconciliation and For-tgencfs, when he had fail'd of his Duty.

"The Law is the eternal, immutable Stan-
dard of Right. And a Part of that Law is, that a Man shou'd forgive, not only his Children, but his Enemies, upon their Repentance, asking Pardon, and Amendment. And therefore, he cou'd not doubt, that the Author of this Law, and God of Patience and Consolation, who is tc rich in Mercy, wou'd forgive his frail OrT-spring; if they acknowledg'd their Faults, disapproved the Iniquity of their Tranfgreilions, begg'd his Pardon, and resolv'd in earned for the future, to conform their Actions to this Rule, which they own'd to be Juft and Right. This way of Reconciliation, this hope of Atonement, the Light of Nature revealed to them."

Had the Doctor only faid, that we can't know from the Light of Nature, that There's more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repent s, than over ninety nine juft Perfons, who need no Repentance \ That, if strictly taken, might, perhaps, be better disputed \ but nothing, fure, can be more fhocking than to fuppofe the unchangeable God, whose Nature and Property is ever to forgive" was not, at all Times, equally willing to pardon repenting Sinners; and equally willing they mou'd have the Satisfaction of knowing it.

If God's Ways are equal, and he has, at one Time as well as another, the fame Goodnefs for the Sons of Men, in relation to their eternal Hap-pinefs i how can we fuppofe he left all Mankind, for fo many Ages, and the greatest Part, even at pre-fent, in a molt miferable State of Doubt, and Un-certainly, about the Pardon of Sin; and confe-quently, about the Poftibility of any Man's being fav'd? If this Notion, that even the beft, and wifeft A a 2 of

356 Christianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 14.

of Mankind, were, not only abfolutely, but moft absolutely ignorant of That which of all things, it
was of the greater!: Importance for Mankind to
know, be not inconfiftent with the divine Goodnefs ;
I am at a lofs to know what is fo.

If the Defign of God, in communicating any
thing of himfelf to Men, was their Happinefs;
wou'd not that Defign have oblig'd him, who, at
all Times, alike defires their Happinefs, to have, at
all Times, alike communicated it to them ? If God
always acts for the Good of his Creatures, what
Reafon can be affign'd, why he fhou'd not, from
the Beginning, have difcover'd fuch things, as
make for their Good ♦, but defer the doing of it till
the Time cf 'Tiberius ? fince the sooner This was
done, the greater wou'd his Goodnefs appear to
be : Nay, is it confident with infinite Benevolence,
to hide That for many Ages, which he knew, was
as ufeful at hft to prevent, as afterwards it cou'd
be, to put a flop to any thing he diflik'd ?

And, indeed, without denying that God, at all
Times, intende d Mankind That Happinefs, their
Nature is capable of -, we muft allow, that, at all
Times, he has given them the Means of obtaining
it, by the Rules he has prefcrib'd them for their
Conduct i and confequently, thefe Rules muft have
been difcoverable at all Times. For, if God acs
upon rational Motives, muft not the fame Motives
which oblig'd him to difcover any Thing that's for
the Good of Mankind, have oblig'd him to difcover
every Thing that is fo *, and that too, after the fame
plain Manner ? And not do this, as it were, grudgingly, little by little; here a Bit, and there a Bit ;
and that to one favourite Nation only, under the
Veil of Types, Allegories, &c. And at laft, tho' he
difcover'd fome Things more plainly, yet it was but
to a small Part of Mankind, the Bulk of them to
this day remaining in deplorable Ignorance.

B. Another Argument the Doctor brings for
the undeniable Defect of the Light of Nature is,
that

Ch. 14. Chrijjianity as Old as the Creation. 357

that tho'it is evident from this Light, that God ought l pag. 178.
to be worjhipp'd, yet " the Manner ", in which he
" might be acceptably worfhipp'd, the wifeft, and
** beft of the Philofophers were intirely, and una-
" voidably ignorant of."

A. Who can forbear pitying thefe unhappy
Philofophers, indifpenfably obliged to worhip God
acceptably ; and yet, hard Fate ! unavoidably ig-
norant how to perform this acceptable Worship ?

But,

If God cou'd not will to be worhipp'd, without willing feme Way, or other, of being worhippp'd -, and if he left it to the Light of Nature to discover how he wou'd be worhippp'd, cou'd That be for any other Reafon, but because it was acceptable to him, to be worhippp'd as that Light directed? Is it not a contradiction, to fuppofe God wou'd be acceptably worhippp'd, and yet let Men, even the beft, be entirely and unavoidably ignorant, how to worhip him acceptably? Does not the Light of Nature tell us, that God is a Being of infinite Wisdom and Goodnefs \ and that all his natural Faculties are directed by thefe two Attributes, to serve the Purposes of Benevolence? How then can we be ignorant, what Worhip, what Service, we are to render him? Can we doubt, if we endeavour to have the fame Frame of Mind, and govern our Aclions by the fame Law of Benevolence; whether we hall obtain his Favour? fince to imitate him, is to pay him the higheft Adoration \ and to keep his Commandment s, fhews the higheft Veneration.

'Tis for fuch Reafons as thefe, that Dr. Scott infinitely differs from this learned Author, and fays, u If we truly understand what God is, we can't q" jjf c " but apprehend what Worhip is fuitable to him"p. 2.V01.1.'" from the eternal Congruity and Proportion, thatCh.6. p. 323." there is between Things and Things, as obvious " to the Mind, as Sounds and Colours are to the " Ears and Eyes."

A a 3 B.

35 & Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation.Cb. 14.

pag. 173. B. Dr. Clarke owns, that " Obedience to the pag. 179. <c Obligations of Nature, and Imitation of the moral Attributes of God; the wifteft Philofophers " eafily knew, was, undoubtedly, the moft ac- " ceptable Service to God •," and what he infifts upon as neceflary, is only fome external Adoration.

A. But fince external Adoration can't be performed, but by external Signs, thefe muft. be different in different Places; becaufe what are Marks of Refpedr. in one Country, are Marks of Difrefped in another; or, at leaft, look ridiculous.

B. The Reafon that the Doctor gives, why the wifteft Men were entirely, and unavoidably ignorant, how God wou'd be acceptably worhippp'd with external Adoration, is, becaufe they fell lamen-
A. Never any before, call'd the worshipping of Idols, the worshipping of the true God, tho' unacceptably. But however, since you lay such stress on this discourse, I shall consider, what the Doctor says, to prove this paradox.

Plato, says he, after having deliver'd almost all divine Truths, concerning the Nature, and attributes of the supreme God, weakly advises Men to worship like wise inferior Gods, nor dare to condemn the worshipping even of Statues.

And so he spoil'd the best Philosophy in the World, by adding Idolatry to that Worship, which he had wisely, and bravely before prov'd to be due to the Creator of all Things. But cou'd he be entirely, and unavoidably ignorant of what he has bravely, and wisely prov'd?

Socrates, he says, superstitiously offered a Cock to ESOplius, unless it was done in mockery to him, looking on Death to be his greatest Deliverance. But since he doubted what Socrates intended, why does he instance in him, as one entirely, and unavoidably ignorant, how God was to be acceptably worshipp'd?

Cicero, he says, allow'd Men to continue the Idolatry of their Ancestors, advis'd them to conform themselves to the superstitious Religion of their Country. In which he fondly contra-

diets himself, by inexcusably complying with the Practices of those Men, whom, in many of his Writings, he largely, and excellently proves to be extremely foolish, upon the account of those very Practices. But does this prove any unavoidable Ignorance in Cicero, in relation to the Worship of the true God? But only that he, as a Philosopher, not only knew, but spoke the Truth; tho' as a Priest, he thought fit to dissemble: Perhaps, he suppos'd it not prudent, without some such forming Expremons, to plainly to attack the reigning Superstition. But,
Since the Reasoning of the ancient Philosophers fully shew'd their Sense, these Reflections might have been spared; were it but for the sake of some modern Philosophers; whose philosophical Faith is as little reconcilable with the Creeds and Litanies, they, as Priests, solemnly repeat *, and the Articles they as solemnly subferibe *, as any thing Cicero, the Priest, cou'd say in opposition to Cicero, the Philosopher; who describes our moral Obligations after so beautiful a manner; and by such plain, and irrefutable Arguments, mews the necessary Connexion between Virtue and Happiness *, Vice and Misery; as can't but make us highly delighted with the One, and create in us a just Aversion to the Other.

The Doctor had here a fair Opportunity, of shewing the Absurdity of arguing from what even the bed of Men say; when it is not safe, to talk otherwise. This had been more agreeable to his Candor, than taking a Handle from hence to expose the Light, and Law of Nature, as well as those great Men; to whom we are infinitely oblige'd, for writing under these Disadvantages so freely as they have done *, especially Cicero, from whom 

360 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 14.

Jrv.ch. contra whom the Fathers have borrow'd their heft Argu-GentA.^. rments against Paganifm. Arnobius fays, that if his p. 120. Works had been read, as they ought, by the Heathens, there had been no need of Chriftian Writers. And in anfwer to thofe Gentiles, who, feeing the Ufe the Chriftians made of them, were for fo liciting the Senate to burn, or otherwife fupprefis them; he fays, That were, not to defend the Gods, but to fear the Testimony of Truth. Which Pagan Method has not only been us'd ever fince, by all who fear'd the Testimony of Truth, to the Lofs of an immenfe Treasure of Learning -, but they have improv'd it too, and been for burning of Men, as well as Books: And thereby introduc'd a Superftition more abominable than Paganifm. And give me leave to add, that

In Old Rome, as long as there was civil Liberty, there was an entire Liberty of Confcience *, and even the Priests of the National Church, provided they comply'd with its Ceremonies, had no fpeculative Creeds, or Articles to fubferibe *, but were entirely free to maintain what Opinions they pleas'd. Of this, Cicero is a remarkable Inftance --, who, in his Book de Divinaiiione, expofes the Superstition
of his own Country-men, and ridicules thofe Mi-
racles, with which the Annals of the Chu re h-Pr lefts
were fill'd: And he, tho' a Pried himfelf, every
where treats his Brethren with great Freedom;
and in his Addrefs to them, fpeakmg of an ambi-
tious, intriguing Prieff, who wou'd hide his Malice
under the cover of Religion (for fome fuch there have
Oat. pro been in all Religions) fays, " Jf Publhis Claudius
Domu fua " is to defend his peftilent, and deadly Miniftry
by the sacred Name of divine Religion, when 'tis
impoftible for him to do it by human Fquity ; 'tis
high Time to look for other Ceremonies, other
Minifters of the immortal Gods, and other In-
terpreters of Religion." But to return,

The Doctor having thus expos'd the Light of
Nature, and, as he thinks, fhewn its undeniable
Defects in the Perfons of thefe Philofophers y de-
dands

ad Pontifi-
ces, c. 1.

Ch. 14. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. ■ -261

mands what Grounds our modern Deifts have to
imagine, that if they themfelves had liv'd without
the Light of the Gofpel, they mould have been
wifer than Plato, Socrates, and Cicero. But fure no
great Wifdom is requir'd to know the Law of Na-
ture, was it but half fo plain, as the Doctor, from
Bifhop Cumberland, has reprefented it --, and which
no well-meaning Gentiles, who did by Nature the
'Things contained in the Law, cou'd be ignorant of. And,

I am furpriz'd to find the Doctor arguing as ifpag. 50.
that Law, " which is a moft perfect Rule to the
" moft perfect Being, is not perfect enough for his
" imperfect Creatures -," tho' their whole Perfection
conflits in imitating him, and governing their Ac-
tions by the fame Rule : A Rule, which, it can't
be deny'd, had Mankind govern'd their Actions by
it, wou'd have render'd them as perfect as their
Nature was capable of. I fhou'd be glad to know,
why this Rule has loft its Virtue, and will not now
render Men as acceptable to God as ever ? But cou'd
we fuppofe a God of infinite Perfection, might or-
dain an imperfect, or infufficient Rule, for the Ac-
tions of his Creatures ; or, which comes to the
fame, afford them another Light for the Difcovery
of it, but what had fuch undeniable Defects, as
made them incapable of knowing their Duty ; nor
was fufficient to hinder them from falling into, and
continuing from Age to Age, in a deplorable State of Corruption: I wou'd ask, whether God did this knowingly, or ignorantly, not foreseeing the Consequences? To suppose the first, is to make God act out of Spite, and Hatred to his Creatures, in bringing them into Being, and making that Being a Curse to them:—Or if the last, why were not these Defects supply'd as soon as discovered? Or, were they not discovered by infinite Wisdom till these latter Times *, and then revealed only to a small Number, tho' all Mankind had equal need of them? And then too, so imperfectly, that Men have ever since been in continual Quarrels, about the Meaning of most of those Things, which are supposed to have been added, to supply the Defects of the Law of Nature?

What human Legislator, if he found a Defect in his Laws, and thought it for the Good of his Subject to add new Laws, wou'd not promulgate them to all his People? Or, what Parent wou'd act after so partial a Manner, as the Doctor, in a self-confounding Scheme, supposes the common Parent of Mankind has done? And not let all his Children know as soon as possible, what was for their common Good? Especially, if they were in such a forlorn, and miserable Condition, as he represents all Mankind to have been in, almost as Toon as created.

The Doctor very rightly observes, that " Even p*g. 116. " among Men, there's no earthly Father, but, in thofe Things he esteems his own Excellencies, " defires, and expects to be imitated by his Children; tc how much more, fays he, is it neceffary, that God, " who is infinitely far from being fubject to PaffTions, " and Variablenefs, as frail Men are; and has an " infinitely tenderer, and heartier Concern for the M Happinefs of his Creatures, than mortal Men " can have for the Welfare of their Pofterity, muft " defire to be imitated by his Creatures in thofe " Perfections, which are the Foundation of his own " unchangeable Happinefs r" How far this Invari- ablenefs of God, and his great Love for his Creatures is confent with that Scheme of Things, which the Doctor has hitherto advanced, has, I think been made appear. We will now examine what he adds, to (hew that God has an infinitely more tender and hearty Concern for the Happinefs of his Creatures, than mortal Men can have for the Welfare of their Pofterity: What he fays, is, that " both the NeceiTities of Men, and their natural

362 Chriſlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

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"Notions of God gave them reasonable Ground
to expect and hope for a divine Revelation, to
recover Mankind out of their universally degenerate
state, into one suitable to the original Excellency.

pag. 197'

Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation. 363

"cellence of their Nature." And that it was Contents,
agreeable to the Dictates of Nature, and Right pag. 201.
"Reason, to hope for such a divine Revelation ",
That it is agreeable to the natural Hopes and pag. 214.
"Expectations of Men, that is, of Right Reason
duly improv'd, to suppose God making some par-
ticular Revelation of his Will to Mankind.

"And that this was most suitable to the divine
Attributes." Yet notwithstanding these, and a
great many other fine Sayings to the same purpose,
he denies that God was oblig'd to make such a Re-
velation: But, with Submission, what other Reason
have we to say, God is oblig'd to do any one thing
whatever; but that 'tis agreeable to the natural
Notions we have of his Wisdom and Goodness, and
to the Dictates of Nature and Reason, for him to
do: And if the Necessities of Mankind have al-
ways been as great, and the Goodness of God al-
ways the same; wouldn't these oblige him to have
prescribed an immediate Remedy to the Difeafe,
and not deferred it for four thousand Years toge-
ther; and then apply'd it but to a few, tho' all had
equal Need of it? And a Need occasion'd (as the
Doctor supposes) by God himself, in not affording
them any other Light, but what was inefficient to
answer the End for which it was given.

B. The Doctor supposes, that this Revelation
was not the Effect of God's Justice; for then it pag. 215.
must needs have been given in all Ages, and to all
Nations, but of Mercy and condescending Goodness.

A. Can a Being be denominated merciful, and
good, who is so only to a few but cruel, and un-
merciful to the rest? And certainly all the Argu-
ments the Doctor can urge from the NecefTities of Mankind, and the abundant Goodnefs of God, will equally prove, that this Revelation, did it teach a new Religion, fou'd be univerfal ; as that it fou'd be at all. But,

If Revelation was absolutely neceflary to recover Mankind, out of their univerfal ly degenerate,

and


and corrupted State, and replace them in a State iuitabJe to the original Dignity, and excellency of their Nature ; and more effectuallly to do this, pag. 166. there was inf tituted an Order of Men, who were to be, as the Doctor calls them, The' Instrumcnts of conveying extraordinary AlJiftances for this Puirpofe ; muft not Revelation have had its intended Effect, and made Chriftians, efcpecially where thefe Instru- ments of conveying extraordinary Affiftances are in great Numbers, and in great Authority \ much more perfect and excellent, than Men cou'd poffibly be in, when under Times of Unavoidable Corruption ? And yet,

The Doctor having taken a large Paffage from Cicero, where the Orator very rhetorically defcribes the great Corruptions of his Time, and afTigns the p. 1 5 ». Caufes thereof; makes this Remark, " That a live-

c ' Her Defcription of the prefent corrupt State of Human tc Nature is not eafy to be met zvith:" Which, I think, is furrudenly owning, that Human Nature at prefent is far from being exalted to fo high a State of Per- fection, or in the lean: mended. And the Doctor frequently quotes Cicero for the Support of his Opi- nion, yet Cicero is far from furnopofing any fuch Defect in Nature : For a Proof of which, I need only men- Be Leg.!. 1. tion thefe two fhort Paffages. " 'Tis imposfible to "err, as long as we follow the Guidance of Na- r °- " ture. — There's no Man, who following the " Conduct of Nature, but may arrive at Per- fection." And the Doctor himfelf quotes a Paffage from him, to (hew that Nature has not been wanting p. 4 2 - to declare her Mind 3 Multis fignis natura declarat quid velit. And it might be as eafily mewn, he as much miuftakes the Meaning of thofe other Philofo- phers he quotes. And indeed, how cou'd any Men, except they had a very abfurdf Hypo thefts to ferve, affert, that any thing cou'd be Mens Duty they were unavoidably ignorant of ? Yet,
The Doctor, to prove this invincible Ignorance m the Gentile World, has frequent recourse to the

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Cb. 14. Chrijlianiy as Old as the Creation, 365

Authority of Laclantius, a primitive Father, without (hewing that he had a greater regard for Truth than other Fathers: And I am afraid the Doctor himself seems here not much to regard it, in maiming a Sentence of Laclantius \ Maximum itaque argu- mentum eft, philofophiam neque ad fapientiam tendere, neque ipfam efj' e fapientiam -, quod myfterium ejus, barba tantum celebratur, C5* palio. Whereas the whole Sentence runs thus; Non eft ergo fapientia, fi ab ho- La&ant. Inft. minum ccetu abhorret\ quoniam ft fapientia homini data^ lv ^- 1- 3- eft, fine ullo difcrimine omnibus data eft ; ut nemo fttip'p\?~ prorfus, qui earn capere non poftit. At illi [Philofopbi] virtutem humano generi datam fie amplexantur, utfoti omnium publico bonofru velle vide ant ur *, tarn invidi, quamfi velint deli ga re oculos, aut effodore ceteris, ne folem videant. – Sh,odJi natura hominis fapientia ca- pax eft ; op or t nil opifices, & rufticos, Ci? mulkres, & omnes denique qui humanam formam gerunt, doceri, ut fapiant ; populumque ex omni lingua, & conditione, fes? fexu, & <etate conflari. Then follows what the Doctor quoted.

This had been a full Anfwer to all the Doctor has taken from him; if not to all the Doctor has said on this Head: And it plainly mews, this Father here thought, that Wifdom, as it was defign'd for all, was within the reach of all; and that which the loweft of Mankind could not attain, was neither Wifdom, nor Virtue; and that thofe Philofophers, who wou'd confine this univerfal Light to themfelves, were as envious, as if they would exclude ethers from the Light of the Sun. And that this alone was a fufficient Proof, that their Philofophy con- fifted only in the Beard, and the Cloak.

This Father afferts nothing here, but what the wifeft of Men had long before own'd, in faying, that Wifdom is easifly feen of them that love her \ and\ N ~^ fg t o „ found of fuch as feek her. She goes about feeking mon6. 12. & fuch as are worthy of he? \ft>e ! ws her f elf favourable to 1 ^>- them in the JVavs j and meeteth them in every 'Thought.

And,

Wh a t
Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

What impartial Man, who has compared the former, and present Condition of Mankind, can think the World much mended since the Times of "Tiberius, or tho' ever so well vers'd in Church-Hiftory, can, from the Conduct of Chriftians, find, that they are arriv'd to any higher State of Perfection, than the reft of Mankind; who are suppos'd to continue in their Degeneracy, and Corruption? What was the Opinion of a late eminent Philofopher, as well as Divine, is plain, by his faying, Burnet dePidef/ refurgerent Philofophi & Gentilium Sapient es, & perluftrato crbe a nobis qu'erent, quid profuerit hu- mano gencri Religio Chrifiiana, quoad mores & vita? pr obi tat em? quoad pacem & bonutn publicum? noi utique appellatis Barbaros per opprobrium: fed nobis Barbaris quid pr aft at is vos Chriftiani?

Monfienr Leibnitz, a great Statefman as well as Philofopher, in comparing the Chrhtians at present, with the Infidels of China, does not fcruple to give the preference to the latter, in relation to all moral Virtue — and after having paid of them, Did
"our Faces." And he adds, with respect to the Manners

Praifatio ad

xiica.

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Nat' arettes
Ace. of China
in ChurchiiW$ Collection of
Voy. V. 1.
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Ch. 14. Christiаниty as Old as the Creation. 367

Manners of those European Christians, who come into the East-Indies, and of the Converts made by the Missionaries; "That there are few converted in those Parts, where they converse with the Europeans; and when it happens that any are converted, they prove so bad, it were better they had never been baptiz'd." And I am afraid, 'tis much the same in relation to the West-Indies. And,

Bishop Kidder says of Christians in general, "That were a wise Man to choose his Religion by * c the Lives of those who profess it; perhaps, Christianity would be the last Religion he would choose." And who, that has been abroad, and compar'd the Lives of Believers and Unbelievers, does not say the same Things?

And Dr. Clarke himself, in the Discourse we are now considering, has sufficiently prov'd, that Man is naturally a social Creature, full of Benevolence, Pity, and Tenderness; and he says, that 'tis Reason, which is the proper Nature of Man, P a $-i"7« can never lead Men to any thing else than universal Love, and Benevolence;" and that " Wars, Hatred, and Violence can never arise, but from
"extreme Corruptions." Tho' there's no part of Natural Religion, but highly tends to improve this focial, and benign Temper ♦, yet alas! we find, that what, in moft Places, parTes for the Christian Religion, if not the chiefeft part of it, has transform'd this focial, and benign Creature into one fierce, and cruel *, and made him ad with fuch Rage and Fury againft thofe, who never did, or deign'd him the leafr. Injury; as could not have enter'd into the Hearts of Men to conceive, even tho? they were in the Doctor's unavoidable State of Degeneracy and Corruption.

I J? People are once perfuaded, that what their Priefts call Schifm, Herefy, Infidelity, &c. tho' held with the utmoft Sincerity, are damnable Sins *, it wants not much Skill to perfuade them to hate thofe  

mor-

368 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 14.

morally, whom God, they are already perfuaded, will hate to all Eternity; and that, as they regard the Prefervation of the Orthodox Faith, and the faving their own Souls, and the Souls of all that are dear to them, they ought to take the moft ef- fectual Methods to root out all fuch damnable Op- inions. 'Tis upon this common Principle, that the Inquifition is eftablifVd; and the Papifts^ to do them juftice, act up to it; tho' perhaps, even among them, there are fome Lay-men, where Nature is too hard  

Principles.

If once pernicious Opinions are believ'd to be contain'd in any Revelation, they will have the fame Effect, as if really there. Has not the Belief of the judicial Power of the Clergy, as to the next World-, and their independent Power in this World, done the fame Mifchief, as if they had really been contain'd in Scripture? And if they, who maintain thefe, and other as vile Maxims, have got porTeflion of Mens Minds, by ingrowing (not to mention other Arts) the teaching the Young, as well as in- 

fructing the Old; what lefs than a new Revelation can expofe their Exopitions, or explain away their Explanations of the prefent Revelation, which have prov'd more fatal to the Happinefs of Mankind, than all the Superfttions of the Pagan World. Had the Bees Speech and Reafon, would they, think you, from Age to Age, have continu'd to give the beft part of their Honey to fuch haranguing Drones, who, for the moft part, employ'd their Talents, to fet not only Hive againft Hive; but the Bees of the fame Hive againft one another, for fuch things as
had no other Tendency, than to make the idle
Drones lord it over the industrious Bees? But not
to deviate,

We have no great Reason to hope, it will ever
be so well with Mankind; but that there will al-
ways be too much room for such Arguments, as
the Doctor urges from the Corruptions of Mankind,
for new Revelations. Have not Impostors always
made

Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation* 369

made use of this Plea? Was it not on the Carnality
of the primitive Orthodox Christians, that the spir-
ital Montanus founded his new Gospel which
divided the Christian World for no firlall Time, and
made the celebrated Tertullian say; That "the Law See Reeves's
tc and Prophets were to be look'd on as the Infancy; Prelim. Dic,
" and the Gospel, as it were, the Youth; but that*"* 7 "
44 there was no complete Perfection to be found, "
" but in the Instruction of the Holy Ghost, who
44 spoke by Montanus?"

And it was the ill Lives of the Professors of
Christianity, as 'tis own'd by Christian as well as
Arabick Writers, which prepar'd the way for that
Succes which Mahomet met with; whose Religion,
as it gain'd in a short Time more profelytes than
any other, so it is still gaining ground: For which
Father Marracci, who has so well translated, and
makes such just Reflections on the Alcoran, gives
this odd Reason: Habet nimirum hoc Superftitio (Mz-Marrac. Pref,
humedana) quicquid plauftible, ac probable in Christi-
ana Religione reperitur, £5? qua Nature legi ac luminfi' 4 *
confentanea videntur. Myfteria ilia Fidei noftra, qua
primo afpeftu, incredibilia, & hnpojabilia apparent \ £2? pracipue, qua nimos ardua humana natura cenfen-
tur, penius exclusidit. Hinc moderni Idolorum Cultores^
facius ac promptius Saracenicam,^^;Evangelicam,
Legem amplecluntur. But,

The Doctor is so far from solving the Difficulties
attending this Scheme, that he quits it, and art-
fully introduces a new Scene; and tho' he had be-
fore laid it down as a moft evident Truth, that
God does nothing by meer Will and Arbitrarinefs;
yet this new Hypothecs is wholly built on it, in
fuppofing, that in thefe latter Times j God intend-
ed to give fome Men, without regard to their Me-
rits, ah higher Degree of Happinefs than he did
the reft: And to fhew how confident this is with
Reafon, he fays, " As God was notoblig'd to makepag. 217.
44 all his Creatures equal, or to make Men Angels,
44 or to endow all Men with the fame Capacities
B b 44 and

370 Chriftiſnitj as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14*

M and Faculties; fo he was not bound to make all
" Men capable of the fame degree, or that fame kind
" of Happinefs, or to afford all Men the very fame
" Means and Opportunity of obtaining it."

B. But how comes this to be fhifting the Scene,
and introducing a new Hypothecs?

A. Because his former fuppofes Men living
and dying in a deprav'd, corrupted, degenerate,
and impious State, incapable of Reformation j where-
as in this all Men are allow'd to have, in general,
the Means of attaining to a certain Degree of Hap-
pinefs hereafter; whilft Chriftians alone have in par-
ticular the Means and Opportunities of gaining this
higher degree, and kind of Happinefs.

Tho' infinite variety of Creatures, and confe-
quently Inequality, is neceffary to mew the great
Extent of the divine Goodnefs, which plainly ap-
ppears from the beautiful, and well-form'd Syftem
of the World, and the due Subordination of Things,
all contriv'd for the Happinefs of the Whole *, yet
fure, it does not from thence follow, that God will
not either here, or hereafter, beftow on the rational
Creation, all the Happinefs their Nature is capable
of-, fince that was the End why God gave it them.
Can God, who equally beholds all the Dwellers
on Earth, free from Partiality and Prejudice, make
fome People his Favourites, without any Confedera-
tion of their Merits; and merely becaufe they be-
lieve certain Opinions taught in that Country where
they happen to be born *, while others, far the greater
number, fhall, from Age to Age, want his Favour;
not upon the Account of their Demerits, but becaufe
deftin'd to live in Places, where God, who always
acts from Motives of infinite Wifdom and Good-
nefs, thought it bed to conceal from them all fuch
Opinions? What can more reprefent God as an
arbitrary and partial Being, than thus to fuppofe,
that he vouchfares not to afford the greatefl part
of Mankind, the Happinefs, of which himfelf had made them capable?

Must

Ch. 14. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation, 371

Must not every one perceive, that this narrow Notion is inconfiftent with the Character of a Being of unlimited Benevolence? Is not infinite Goodnefs always the fame? How then can it, in thefe laft Days, make fuch Inequality among Men? Is not this suppo
ing Inconfancy in the divine Conduct? Is not this Notion repugnant to the natural Idea we have of the divine Goodnefs? As likewife to thofd express Texts of Scripture, which declare God is no Refpecler of Perfons*, that every one, of what Nation foever*faIIle rewarde according to his Works? And that Men are accepted according to what they have y and not according to what they have not?

If God, as the Doctor contends, will judge Men as they are accountable, that is, as they are ra
tional*, mufl not the Judgment of the moll righ
teous Judge, hold an exact proportion to the Ufe they have made of their Reafon? And if Men's State in this Life be a State of Probation, and for that Caufe they are made moral Agents, capable of knowing Good from Evil, and confequently of doing every thing that's fit to be done; muft they not be dealt with hereafter, according to the ufe they have made of their moral Agency?

How can Men be fure, if God acts thus par
tially, that this partiality may not even now be iri Favour of other Countries, than thofe they live in; and of other Notions, which not Bowing from the Nature and Reafon of Things, we may be wholly unacquainted with? If Men may lofe any part of God's Favour for Impoflibilities; or not obferving fuch Rules as he never gave them \ where mall v/e flop? Cou'd I think God fo partial and prejudiced, as mod. Sects, for their own Sakes, repre{ent him; how cou'd I admire, love, and adore him, as I ought? Nay, how can any, who have fuch unwor
thy Notions of God, be certain, God's Prejudice and Partiality will be in their Favour? If you ad
mit any one Imperfection in God; how can you be fure of his Veracity, Immutability, or any other Perfection whatever f B b 2 Tho*
Tho' Dr. Clark contends for what terminates in this gtofs Partiality, as if the Whole of Christianty was founded on it *, yet some of our Divines, of the firft Rank too, are of a different Opinion *, from two of Which, I'll give you the following Quotations.

Whart*\ " God's Goodness and Mercy (fays Mr.Whar-
VoLofSerm." ton) Were, from all Ages, equal and uniform *, P* 3'5» &c - " his Juftice always impartial and universal, in ex-
4< eluding none from his Favour, but for Reafons

" common to them with all Mankind. The

" Univerfality, and Impartiality of the Divine Ju-
" fice and Favour is founded on the Excellency of
" the Divine Nature ; which can't be supposed to
" want That, which above all is neceffary for the
" Government of the World; impartial Juftice in

" the difpenfing of Rewards and Punimments.

" All Men were equally created by God; and if
" we repect That alone, all have an equal Title

" to his Favour. Other wife we cou'd not but

" conceive Injuftice in God ; nor were it poflible to
" reconcile fuch a Partiality with his infinite Ex-
" cellency. The Reafon why God is no Refpecter of sChron. 23. « Perfons, is faid to be, becaufe "There is no Iniquity 49* " with the Lord. All reafonable Preference of one

" Perfons to another, muft be founded on fome juft
«' Caufe *, otherwife it wou'd be trifling, and fonf, " nay, even unjuft, and foolifh — Far be it from
" us, to imagine any fuch Imperfections in God;
" in him there is no Variablenefs, or Shadow of

" Change. He ever proceeds upon fixed, and

" immovable Principles ; which equally ferve for

" all A&ions and Caufes. God has fix'd mod

" impartial Laws of Government ; which univer-

" fally affect all the Members of Mankind.

" It is (o pSeafing a Delufion, to fancy themfelves dear to God in an extraordinary Manner, and
" for unaccountable Reafons ; that it is no wonder
" many have been tempted to entertain fuch a

charming Error. — This fedue'd the Jews.

" This
Ch. 14. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation, 373

*/ This Prejudice has corrupted great Numbers of
" Chriftians. — Is God the God of the Jews and
ft Chriftians only ? Is he not the God of the Gentiles
" aifo? Are not his Attributes always unalterable ;
" and the Influence of thefe equally cteriv'd down
" to all his Creatures ? "

That celebrated Preacher, Dr. Ibbott 9 affirms, Serm. Vol.
that, l 'Tis not our being of any Nation, or anypag.207.
" Sect, Members of any particular Church, or
" Society i that will intitle us to God's Favour; but
" our working the Work of God, living up to that
" Light and Knowledge which he has afforded us-,
" and being moft. punctual, and exact in the difcharge
" of thofe moral Duties, which ajl Mankind, who
" have any true Notions of God and Religion, have

" ever thought themfelves oblig'd to." Again y

" Wherever" Men fear God, and love one another, pag. 21 1.

" they will be accepted without any Regard to their

" Country, or Nation ; their Tribe, or Family ;

" for This is what God would bring all People to,
M from the rijing of the Sun unto the going down thereof.
ec This is that inward Temper of Mind, and that
" outward Practice of Life, which he requires ;
" and which, wherever he meets it, will find Ac-
M ceptance with him."

The contrary is a Notion, which lays a Foun-
dation for everlafting Perfeucion ; for if Men flat-
ter themfelves, that they, upon the Account of their
particular Syftems, are the Favourites of Heaven ;
and that others mail want, even to Eternity, many
Degrees of their Happinefs ; will not that oblige
them, as they love their Children, Families, Friends,
Neighbours, and Relations ; to ufe any Means,
come into any perfeucion Meafures, to prevent
fuch Opinions from fpreading, as they imagine,
wo'd deprive them of that Degree of Happinefs,
which otherwise they might ever enjoy? And is it
not chiefly owing to this Aburdity, that even the
moll moderate of the different Sects, are far from
Bb 3 treating

374 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.
treating one another with that Benevolence, which
the common Ties of Humanity require?

Did Men believe, that all, who were equally
fincere, were equally acceptable to God; there cou'd
be no pretence for the leaft Partiality, much lefs for
Persecution, either Pofitive, or Negative: Nor
cou'd any Man love another the lefs, for the wideft
Difference in Opinions: And then of courfe, Mens
Indignation wou'd be wholly bent against Immor-
ality, discoverable by the Light of Nature —, which,
now, alas! is but too often protected by Zeal for
mere Speculations.

This Principle, and this alone, wou'd caufe
univerfal Love, and Benevolence among the whole
Race of Mankind 5 and did it prevail, muft foon
produce a new, and glorious Face of Things *, or,
in the Scripture— Phrafe, a new Heaven^ and a new
Earth; and wou'd free Men from that miferable
Perplexity, in which the Fear of mißtaking in fpe-
culative Matters involves them.

What Afflirance, upon any other Ground, can
even the generality of Chriftians have, that they do
not err moft dangeroufly; when they confider what
Divifions there have been, from the Beginning, a-
mong Chriftians, about fuch Points? And that the
Guides of their own Churches, even the moft able,
tho' they agree in faying, 'Their Fundamentals are
plain -, have not always the fame Set of Fundamentals 
and when they have, widely differ in explaining
them: Can they, I fay, who confider this, be cer-
tain, that it is not the Fear of Lofs of Preferment,
or fome other political Reafons, that keep up any
Sort of verbal Agreement among them, even in
Things ownM to be of the higheft Consequence *,
and which, as fuch, are plac'd in their Creeds and
Articles? Confider, with yourfeif, what Comfort,
what Satisfaction, it muft give a Man, efpecially,
on his Death-bed, to be certain, he is not accounta-
ble for any Errors in Opinion; if he has, according

Ch. 14. Christianity as Old as the Creation. ^75
as his Circumftauces permit, done his beft to difco-
ver the Will of God?

Dr. Prideaux says, "The main Arguments Ma- Life of Ma-
" hornet made ufe of, to delude Men into the Itn-bonet, p. 25.
" pofture, were his Promifes, and his Threats ^ dlt - 7vo ' 
" being thofe which efily work on the Affections of
" the Vulgar. 5 ' If the Bulk of Mankind are fo
easily deluded by Threats and Promifes, when join'd
to Opinions as abfurd as thofe of Mahomet; can
there be any other way to avoid their being deluded
in proportion to the Greatnefs of thofe Promifes
and Threats; but by annexing them, not to any Set
of Opinions, but to Sincerity and Infincerity? For
here, the only Effect they can have, is to make Men
judge without Prejudice and Partiality.

The prefent Bifhop of Sarum fays, C£ God isPreferv,p.75.
" juft, equal, and good; and as fure as he is fo,
" he can't put the Salvation and Happinefs of any
" Man, upon what he has not put it in the Power
" of any Man on Earth to be intirely fatisy'd of. "
And much lefs, fay 7, can a juft, equal, and good
God put the Salvation, or any Part of the Happi-
nefs of the greater! Part of Mankind, upon that, of
which, instead of being entirely fatisfied, they are
intirely ignorant. Is it poflible, a miftaken Chriftian
can have a Title to God's Favour, and a Man of
another Religion not have the fame Title; when
that Sincerity, on which the Title depends, is com-
mon to them both? " If the Favour of God, aslb. p. 91.
" the Bifhop fays, follows Sincerity, as fuch; and
<e equally follows every Degree of Sincerity, " muft
not Men of all Religions whatever, if equally fin-
cere, have the fame Title to be equally favour'd by
God? who is the only infallible Judge of their Sin-
cerity, in the Ufe of thofe Talents, whether great,
or fmall, he has endow'd them with. And,

Mr. Chillingworth was fo far from thinking invo-
luntary Errors, Crimes *, that he thought it criminal
to afk pardon for them: And fays, " That wou'd^ we ^ the

f* be to impute to God the itrange Tyranny or re- ty ma i nta in'd.
B b 4 * 6 quiring Se&. 16.

376 Chriftianity as Old as the Creation.Cb.14.

" quiring Bricks, where he has given no Straw; of
" expæsing to gather, where he has not ftrow'd \\
"to reap, where he fow'd not *, of being offended
"with us for not doing, what he knew we cou'ld
"not do." And,

The Romanists themselves, tho' they own the
common People can have but an imperfect Knowledge
of what their infallible Church requires; yet fay,
that *a Difpofition to receive, and an Endeavour
"to understand what it teaches, is fuficient."
And mall not the Prot eft ants allow as much to fuch
a Difpofition, in relation to the Will of God *, as
the Papifts do, to the Will of Man? But fince there
are fome, to whom these Notions about Sincerity,
will appear mocking, for their fakes, I will quote
a Divine, whom they have in a manner idoliz'd: I
Lejley of pri-mean the famous Mr. Lefley, who fays, "In the
vate Judgm. c< Beginning God created Man, and left him in the
*** 221 ' " Hands of his own Counfel (Ecclef I 5. 14.) He fet
*' Life and Death, Blerling and Curfing for him to
" chufe; and God will blefs, or curfe him, ac-
"cording to what he has fet before him \ whether
" by Revelation, or his own Natural Reafon only:
" And who is Judge of this but God, who always
"knows the Sincerity of any Man's Intenfions,
"and what Endeavours he has ufed towards the
"right informing his Judgment?"

In a Word, this is fo evident a Truth, that there
are none, but who, with the Bihop of London, fay,
Pafl. Letter, " Chriftianity requires no further Favour, than a
Pg 54- " fair, and impartial Inquiry into the Grounds and
"Doctrines of it;" even while they are designing
the further Favours of Fines, Pillories and Imprifon-
ment, &c. But to return to the Doctor.

I wou'd be glad to know, whether the greater
Degree of Happinefs, from which Dr. Clark wou'd
exclude the ref of Mankind; belongs to all thofe
innumerable Seels, that go under the Name of
Chriftians; or to one SecT.; by virtue of its pecu-
liar Fundamentals -, or elfe to all Chriftians, who,
. l tho'

Ch. 14. Chriftianity as Old as the Creation. 377

tho' ever fo much miftaken, fincerely endeavour to
find out the Will of God? If the Doctor fays the
latter, he can't think this Favour depends on any
Set of Notions, but on Sincerity *, and confequently,
must equally belong to all that are equally fincere:
But allowing that Chriftians are to be *rewarded
above others, equally fmcere; yet if they are like-
wife fubject to be punifh'd above others for their
Miftakes, even about fuch abftrupe Notions, as di-
vide the moft eminent Men of the fame moft emi-
nent Church •, such as Dr. Waterland, and Dr. Clark
nay, Dr. Clark, in some Editions of his Book, and
himself in other Editions •, where then, is the great
Advantage of the Doctor's Hypothesis? But,

If Christians are to be punished hereafter, for
not observing Rich Things, as the happiness of
Mankind in general does not depend on •, God,
certainly, is far from being partial in their Favour;
if not, where is the Difference?

But does not the Doctor raise an Argument,
from Men's different Capacities and Abilities in this
Life, for their having different Degrees of happiness
hereafter?

A. Tho' Men here have different Capacities,
yet if that depends on bodily Organs \ all Souls may
in Heaven have equal Capacities: But even this
Supposition will not serve his Purpose, except the
wiseft of the Philosophers had not Abilities equal to
the meanest Christian \ and fo (allowing a Proposition
between Happiness and Abilities) were naturally incapable of the same Degree, or Kind of Happiness. But,

The Doctor himself seems conscious of the
Weakness, even of this new Hypothesis —, since he,
after he had used it, to get rid of a troublesome
Objection; (trait quits it in saying, "That as pag. 270,
" Man ever deny'd, but that the Benefit of drift's
" Death extended backward, to those who liv'd
" before his Appearance in the World; so no One
" can prove, but the same Benefit may extend itself

" forward

378 Christianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

" forward to those, who. never heard of his Ap-
" pearance; tho' they liv'd after it." If both these,
the' knowing nothing of Christ, or his Death, reap
the Benefit of his Death •, what more can the most
perfect Believer expect? So that even on this Sup-
position, the Doctor must have own'd, that all Men,
living up to that Light God has given them, are
upon a Level, in relation to their future Happiness.

And indeed, if Sinners, since the coming of
Christ, are not to be fav'd without Repentance and
Amendment; and Sinners, at all Times, were to
be fav'd on these Terms, or elfe cou'd not be fav'd
at all; must not Repentance and Amendment, which
suppose a Knowledge of what was to be repented
of, and amended; put all Mankind, at all Times,
upon a Level, with relation to their future Happi-
nefs? Can any thing be more evident, than that,
if doing Evil is the only Foundation of God's Dif-
pleasure; ceasing to do Evil, and doing the con-
trary, must take away that Displeasure? As long
as Men continue in their Sins, they must continue
the proper Objects of God's Refentment, but when
they, forsaking their Sins, act a Part suitable to
their rational Nature, they of course become the
proper Objects of his Approbation: And this, fure,
can't be deny'd, except you fuppofe, Chrift, who
came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repe-
tance; propos'd fome other way of reconciling them
to God, than by persuading them to bring forth
Fruits meet for Repentance, or, in other Words, by
obliging them to live up to the eternal, and univerfal
Law of Righteousefs.

Tho' the Doctor fays no more than our Ar-
ticle 31, es affirm, viz. that "the Oblation of Chrift
once made, is that perfect Redemption, Propi-
tiation, and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole
World, both Original, and Actual:" yet I wish
the Doctor had been mere explicit, and told us,
what Benefit thefe who never heard of Chrift's
Apcarance, cou'd gain by his Death.

Cb. 14. Chrijiianity as Old as the Creatkn. 379

B. The Doctor fays, that " Chrift died, to {hew pag. 259.
God's irreconcileable Hatred to Sin ; and to vin-
dicate the Honour of his Laws." pag. 260.

A. These Reafons, fure, cou'd never influence
thofe, who never heard of Chrift; or, if they had,
perhaps, wou'd have been fo perverfe, as not to
imagine, that pardoning the Guilty, and punifhing
the Innocent, cou'd either fhow irreconcileable En-
mity to Guilt, or Love for Innocence; and perhaps,
govern'd by Prejudices, might think very oddly of a
King, who, tho' he freely pardon'd his repenting
Rebels; yet fhou'd caufe his moft loyal, and only
Son to be put to death, to fhew his Hatred to Re-
bellion; and to vindicate the Honour of thofe Laws,
which forbid putting an innocent Perfon to death;
or any Perfon to be any way inftromental to his
own Death  much more to facrifice himfelf. Cou'd
thefe Philofophers, who did not imagine any Virtue
in facrificing of Beafts, to wafh away the Sins ofpag. 206,
Men; eafily conceive a Human Sacrifice, which
they believ'ed Human Nature abhorr'd, to be an pag. 287.
Expiation for Sins? Or, that Sins freely pardon'd,
cou'd want any Expiation? Or, that all was mere
Mercy, and pure Forgivenefs, after a full Equiva-
lent paid, and adequate Satisfaction given?

B. This, indeed, feems to me as great a My-
fiery, as that the fame God fhould receive Satisfac-
tion from, and give Satisfaction to the fame God:
and that the fame God, who thus receives, and
gives Satisfaction, fhould neither give, or receive any
Satisfaction; since the Holy Ghoft, the fame God
with God the Father, and God the Son, neither
gives, or receives any Satisfaction.

Tho' I have omitted feveral Things, which well
deferve to be criticis'd; yet, I think, I have faid
enough to fhew the Inconfiftency of the Doctor's
Scheme, and the Weaknefs of all thofe Arguments,
by which he attempts to defroy the All-fufficiency,
abfolute Perfection, Plainnefs, and Perfpicuity of
the Law of Nature, which he had before fo fully

3°0 Chriflianity as Old as the Creation, Ch. 14,
demonftrated. Who cou'd expect, after we had been
told, that as God governs all his own Actions by
the eternal Rule of Reafon; fo all his rational
Creatures are oblig'd to govern themfelves in all
theirs, by the fame eternal Rule: A Rule too,
own'd to be fo plain, that the Reafon of all Men
every where naturally^ and necefJarily affents to it:
Who, I fay, after thefe, and a' Number of other
fuch Expreflions, cou'd imagine, that all this fhould
be unfaid, and the utmoft Art employ'd, to fhew
the Imperfection, Infufficiency, Obfccurity, and
Uncertainty of the Light of Nature; and that by
Reafon of its, many Defects, all Mankind, from
Age to Age, were in an unavoidable State of Cor-
ruplion? And that, even thofe few Men, who
made it their Bufinefs to ftudy Natural Religion,
were entirely ignorant of fome Doctrines, abfolutely
neceffary for the Reformation of Mankind? Nay,
that they were (here the Doctor, perhaps, defcribes
his own Conduct) " like Men wandering in the wide
cc Sea, without knowing whither to go, or which
$c Way to take; or having any Guide to conduct
" them? " And, in support of his Hypo thefs, make v
no fcruple to repreffent God, not alike Good at all
Times and Places; and to have acted for many Ages
with fo little Forefight; as to give Mankind no
other Light for their Conduct, than fuch, as dif-
abled them from anfwering that End, for which it
was given: And afterward, with fo l'ttle Good-
nefs -, as when he faw this Defect, flill to continue
the greater! Part of Mankind in that difmal State
of Darknefs, in which all before were involv'd?
And then, after he had made the moft of this ftrange
Hypotheffis, to quit it for the fake of another, no lefs
Grange? And, tho' he had declar'd, that God does nothing in the Government of the World, out of mere Will and Arbitrariness; yet to suppose, that God acts thus with his rational Creatures; and without regard to Merit, arbitrarily designs Chrifrians a greater Degree of Happinefs than others? And at laft

Ch. 14. Chriflianity as Old as the Creation. 3 8 1

kft quit too, even this Hypothefis •, by fuppofing all Men, tho' they never heard of Chrift's Death, to be upon a level, in relation to any Benefits receiv'd from it? And, I may add,

When Men confider, how often this Difcourfe has been reprinted, and review'd by a Man own'd to be as great a Mailer of Reafon, as ever appear'd in print; and withal, both a subtle Metaphyfician, and excellent Mathematician; an acute Philofopher^ as well as a deep Divine •, one, who never fails to exhuaff the Subject he handles: When Men, I fay, confider all this, will they not be apt to cry?

Si Pergama dextra, &fr. Virg- --^n. 2,

291.

B. I muft own, you have produced feveral Weighty Arguments, many of them new, at leaft, to me; to prove that Religion was, and always muft be invariably the fame; but fince you go out of the common Road, and the Path you take, is fcarce at all trodden; you muft expect, it will be faid of you, as of fome modern Writers, that you are better at pulling down, than building up.

A , When any Notion, in Defence of which People have litle to fay, is attacked, they ufually cry, Why will you pull down, except you build up? When in reality, Error muft be remov'd, in order to make way for Truth: You muft pull down one, before you can build up the other. But here, I hope, there's no room for that Objection •, becaufe, as nothing but Rubbifh is remov'd, nothing but what is either inconfiftent with, or, at leaft, takes off from, the full Exercife of Piety, and Virtue; fo every Thing is advanc'd, which tends to promote the Honour of God, and the Happinefs of Human Societies. And, I may add, that as in attacking the Superftition of any one Party, all the reft wou'd think me in the right ifo here all Parties, without coming into the Hypothefis of their Adverfaries, may, by equally receding from thefe arbitrary Things
they have brought into Religion, come to an happy Agreement.

For my part, I think, there's none who wish.
Well to Mankind, but must like wife wish this Hypothesis to be true *, and can there be a greater Proof of its Truth, than that it is, in all its Parts, so exactly calculated for the Good of Mankind, that either to add to, or take from it, will be to their manifest Prejudice? And,

Introdu. to If, as Bishop Chandler remarks, "They are Def. of Christ." Deceivers, and true Enemies to Mankind, who do not teach a Religion most worthy of God, most friendly to Society, most helpful to Government, and most beneficial to every Individual; ** what need we run to his Jewish Rabblies, or any other Rabbies, to discover this true Religion? If it is by this Test, that our Reason must judge of the Truth of all Religion; are not they the best Friends to Mankind, who teach such a Religion, without the least Mixture of those Arbitrary Things, that have caused such fatal Contentions among Christians? And which, at the best, serve only to divert them from attending to a Religion most worthy of God> most friendly to Society \ most helpful to Government\ and most beneficial to every Individual *, and withal, is a Religion, as I hope is here fully prov'd, founded upon such demonstrable Principles, as are obvious to the meanest Capacity \ and most effectually prevents the Growth, both of Scepticism and Enthusiasm.

I entirely agree with this Right Reverend Father, that "Christianity in itself, ftripped of the Additions that Policy, Miftake, and the Circumstances of Time, have made to it, is a most holy Religion;" but I may add, that by reason of these Additions, it is become, in most Places, a most unholy Religion. And can we hope to get rid of these Additions, but by bringing them to the Bishop's own Test? I might here ask him, Who are they, that have brought in, and ft ill defend these 2 Ad-

Ch. 14. Chriſtianity as Old as the Creation. 383

Additions to Christianity *, which, as all fair, and
candid Writers own, have given great Advantages
to its Adverfaries ?

What good Chriftian is not ready to join with
the excellent Dr. Sykes, in wishing, " That Chri-
Sykes's Effay

" {Hans wou'd not vend under the Name of Evan-
" gelical Truths, the abfurd, and contradictory 
" Schemes of ignorant, or wicked Men ? That they
" wou'd part with the Load of Rubbifh, which
" makes thinking Men fink under the Weight,
" and gives too great a Handle to Infidelity ?"
" The Hands of Friends to Christianty, be fays> Ib. ?nf.
" have been much embarraf'd, thro' Fear of fpeak-
" ing againft local Truths \ and its Adverfaries
" have fo fuccefsfully attack'd thofe WeaknefTes,
" that Christianty itfelf has been deem'd indefen-
" fible \ when, in reality, the Follies of Chriftians
" alone have been fo." If this be true, have I not
fhewn fome Resolution, in daring to attack the
darling Weaknefles, and Follies of falfe Chriftians,
in proving that true Chriftianty is fo far from being
indefenfible ; that it carries its own Evidences with
it *, or -in other words, all its Doctrines plainly fpeak
themselves to be the Will of an infinitely wife, and
good God ; as being moft friendly to Society ^ moft
helpful to Government^ and moft beneficial to every
Individual \ or, in one. word, free from all Prieft-
craft ?

B. There's one Objection which will always
ftick, you will be reprefented as an AfTecter of No-
velty ; and that 'tis Pride and Vain-Glory, which
makes you go out of the common Road.

A. That is a Reflection all muft expect, who
endeavour to reform any prevailing Abules : They
little understand Human Nature, who do not fee,
that Novelty, in this Cafe, can only ferve to make
a Man defpis'd by the Majority, for his Ignorance 1
in not being able to discover that Truth, which
they, at firft fight, clearly perceive ; as well as
hated by them, for propagating falls Doctrine ;

and

384 Chrijlianly as Old as the Creatiwi. Ch. 14.

and inhumanly treated for it, if it clam.es (and
where does not Reformation clam) with the Intereft
of a certain Set of Men, who have two Thirds of
Mankind, viz. the Bigots and Immoral, entirely at
their Devotions. But,

I am fo far from being a Novelifi, that all, ex-
cept where they difagree with themfelves, mud;
agree with me: Are not all of my Sentiments, who own, that their Religion contains all Things worthy of having God for its Author? For that supposes, that Reason, antecedently to Revelation, can tell them what is, or is not worthy of having God for its Author: And do not all recede from Revelation, or, which is the same, recede from the plain obvious, grammatical Contraction of its Words, whenever that, in the least Point, recedes from the Religion of Nature and Reason? Which being, as Dr. Prideaux owns, wrote in the Hearts of every See pag. 60, one of us from the Creation, is "the Touchstone of all Religion;" and that, "if the Gospel are in any particular, or in the minutest Circumstance is contrary to its Righteousness; that is strong enough to destroy the whole Cause; and make all Things else that can be said for its Support, totally ineffectual." Which supposes, we can't judge of the Truth of any Revelation, till we apply to it the Touchstone of all Religion; and see whether it agrees with that in all Particulars. And do not all, without regard to the plain Meaning of the Words, in interpreting the Precepts of the Gospel, (which are, for the most part, delivered in general, undetermined, and very often, hyperbolical Terms,) so explain, limit, and restrain these Precepts, as to make them agreeable to the Touchstone of all Religion, the Nature, and Reason of things, for fear, that otherwise they might depreciate Morality? And in this Case, they, as it is allow'd, are the best Interpreters, who most recede from the killing Letter, And is not this, in effect, saying with the present Bishop of Bangor, "That the Gospel is a Republication of the Law of Nature; and its Precepts declarative of that original Religion, which is as old as the Creation. And, 'Tis as reasonable to suppose, that three Angles of a Triangle would be equal to two right ones in one Age, and unequal in another; as to suppose that the Duties of Religion should differ in one Age, from what they were in another; the Ha-
"bitudes, and Relations from which they flow*

"continuing always the fame."

The Principles I maintain are fo evident, that they who are introducing Things in opposition to them, muft yet own their Force. Dare any fay* that God is an Arbitrary Being, and his Laws not founded on the eternal Reason of Things—, evert while they are contending for his acting arbritarily, and giving us fuch Laws as are founded on mere Will and Pleafure ? Will any maintain, that our reafon-insg Faculties were not given us, to diftinguifh between Good and Evil, Religion and Superftition? Or that they will not anfwer the End for which they were given ?

Will any affirm, that the Nature of God is not eternally the fame? Or that the Nature of Man is changed ? Or that the Relations God and Man ftand in to one another, are not always the fame ; nay, even while they are making Alterations in thefe Relations* by fuppofing new Laws, and new Duties ?

I p All own, that God, at no Time, cou'd have any Motive to give Laws to Mankind, but for theii* -Good ; and that he is, at all Times, equally good, and, at all Times, acts upon the fame Motives ; muft they not own with me, except they are incon-fiftent with themselves, that his Laws, at all Times muft be the fame ? And that the Good of Mankind is the Teft, the Criterion* or the internal Evidence, by which we are to judge of all his Laws ? But,

Cc If,

386 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

If, after all, I am ftil criminal, it mud be in not owning, that God created the greater! : Part of Mankind to be damn'd —, or, which is the fame, made fuch Things neceflary to their Salvation, as they were incapable of knowing : And in my af-

Heb. 11. 6. ferting, that God is a Rewarder of thofe, who dili-gently seek him •, tho' they do not feek him under the Direction of this, or that Set of Men •, who, pro-vided they can make themfelves neceflary here, care not who they damn hereafter. And thus,

A&s 10. 34, I N believing with St. Peter ', that God is no Re-

3 5. specler of Perfons •, but in every Nation he that fear eth him, and worketh Right eoufnefs, is accepted with him : Rom. 2. 14. And with St. Paul, that the Gentiles do by Nature the Rom. 2. 6. Things contained in the Law : And that God will ren-
der to every Man (whether Believer, or Unbeliever,)
Tit. 2. 11, 12. according to his Deeds: And that the Grace of God,
which bringeth Salvation, Teaching us, we
fhciCd live foberly, righteousfly, and godly in this pre fent
JWorld, (which takes in the whole of our Duty) has
appeared to all Men, and at all Times. And,
Mat. 9. 12. In believing with our Saviour, that the Whole
John 7. 17. yieednot a Phyfician; and that the Doctrine he taught
Ihews itfelf to be the Will of God; and that he did
not fppeak of himfelf \ and in believing the Description,
that God himfelf gives of the New Covenant, I will
Hcb. 8.10. put my haws into their Minds, and write them in their
~~ Ver. 1 11. Hearts: They (hall not teach every Man his
Neighbour. They fu all all know me from the leaft
to the great 'eft.

I n a word, All are forc'd to own thefe Senti-
mements I contend for, except the Ant bropomorphites*,
they, indeed, faid, that Fallible Reaon muft give
place to infallible Revelation *, or in Dr. Waterland y s
Remarks on Words, Ci That to advance Natural Light, that is,
Dr. Clarke's " Pagan Darknefs, in oppofition to Scripture Evi-
3'xpoft.ofthec ci ence j 3 fettino; v up human Conjeclures above
La. Late- c , , , ^ r , , f? , r , . . . J , ,
chUm, p. 66. divine irutns:" And that, fince the Scripture
fo frequently imputes human Parts, and Paticns
to God; we ought net to doubt of its only be-
cause

Ch. 14. Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. 387

cause we can't reconcile it with that Philofo-
phy, which the Bulk of Mankind, for whom the
Scripture was chiefly wrote, are intirely ignorant
of.

In our next Conference (it being high Time to
put an End to this) I mall (hew you, that all Man-
kind, Jews, Gentiles, Mahometans, &c. agree, in
owning the Sufficiency of the Law of Nature, to make Men acceptable to God ; and that the primitive Christians believ'd, there was an exact Agreement between Natural and Revealed Religion \ and that the Excellency of the Latter, did consist in being a Republication of the Former.

For the present, take these few Authorities:
c4 If, says the renowned Origen, we admit the Origen contra " Judgment of God to be just, we must acknowledge, Celium, 1. 1. "ledge, that there can be no Ground for the Punishment of Sinners, unless the common Conceptions of all Men, are sufficient to give them a Mounded Understanding in the Duties of Morality. " And, therefore, it is not to be thought strange, "that those Things that God has taught us by the \ Prophets, and by our Saviour, were implanted "by him in the Minds of all Men \, that [q every 46 Man, having had the Intention, and Meaning of the Law written in his own Heart, thou'd be "left without excuse before the Divine Tribunal." And,

Lafianthus, the most eloquent of the Fathers, seems ravish'd with the Description Cicero gives of the Law of Nature \, and therefore, chooses to express his own Sense of it, in the Words of that Philosopher. " The Law of God, says he, is necessary I. 6. c. 8. " to be obser'd, That will lead us into the Way of Happiness \, that holy and heavenly Law, I mean, Which Marcus Tullius has, as it were, divinely describ'd in his third Book de Republica y *'. and whose Words, I will, therefore, subjoin. " Right Reason is a Law of Truth, consonant to Nature, implanted in all Men, uniform and eternal.

Cf

3 §8 Chrijiianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

"nal.-- "This Law neither needs to be propos'd, "nor can it ever be, either in whole, or part, repeal'd y neither Senate, nor People, can discharge us from the Obligation of it; we need not look abroad for an Expounder, to make us understand it. < c It is not one Law at Rams, another at Athens; one at this Time, another hereafter; but one, and the same immutable Law continues, and extends itself to all Times and Nations j and one God *' is the common Lord, and Governor of all Things. "fie it is, that has fram'd, propounded, and eternally blessed this Law; and whatsoever obeys not him,
<c abandons even himfelf, renounces his own Nature; " and in fo doing, fuffers actually in himfelf the " greater! Punifhment, tho* he efccapes all Things cc elfe which are deem'd fo,"

JnPfal. 57. St. Auftiti fays, " The Reafon why God has <c given us a written Law, is not becaufe his Law was not already written in our Hearts ; but becaufe Men letting out their Appetites after " Things abroad, became Strangers to themselves ; " and therefore, we have been fummon'd, and * 6 call'd upon by him, who is every where prefent, " to return into ourfelves: For what is that the ** outward written Law calls for, unto thofe who iC have forfaken the Law written in their Hearts 5

Jfaiah46. 8. " 4 but Re t ur n,0 ye Tranfgrejifors, to your own Hearts?"* I fhall, likewife, fhew you, that the Law of James 1. 25. Liberty, that perf eft Law of Liberty, which we are pbjig'4 to maintain in all our Words and Actions,

Jb. 2. 21. as the Law we are to be judged by ; does not conflft in a Freedom from Things of a moral Nature, for ttiat would be perfect Slavery 5 but from all thofe things as are not of fuch a Nature : And that "tis evi- dent from the Reafoning, which runs thro' all the Epiftles, that the placing Religion in any indifferent Thing, is inconfiftent with the Nature of Chrifti- anity ; 'tis introducing Judajfm, or what (as Chrifti- ans have found to their Coil:) is flill more preju- dicial.

2 And

Ch. 14/ Christianity as Old as the Creation. \ 389

And therefore, inftead of tranfcribing the beft Part of the Epiftles, I ftiall only mention a Text, or two : The Apoftle of the Gentiles not only fays,

Stand f aft in the Liberty, wherewith Chrift hath made you free ; but declares, wherever the Spirit of thei Cor. 16. 13J Lord is ; there is Libert j\ and confequently, that they who impofe any indifferent Things, as part of Reli- gion, fin againeft our Chriftian Liberty ; and act by another Spirit than that of the Lord : And I am afraid, that in this, as well as in many other Cafes, the Spirit of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Church, in moil Places, have been very opposite. And left we fhou'd miftake in this important Point, the Apoftle likewife tells us, not only in what Things the Kingnom of God does, but in what Things it does not conflft. The Kingdom of God is not Meat andRom. 14. 17, Drink, but Right eoufnets, Peace, and Joy in the Holy 18 » *9«
Ghoft i for he that in thefe Things ferveth Chrift, is ac-
ceptable to God, and approved of Man: Let us, there-
fore, follow after the Things which make for Peace, and
Things wherewith we may edify one another. If thefe
are the only Things, by which we can ferve Chrift,
and which will make us acceptable to God, and ap-
prov'd of Men; can fuch Things, as have no Ten-
dency to promote Righteousnesfs, Peace, and Joy in
the Holy Ghoft, make us serviceable to Chrift, or
acceptable either to God, or Man?

These Words of the Apoftle, tho' they need
no Paraphrafe, yet I mall mention what Calvin fays
on this Place; Nam fieri non pot eft, ubi quifpiam Deo
acceptus eft ac hominibus probatus, quin perfeBe in ipfo
vigeat acfloreat regnum Dei. Sha tranquiila placidaq
Confcientia per Juftitiamfervit Chrift 0, tarn hominibus
quam Deoef approbat. » Ubi ergo eft juftitia, & pax,
£57 gaudium fpirituale, illic regnum* Del r fuis omnibus
numeris eft abfioh'tum. And with him Bucer, Muf-
cuius, and others of our firft Reformers, agree.
And if the Kingdom of God, which has thefe
Things, is abolutely perfect, omnibus fuis numeris
abfolutum\ it c'an only be the Kingdom of Satan,

which

390 Chrijlianity as Old as the Creation. Ch. 14.

which requires things of a different Nature: And
if 'tis in thefe Things only we can ferve Chrift,
others can't be introduc'd, but for the service of
AntichrifL

However, I (hall, at prefent, content myself
with faying, There are but two ways for any thing
to oblige; either from the Reafon of the Thing, or
elxe from a poftive Command: Now, if there are
no fuch Things, as are commanded to be obferv'd
at all Times, and by all People; and no Commands
can oblige thofe, to whom they were not given;
we have no way left, to know what Things oblige
perpetually, but from their Nature \ which will
iufficiently diftinguifh them from thofe, which (in
fo mifcellaneous a Book as the Bible, taking in fuch
a vaft Period of Time) might be, given upon cer-
tain Occaions, and particular Reafons; in which
we are no other ways concern'd, than like them,
to act according as the Circumflances we are in
require. Without this, Chriftians wou'd have no
certain Rule, to know what Precepts oblige perpe-
tually; all being alike commanded in Scripture^
without making any Difference \ no Precepts being
faid to bind all Mankind, or to bind any for ever,
except thofe relating to the Jewijh Oeconomy;
which, in an hundred Places, we are told, are to 
ail for ever.

To compnfe the Matter in few Words-, what I 
have been endeavouring to prove, if,

firftj Th a t there are Things, which, by their 
internal Excellency, ihew themfelves to be the Will 
of an infinitely wise, and. good God.

Stcondly^ T h e l l f are Things, which have no 
W orth in themelves ; yet becaufe thofe that have, 
can't many times he perform'd without them, thofe 
are to be confider'd as Means to an End \ and be-
ing of a mutable Nature, are left to human -Dis-
cretion, to be vary'd as bell fuits thofe Ends' , tor 
the fake of which only they are instituted.

2 , , ' Thirdly,

Ch. 14. Chriftianify as v\ld as the Creation. \ 391

Thirdly, That there are forrie Things fo indif-
ferent, as not to be confider'd either as Means, or 
Ends*, and to place any part of Religion in the Ob-
ervation of Thefe, is highly superftitious. And I 
may venture to fay, He that carries thefe Diftinc-
tions in his Mind, will have a truer Notion of Re-
ligion, than if he had read all the Schoolmen, Fathers* 
and Councils.

B. I own,'tis time to give you fome 'Refpite, and 
to thank you for a* Favour, which can't be too 
much acknowledg'd ; in thus freely communicating 
your Thoughts on this important Subject:, and doing 
it after fuch a Manner, as cannot, were this Con-
ference to be publifh'd, offend Perfons, tho' of the 
greater!: Gravity, who have the Intereft of Truth 
at Heart.

A. Before we part, I mufl: remind you of the 
Occaion of this Conference ; for tho* you plainly 
faw, that God never intended Mankind fhou'd be 
without Religion *, or cou'd ordain an imperfect Re-
ligion ♦, and therefore, did not fee how to avoid con-
cluding, there mud: have been, from the Begin-
ning, a Religion mod perfect, which Mankind, at 
all Times, were capable of knowing; yet you were 
at a lofs, how to make out Chriftianity to be this 
perfect, this original Religion : How far I have 
gone in removing this Difficulty, you beft know. 
All I can fay, is, I am willing, whenever you pleafe, 
to refume the Conference ; and begging leave to
repeat what I mention'd at frfr, am ready to give up my Hypothejis, if you can name one attended with fewer Difficulties; and likewise, to affure you, that if I have advanc'd any Notion, which does not naturally, and neceflarily fhew itielf to be the Will of God; by tending to promote his Ho-nour, and the Good of Man; I here intirely re-nounce it: And by not perfiiting to dtfcnd Error, give this uncommon Mark of an ingenuous Difpo-fition. Err are pBJjum, H<ircticus rjje nolo,