

JEAN CALVIN

INSTITUTES OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
(VOL. 1 OF 2)

Jean Calvin
Institutes of the Christian
Religion (Vol. 1 of 2)

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Advertisement

The Presbyterian Board of Publication, in introducing to the public a new edition of the inimitable “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” do not wish to be regarded as adopting all the sentiments and forms of expression of the venerated writer; although they agree with him in his general views, and admire the skill and learning with which he has pointed out the relative positions and bearings of the great doctrines of revelation. Calvin was better qualified than any of his contemporaries, to present revealed truth in a connected and systematic form. His great natural abilities, his profound erudition, his well balanced and discriminating judgment, and his habits of diligent investigation, eminently fitted him to prepare such a work as the “Institutes,” in which the doctrines of the gospel are so clearly developed and harmonized, that the system has been closely associated with his name, from the period of its publication until the present time.

The honour of Calvin consisted, not in suggesting ingenious theories and speculations, but in his general accuracy in

interpreting the Holy Scriptures, and in detecting and pointing out the connection of Scripture doctrines, which, instead of being insulated, were shown to occupy their respective places in forming a complete and perfect system of Divine truth. The doctrines embraced in the formularies of the Presbyterian Church are termed Calvinistic, from their general accordance with Calvin's interpretation of scriptural truth; but the admission of this term, as explanatory of their general character, is not understood as by any means implying an entire coincidence in the views of Calvin, or a submission to his authority as an umpire in theological controversies. Although a learned and pious, he was a fallible man; and his opinions, although deserving of profound respect, are not to be blindly followed.

While admitting that the "Institutes," considering the times and circumstances in which they were written, form an invaluable body of divinity, still it must be acknowledged, that some of the doctrines therein maintained have been more luminously set forth in modern times. We would especially mention as an instance the doctrine of justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ. Some of the expressions of Calvin on the subject of reprobation may be regarded as too unqualified, and we can no further endorse them than as they are incorporated in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. The most decidedly objectionable feature in the "Christian Institutes," is to be found in the explanation of the Fourth Commandment, where the author asserts the abrogation of the Sabbath. In Calvin's view,

this ordinance was a mere type of better blessings, and, with the types and ceremonies of the old dispensation, was done away by the introduction of a new and better dispensation. In this opinion there can be no doubt that he greatly erred; and so universal is the conviction of the Church on the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as a moral institution, that no danger is to be apprehended from a contrary view, even under the sanction of so great a name as that of Calvin. In justice to his opinion on this subject, however, it should be stated, that he distinctly recognized not only the propriety but the necessity of a consecration of stated days for public religious services, without which regulation, he declares that "it is so far from being possible to preserve order and decorum, that if it were abolished, the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin." It is much to be lamented that so great a mind should have been led astray on so important a point by attempting to avoid an opposite extreme.

The Board of Publication have been induced to undertake this edition, by the very generous offer of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches in Baltimore, of which the Rev. John Backus and the Rev. Dr. R. J. Breckinridge are respectively Pastors, to defray the expense of stereotyping the work. Under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Board, the translation has been diligently compared throughout with the original Latin and French, and various corrections have been made to convey the meaning of the author more distinctly and accurately. This laborious duty has been performed by a

member of the Publishing Committee. The intrinsic excellence of the work, taken in connection with the attractive style, and comparative cheapness, of the present edition, induces the Committee to hope, that it may be widely circulated and carefully studied, both by the clergy and laymen of the Presbyterian Church.

In behalf of the Executive Committee,
William M. Engles, Editor.

The Translator's Preface

The English Reader is here presented with a translation of one of the principal theological productions of the sixteenth century. Few persons, into whose hands this translation is likely to fall, will require to be informed that the Author of the original work was one of an illustrious triumvirate, who acted a most conspicuous part in what has been generally and justly denominated The Reformation. Of that important revolution in ecclesiastical affairs, so necessary to the interests of true religion, and productive of such immense advantages even to civil society, Luther, Zuingle, and Calvin, were honoured, by the providence of God, to be the most highly distinguished instruments. It is no degradation to the memory of the many other ornaments of that age, to consider them as brilliant satellites in the firmament of the Church, revolving round these primary luminaries, to whom they were indebted for much of that lustre which they diffused over the earth; while they were all together revolving around one and the same common centre, though, it must be confessed, with considerable varieties of approximation, velocity, and obliquity in their courses; yet all deriving more or less copious communications of light from the great Sun of the moral system, the true Light of the world.

Differing in the powers of their minds, as well as in the temperament of their bodily constitutions, placed in different

circumstances, and called to act in different scenes, these leading Reformers, though engaged in the same common cause, displayed their characteristic and peculiar excellences; which, it is no disparagement of that cause to admit, were likewise accompanied by peculiar failings. It is not the design of this preface to portray and discriminate their respective characters. They alike devoted their lives and labours to rescue Christianity from the absurdities, superstitions, and vices by which it had been so deplorably deformed, mutilated, and obscured, and to recall the attention of mankind from the doubtful traditions of men to the unerring word of God. But while they were all distinguished Reformers, Calvin has been generally acknowledged to have been the most eminent theologian of the three.

Such was the superiority of the talents and attainments of Calvin to those of most other great men, that the strictest truth is in danger of being taken for exaggeration. It is impossible for any candid and intelligent person to have even a slight acquaintance with his writings, without admiring his various knowledge, extensive learning, profound penetration, solid judgment, acute reasoning, pure morality, and fervent piety.

His Commentaries on the Scriptures have been celebrated for a juster method of exposition than had been exhibited by any preceding writer. Above a hundred years after his death, Poole, the author of the Synopsis, in the preface to that valuable work, says, "Calvin's Commentaries abound in solid discussions of theological subjects, and practical improvements of them.

Subsequent writers have borrowed most of their materials from Calvin, and his interpretations adorn the books even of those who repay the obligation by reproaching their master.” And nothing can more satisfactorily evince the high estimation to which they are still entitled from the biblical student, than the following testimony, given, after the lapse of another century, by the late learned Bishop Horsley: “I hold the memory of Calvin in high veneration: his works have a place in my library; and in the study of the Holy Scriptures, he is one of the commentators whom I frequently consult.”

But perhaps, of all the writings of Calvin, none has excited so much attention as his Institutes of the Christian Religion.

His original design in commencing this work is stated by himself, in the beginning of his dedication, to have been to supply his countrymen, the French, with an elementary compendium for their instruction in the principles of true religion. But we learn from Beza that, by the time of its completion, existing circumstances furnished the Author with an additional motive for sending it into the world, during his residence at Basil, whither he had retired to avoid the persecution which was then raging in France against all the dissentients from the Church of Rome. Francis the First, king of France, courted the friendship of the Protestant princes of Germany; and knowing their detestation of the cruelties which he employed against his subjects of the reformed religion, he endeavoured to excuse his conduct by alleging that he caused none to be put to death except some few

fanatics; who, so far from taking the word of God as the rule of their faith, gave themselves up to the impulses of their disordered imaginations, and even openly avowed a contempt of magistrates and sovereign princes. Unable to bear such foul aspersions of his brethren, Calvin determined on the immediate publication of this treatise, which he thought would serve as an answer to the calumnies circulated by the enemies of the truth, and as an apology for his pious and persecuted countrymen.

The Dedication to Francis is one of the most masterly compositions of modern times. The purity, elegance, and energy of style; the bold, yet respectful, freedom of address; the firm attachment to the Divine word; the Christian fortitude in the midst of persecution; the triumphant refutation of the calumnies of detractors; with other qualities which distinguish this celebrated remonstrance, will surely permit no reader of taste or piety to withhold his concurrence from the general admiration which it has received.

The Author composed this treatise in Latin and French, and though, at its first appearance, it was little more than an outline of what it afterwards became, it was received with uncommon approbation, and a second edition of it was soon required. How many editions it passed through during his life, it is difficult, if not impossible, now to ascertain; but it obtained a very extensive circulation, and was reprinted several times, and every time was further improved and enlarged by him, till, in the year 1559, twenty-three years after the first impression, he put the finishing

hand to his work, and published it in Latin and French, with his last corrections and additions.

The circulation which it enjoyed was not confined to persons capable of reading it in the languages in which it was written. It was translated into High Dutch, Low Dutch, Italian, and Spanish.

Soon after the publication of the Author's last edition, it was translated from the Latin into English. In this language it appears to have reached six editions in the life of the Translator. A reflection on the small number of persons who may be supposed to have had inclination and ability to read such a book at that period, compared with the number of readers in the present age, may excite some wonder that there should have been a demand for so many editions. But no surprise at this circumstance will be felt by any person acquainted with the high estimation in which the works of the Author were held by the venerable Reformers of the Church of England, and their immediate successors, as well as by the great majority of religious people in this country. This is not a question of opinion, but an undeniable fact. Dr. Heylin, the admirer and biographer of Archbishop Laud, speaking of the early part of the seventeenth century, says, that Calvin's "Book of Institutes was, for the most part, the foundation on which the young divines of those times did build their studies." The great Dr. Saunderson, who was chaplain to King Charles I., and, after the restoration of Charles II., was created Bishop of Lincoln, says, "When I began to set myself to the study of divinity as my proper business, Calvin's Institutions were recommended to me,

as they were generally to all young scholars in those times, as the best and perfectest system of divinity, and the fittest to be laid as a ground-work in the study of this profession. And, indeed, my expectation was not at all deceived in the reading of those Institutions.”¹

The great changes which have taken place in our language render it difficult to form a correct opinion of the merits of Mr. Norton's translation, which was first published about two hundred and fifty years ago. It must give rather a favourable idea of its execution, that it was carefully revised by the Rev. David Whitehead, a man of learning and piety, who, in the reign of Henry VIII., was nominated by Archbishop Cranmer to a bishopric in Ireland, and, soon after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, was solicited by that Princess to fill the metropolitan see of Canterbury, but declined the preferment. But, whatever were the merits or defects of that translation at its first appearance, it has long been too antiquated, uncouth, and obscure, to convey any just idea of the original work, and abounds with passages which, to the modern English reader, cannot but be altogether unintelligible.

¹ It is not uncommon, among persons of a certain class, to represent the leading principles of Calvin as unfavourable to practical religion, and to that kind of preaching which is adapted to affect the hearts and consciences of the hearers. A reference to the most able and intelligent theologians and preachers who have held those principles, and upon whom they may reasonably be concluded to have exerted their genuine and fullest influence, will amply evince the inaccuracy of this representation. Of the excellent divine quoted above, King Charles I. was wont to say, that “he carried his ears to hear other preachers, but his conscience to hear Mr. Saunderson.”

The intrinsic excellence of the book, its importance in the history of theological controversy, the celebrity of the Author, the application of his name to designate the leading principles of the system he maintained, and the frequent collision of sentiment respecting various parts of that system, combine with other considerations to render it a matter of wonder, that it has not long ago been given to the English public in a new dress. The importance of it has also been much increased by the recent controversy respecting Calvinism, commenced by Dr. Tomline, the present Bishop of Lincoln, in which such direct and copious reference has been made to the writings of this Reformer, and especially to his Christian Institutes. These circumstances and considerations have led to the present translation and publication, which, from the very respectable encouragement it has received, the Translator trusts will be regarded as an acceptable service to the religious public.

Among the different methods of translation which have been recommended, he has adopted that which appeared to him best fitted to the present undertaking. A servile adherence to the letter of the original, the style of which is so very remote from the English idiom, he thought would convey a very inadequate representation of the work; such extreme fidelity, to use an expression of Cowper's, being seldom successful, even in a faithful transmission of the precise sentiments of the author to the mind of the reader. A mere attention to the ideas and sentiments of the original, to the neglect of its style and manner,

would expose the Translator of a treatise of this nature to no small danger of misrepresenting the meaning of the Author, by too frequent and unnecessary deviations from his language. He has, therefore, aimed at a medium between servility and looseness, and endeavoured to follow the style of the original as far as the respective idioms of the Latin and English would admit.

After the greater part of the work had been translated, he had the happiness to meet with an edition in French of which he has availed himself in translating the remainder, and in the revision of what he had translated before. Every person, who understands any two languages, will be aware that the ambiguity of one will sometimes be explained by the precision of another; and, notwithstanding the acknowledged superiority of the Latin to the French in most of the qualities which constitute the excellence of a language, the case of the article is not the only one in which Calvin's French elucidates his Latin.

The scriptural quotations which occur in the work, the Translator has given, generally, in the words of our common English version; sometimes according to the readings in the margin of that version; and, in a few instances, he has literally translated the version adopted by the Author, where the context required his peculiar reading to be preserved. Almost all the writers of that age, writing chiefly in a dead language, were accustomed to speak of their adversaries in language which the polished manners of the modern times have discarded, and which would now be deemed illiberal and scurrilous. Where these

cases occur, the Translator has not thought himself bound to a literal rendering of every word, or at liberty to refine them entirely away, but has adopted such expressions as he apprehends will give a faithful representation of the spirit of the Author to modern readers.

Intending this work as a complete system of theology, the Author has made it the repository of his sentiments on all points of faith and practice. The whole being distributed into four parts, in conformity to the Apostles' Creed, and this plan being very different from that of most other bodies of divinity, the Translator has borrowed from the Latin edition of Amsterdam a very perspicuous general syllabus, which will give the reader a clear view of the original design and plan of the treatise.

He would not be understood to represent these Institutes as a perfect summary of Christian doctrines and morals, or to profess an unqualified approbation of all the sentiments they contain. This is a homage to which no uninspired writings can ever be entitled. But the simplicity of the method; the freedom from the barbarous terms, captious questions, minute distinctions, and intricate subtilties of many other Divines; the clearness and closeness of argument; the complete refutation of the advocates of the Romish Church, sometimes by obvious conclusions from their professed principles, sometimes by clear proofs of the absurdities they involve; the intimate knowledge of ecclesiastical history; the intimate acquaintance with former theological controversies; the perspicuity of scriptural interpretation; and the

uniform spirit of genuine piety, which pervade the book, cannot escape the observation of any judicious reader.

It has been advised by some persons that the translation should be accompanied by a few notes, to elucidate and enforce some passages, and to correct others; but, on all the consideration which the Translator has been able to give to this subject, he has thought it would be best to content himself with the humble office of placing the sentiments of Calvin before the reader, with all the fidelity in his power, without any addition or limitation. He hopes that the present publication will serve the cause of true religion, and that the reputation of the work itself will sustain no diminution from the form in which it now appears.

London, *May 12, 1813.*

The Author's Preface to An Edition Published In The Year 1559, With His Last Corrections And Additions

In the first edition of this work, not expecting that success which the Lord, in his infinite goodness, hath given, I handled the subject for the most part in a superficial manner, as is usual in small treatises. But when I understood that it had obtained from almost all pious persons such a favourable acceptance as I never could have presumed to wish, much less to hope; while I was conscious of receiving far more attention than I had deserved, I thought it would evince great ingratitude, if I did not endeavour at least, according to my humble ability, to make some suitable return for the attentions paid to me – attentions of themselves calculated to stimulate my industry. Nor did I attempt this only in the second edition; but in every succeeding one the work has been improved by some further enlargements. But though I repented not the labour then devoted to it, yet I never satisfied myself, till it was arranged in the order in which it is now published; and I trust I have here presented to my readers what their judgments will unite in approving. Of my diligent application to the accomplishment of this service for the Church of God, I can produce abundant proof. For, last winter, when I thought that a quartan ague would speedily terminate in my

death, the more my disorder increased, the less I spared myself, till I had finished this book, to leave it behind me, as some grateful return to such kind solicitations of the religious public. Indeed, I would rather it had been done sooner; but it is soon enough, if well enough. I shall think it has appeared at the proper time, when I shall find it to have been more beneficial than before to the Church of God. This is my only wish.

I should indeed be ill requited for my labour, if I did not content myself with the approbation of God alone, despising equally the foolish and perverse judgments of ignorant men, and the calumnies and detractions of the wicked. For though God hath wholly devoted my mind to study the enlargement of his kingdom, and the promotion of general usefulness; and I have the testimony of my own conscience, of angels, and of God himself, that, since I undertook the office of a teacher in the Church, I have had no other object in view than to profit the Church by maintaining the pure doctrine of godliness; yet I suppose there is no man more slandered or calumniated than myself. When this Preface was actually in the press, I had certain information, that at Augsburg, where the States of the Empire were assembled, a report had been circulated of my defection to popery, and received with unbecoming eagerness in the courts of the princes. This is the gratitude of those who cannot be unacquainted with the numerous proofs of my constancy, which not only refute such a foul calumny, but, with all equitable and humane judges, ought to preserve me from it. But the devil, with all his host, is deceived,

if he think to overwhelm me with vile falsehoods, or to render me more timid, indolent, or dilatory, by such indignities. For I trust that God, in his infinite goodness, will enable me to persevere with patient constancy in the career of his holy calling; of which I afford my pious readers a fresh proof in this edition.

Now, my design in this work has been to prepare and qualify students of theology for the reading of the divine word, that they may have an easy introduction to it, and be enabled to proceed in it without any obstruction. For I think I have given such a comprehensive summary, and orderly arrangement of all the branches of religion, that, with proper attention, no person will find any difficulty in determining what ought to be the principal objects of his research in the Scripture, and to what end he ought to refer any thing it contains. This way, therefore, being prepared, if I should hereafter publish any expositions of the Scripture, I shall have no need to introduce long discussions respecting doctrines, or digressions on common topics, and therefore shall always compress them within a narrow compass. This will relieve the pious reader from great trouble and tediousness, provided he come previously furnished with the necessary information, by a knowledge of the present work. But as the reason of this design is very evident in my numerous Commentaries, I would rather have it known from the fact itself, than from my declaration.

Farewell, friendly reader; and if you receive any benefit from my labours, let me have the assistance of your prayers with God our Father.

Geneva, *1st August, 1559.*

Dedication

To His Most Christian Majesty, Francis, King of the French, and his Sovereign, John Calvin wisheth peace and salvation in Christ.

When I began this work, Sire, nothing was further from my thoughts than writing a book which would afterwards be presented to your Majesty. My intention was only to lay down some elementary principles, by which inquirers on the subject of religion might be instructed in the nature of true piety. And this labour I undertook chiefly for my countrymen, the French, of whom I apprehended multitudes to be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but saw very few possessing any real knowledge of him. That this was my design, the book itself proves by its simple method and unadorned composition. But when I perceived that the fury of certain wicked men in your kingdom had grown to such a height, as to leave no room in the land for sound doctrine, I thought I should be usefully employed, if in the same work I delivered my instructions to them, and exhibited my confession to you, that you may know the nature of that doctrine, which is the object of such unbounded rage to those madmen who are now disturbing the country with fire and sword. For I shall not be afraid to acknowledge, that this treatise contains a summary of that very doctrine, which, according to their clamours, deserves

to be punished with imprisonment, banishment, proscription, and flames, and to be exterminated from the face of the earth. I well know with what atrocious insinuations your ears have been filled by them, in order to render our cause most odious in your esteem; but your clemency should lead you to consider that, if accusation be accounted a sufficient evidence of guilt, there will be an end of all innocence in words and actions. If any one, indeed, with a view to bring an odium upon the doctrine which I am endeavouring to defend, should allege that it has long ago been condemned by the general consent, and suppressed by many judicial decisions, this will be only equivalent to saying, that it has been sometimes violently rejected through the influence and power of its adversaries, and sometimes insidiously and fraudulently oppressed by falsehoods, artifices, and calumnies. Violence is displayed, when sanguinary sentences are passed against it without the cause being heard; and fraud, when it is unjustly accused of sedition and mischief. Lest any one should suppose that these our complaints are unfounded, you yourself, Sire, can bear witness of the false calumnies with which you hear it daily traduced; that its only tendency is to wrest the sceptres of kings out of their hands, to overturn all the tribunals and judicial proceedings, to subvert all order and governments, to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the people, to abrogate all laws, to scatter all properties and possessions, and, in a word, to involve every thing in total confusion. And yet you hear the smallest portion of what is alleged against it; for such horrible

things are circulated amongst the vulgar, that, if they were true, the whole world would justly pronounce it and its abettors worthy of a thousand fires and gibbets. Who, then, will wonder at its becoming the object of public odium, where credit is given to such most iniquitous accusations? This is the cause of the general consent and conspiracy to condemn us and our doctrine. Hurried away with this impulse, those who sit in judgment pronounce for sentences the prejudices they brought from home with them; and think their duty fully discharged if they condemn none to be punished but such as are convicted by their own confession, or by sufficient proofs. Convicted of what crime? Of this condemned doctrine, they say. But with what justice is it condemned? Now, the ground of defence was not to abjure the doctrine itself, but to maintain its truth. On this subject, however, not a word is allowed to be uttered.

Wherefore I beseech you, Sire, – and surely it is not an unreasonable request, – to take upon yourself the entire cognizance of this cause, which has hitherto been confusedly and carelessly agitated, without any order of law, and with outrageous passion rather than judicial gravity. Think not that I am now meditating my own individual defence, in order to effect a safe return to my native country; for, though I feel the affection which every man ought to feel for it, yet, under the existing circumstances, I regret not my removal from it. But I plead the cause of all the godly, and consequently of Christ himself, which, having been in these times persecuted and

trampled on in all ways in your kingdom, now lies in a most deplorable state; and this indeed rather through the tyranny of certain Pharisees, than with your knowledge. How this comes to pass is foreign to my present purpose to say; but it certainly lies in a most afflicted state. For the ungodly have gone to such lengths, that the truth of Christ, if not vanquished, dissipated, and entirely destroyed, is buried, as it were, in ignoble obscurity, while the poor, despised church is either destroyed by cruel massacres, or driven away into banishment, or menaced and terrified into total silence. And still they continue their wonted madness and ferocity, pushing violently against the wall already bent, and finishing the ruin they have begun. In the mean time, no one comes forward to plead the cause against such furies. If there be any persons desirous of appearing most favourable to the truth, they only venture an opinion, that forgiveness should be extended to the error and imprudence of ignorant people. For this is the language of these moderate men, calling *that* error and imprudence which they know to be the certain truth of God, and *those* ignorant people, whose understanding they perceive not to have been so despicable to Christ, but that he has favoured them with the mysteries of his heavenly wisdom. Thus all are ashamed of the Gospel. But it shall be yours, Sire, not to turn away your ears or thoughts from so just a defence, especially in a cause of such importance as the maintenance of God's glory unimpaired in the world, the preservation of the honour of divine truth, and the continuance

of the kingdom of Christ uninjured among us. This is a cause worthy of your attention, worthy of your cognizance, worthy of your throne. This consideration constitutes true royalty, to acknowledge yourself in the government of your kingdom to be the minister of God. For where the glory of God is not made the end of the government, it is not a legitimate sovereignty, but a usurpation. And he is deceived who expects lasting prosperity in that kingdom which is not ruled by the sceptre of God, that is, his holy word; for that heavenly oracle cannot fail, which declares that “where there is no vision, the people perish.”² Nor should you be seduced from this pursuit by a contempt of our meanness. We are fully conscious to ourselves how very mean and abject we are, being miserable sinners before God, and accounted most despicable by men; being (if you please) the refuse of the world, deserving of the vilest appellations that can be found; so that nothing remains for us to glory in before God, but his mercy alone, by which, without any merit of ours, we have been admitted to the hope of eternal salvation, and before men nothing but our weakness, the slightest confession of which is esteemed by them as the greatest disgrace. But our doctrine must stand, exalted above all the glory, and invincible by all the power of the world; because it is not ours, but the doctrine of the living God, and of his Christ, whom the Father hath constituted King, that he may have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, and that he may rule in such

² Prov. xxix. 18.

a manner, that the whole earth, with its strength of iron and with its splendour of gold and silver, smitten by the rod of his mouth, may be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel;³ for thus do the prophets foretell the magnificence of his kingdom.

Our adversaries reply, that our pleading the word of God is a false pretence, and that we are nefarious corrupters of it. But that this is not only a malicious calumny, but egregious impudence, by reading our confession, you will, in your wisdom, be able to judge. Yet something further is necessary to be said, to excite your attention, or at least to prepare your mind for this perusal. Paul's direction, that every prophecy be framed "according to the analogy of faith,"⁴ has fixed an invariable standard by which all interpretation of Scripture ought to be tried. If our principles be examined by this rule of faith, the victory is ours. For what is more consistent with faith than to acknowledge ourselves naked of all virtue, that we may be clothed by God; empty of all good, that we may be filled by him; slaves to sin, that we may be liberated by him; blind, that we may be enlightened by him; lame, that we may be guided; weak, that we may be supported by him; to divest ourselves of all ground of glorying, that he alone may be eminently glorious, and that we may glory in him? When we advance these and similar sentiments, they interrupt us with complaints that this is the way to overturn, I know not what blind light of nature, pretended preparations,

³ Dan. ii. 34. Isaiah xi. 4. Psalm ii. 9.

⁴ Rom. xii. 6.

free will, and works meritorious of eternal salvation, together with all their supererogations; because they cannot bear that the praise and glory of all goodness, strength, righteousness, and wisdom, should remain entirely with God. But we read of none being reprov'd for having drawn too freely from the fountain of living waters; on the contrary, they are severely upbraided who have “hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”⁵ Again, what is more consistent with faith, than to assure ourselves of God being a propitious Father, where Christ is acknowledged as a brother and Mediator? than securely to expect all prosperity and happiness from Him, whose unspeakable love towards us went so far, that “he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us?”⁶ than to rest in the certain expectation of salvation and eternal life, when we reflect upon the Father's gift of Christ, in whom such treasures are hidden? Here they oppose us, and complain that this certainty of confidence is chargeable with arrogance and presumption. But as we ought to presume nothing of ourselves, so we should presume every thing of God; nor are we divested of vain glory for any other reason than that we may learn to glory in the Lord. What shall I say more? Review, Sire, all the parts of our cause, and consider us worse than the most abandoned of mankind, unless you clearly discover that we thus “both labour and suffer reproach, because

⁵ Jer. ii. 13.

⁶ Rom. viii. 32.

we trust in the living God,”⁷ because we believe that “this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”⁸ For this hope some of us are bound in chains, others are lashed with scourges, others are carried about as laughing-stocks, others are outlawed, others are cruelly tortured, others escape by flight; but we are all reduced to extreme perplexities, execrated with dreadful curses, cruelly slandered, and treated with the greatest indignities. Now, look at our adversaries, (I speak of the order of priests, at whose will and directions others carry on these hostilities against us,) and consider a little with me by what principles they are actuated. The true religion, which is taught in the Scriptures, and ought to be universally maintained, they readily permit both themselves and others to be ignorant of, and to treat with neglect and contempt. They think it unimportant what any one holds or denies concerning God and Christ, provided he submits his mind with an implicit faith (as they call it) to the judgment of the Church. Nor are they much affected, if the glory of God happens to be violated with open blasphemies, provided no one lift a finger against the primacy of the Apostolic See, and the authority of their holy Mother Church. Why, therefore, do they contend with such extreme bitterness and cruelty for the mass, purgatory, pilgrimages, and similar trifles, and deny that any piety can be maintained without a most explicit faith, so to speak, in these things; whereas they

⁷ 1 Tim. iv. 10.

⁸ John xvii. 3.

prove none of them from the Word of God? Why, but because their belly is their god, their kitchen is their religion; deprived of which they consider themselves no longer as Christians, or even as men. For though some feast themselves in splendour, and others subsist on slender fare, yet all live on the same pot, which, without this fuel, would not only cool, but completely freeze. Every one of them, therefore, who is most solicitous for his belly, is found to be a most strenuous champion for their faith. Indeed, they universally exert themselves for the preservation of their kingdom, and the repletion of their bellies; but not one of them discovers the least indication of sincere zeal.

Nor do their attacks on our doctrine cease here; they urge every topic of accusation and abuse to render it an object of hatred or suspicion. They call it novel, and of recent origin, – they cavil at it as doubtful and uncertain, – they inquire by what miracles it is confirmed, – they ask whether it is right for it to be received contrary to the consent of so many holy fathers, and the custom of the highest antiquity, – they urge us to confess that it is schismatical in stirring up opposition against the Church, or that the Church was wholly extinct for many ages, during which no such thing was known. – Lastly, they say all arguments are unnecessary; for that its nature may be determined by its fruits, since it has produced such a multitude of sects, so many factious tumults, and such great licentiousness of vices. It is indeed very easy for them to insult a deserted cause with the credulous and ignorant multitude; but, if we had also the liberty of speaking

in our turn, this acrimony, which they now discover in violently foaming against us with equal licentiousness and impunity, would presently cool.

In the first place, their calling it novel is highly injurious to God, whose holy word deserves not to be accused of novelty. I have no doubt of its being new to them, to whom Jesus Christ and the Gospel are equally new. But those who know the antiquity of this preaching of Paul, “that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification,”⁹ will find no novelty among us. That it has long been concealed, buried, and unknown, is the crime of human impiety. Now that the goodness of God has restored it to us, it ought at least to be allowed its just claim of antiquity.

From the same source of ignorance springs the notion of its being doubtful and uncertain. This is the very thing which the Lord complains of by his prophet; that “the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,”¹⁰ but that his people know not him. But however they may laugh at its uncertainty, if they were called to seal their own doctrine with their blood and lives, it would appear how much they value it. Very different is our confidence, which dreads neither the terrors of death, nor even the tribunal of God.

Their requiring miracles of us is altogether unreasonable; for we forge no new Gospel, but retain the very same whose truth

⁹ Rom. iv. 25. 1 Cor. xv. 3, 17.

¹⁰ Isaiah i. 3.

was confirmed by all the miracles ever wrought by Christ and the apostles. But they have this peculiar advantage above us, that they can confirm their faith by continual miracles even to this day. But the truth is, they allege miracles which are calculated to unsettle a mind otherwise well established, they are so frivolous and ridiculous, or vain and false. Nor, if they were ever so preternatural, ought they to have any weight in opposition to the truth of God, since the name of God ought to be sanctified in all places and at all times, whether by miraculous events, or by the common order of nature. This fallacy might perhaps be more specious, if the Scripture did not apprise us of the legitimate end and use of miracles. For Mark informs us, that the miracles which followed the preaching of the apostles were wrought in confirmation¹¹ of it, and Luke tells us, that¹² “the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace,” when “signs and wonders” were “done by the hands” of the apostles. Very similar to which is the assertion of the apostle, that “salvation was confirmed” by the preaching of the Gospel, “God also bearing witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles.”¹³ But those things which we are told were seals of the Gospel, shall we pervert to undermine the faith of the Gospel? Those things which were designed to be testimonials of the truth, shall we accommodate to the confirmation of falsehood? It is right, therefore, that the

¹¹ Mark xvi. 20.

¹² Acts xiv. 3.

¹³ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

doctrine, which, according to the evangelist, claims the first attention, be examined and tried in the first place; and if it be approved, then it ought to derive confirmation from miracles. But it is the characteristic of sound doctrine, given by Christ, that it tends to promote, not the glory of men, but the glory of God.¹⁴ Christ having laid down this proof of a doctrine, it is wrong to esteem those as miracles which are directed to any other end than the glorification of the name of God alone. And we should remember that Satan has his wonders, which, though they are juggling tricks rather than real miracles, are such as to delude the ignorant and inexperienced. Magicians and enchanters have always been famous for miracles; idolatry has been supported by astonishing miracles; and yet we admit them not as proofs of the superstition of magicians or idolaters. With this engine also the simplicity of the vulgar was anciently assailed by the Donatists, who abounded in miracles. We therefore give the same answer now to our adversaries as Augustine¹⁵ gave to the Donatists, that our Lord hath cautioned us against these miracle-mongers by his prediction, that there should arise false prophets, who, by various signs and lying wonders, “should deceive (if possible) the very elect.”¹⁶ And Paul has told us, that the kingdom of Antichrist would be “with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.”¹⁷ But

¹⁴ John vii. 18. viii. 50.

¹⁵ In Joan. tract. 13.

¹⁶ Matt. xxiv. 24.

¹⁷ 2 Thess. ii. 9.

these miracles (they say) are wrought, not by idols, or sorcerers, or false prophets, but by saints; as if we were ignorant, that it is a stratagem of Satan to “transform” himself “into an angel of light.”¹⁸ At the tomb of Jeremiah,¹⁹ who was buried in Egypt, the Egyptians formerly offered sacrifices and other divine honours. Was not this abusing God's holy prophet to the purposes of idolatry? Yet they supposed this veneration of his sepulchre to be rewarded with a cure for the bite of serpents. What shall we say, but that it has been, and ever will be, the most righteous vengeance of God to “send those who receive not the love of the truth strong delusions, that they should believe a lie”?²⁰ We are by no means without miracles, and such as are certain, and not liable to cavils. But those under which they shelter themselves are mere illusions of Satan, seducing the people from the true worship of God to vanity.

Another calumny is their charging us with opposition to the fathers, – I mean the writers of the earlier and purer ages, – as if those writers were abettors of their impiety; whereas, if the contest were to be terminated by this authority, the victory in most parts of the controversy – to speak in the most modest terms – would be on our side. But though the writings of those fathers contain many wise and excellent things, yet in some respects they have suffered the common fate of mankind; these very

¹⁸ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

¹⁹ Hierom. in præf. Jerem.

²⁰ 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

dutiful children reverence only their errors and mistakes, but their excellences they either overlook, or conceal, or corrupt; so that it may be truly said to be their only study to collect dross from the midst of gold. Then they overwhelm us with senseless clamours, as despisers and enemies of the fathers. But we do not hold them in such contempt, but that, if it were consistent with my present design, I could easily support by their suffrages most of the sentiments that we now maintain. But while we make use of their writings, we always remember that “all things are ours,” to serve us, not to have dominion over us, and that “we are Christ's”²¹ alone, and owe him universal obedience. He who neglects this distinction will have nothing decided in religion; since those holy men were ignorant of many things, frequently at variance with each other, and sometimes even inconsistent with themselves. There is great reason, they say, for the admonition of Solomon, “not to transgress or remove the ancient landmarks, which our fathers have set.”²² But the same rule is not applicable to the bounding of fields, and to the obedience of faith, which ought to be ready to “forget her own people and her father's house.”²³ But if they are so fond of allegorizing, why do they not explain the apostles, rather than any others, to be those fathers, whose appointed landmarks it is so unlawful to remove? For this is the interpretation of Jerome, whose works they have

²¹ 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

²² Prov. xxii. 28.

²³ Psalm xlv. 10.

received into their canons. But if they insist on preserving the landmarks of those whom they understand to be intended, why do they at pleasure so freely transgress them themselves? There were two fathers,²⁴ of whom one said, that our God neither eats nor drinks, and therefore needs neither cups nor dishes; the other, that sacred things require no gold, and that gold is no recommendation of that which is not purchased with gold. This landmark therefore is transgressed by those who in sacred things are so much delighted with gold, silver, ivory, marble, jewels, and silks, and suppose that God is not rightly worshipped, unless all things abound in exquisite splendour, or rather extravagant profusion. There was a father²⁵ who said he freely partook of flesh on a day when others abstained from it, because he was a Christian. They transgress the landmarks therefore when they curse the soul that tastes flesh in Lent. There were two fathers,²⁶ of whom one said, that a monk who labours not with his hands is on a level with a cheat or a robber; and the other, that it is unlawful for monks to live on what is not their own, notwithstanding their assiduity in contemplations, studies, and prayers; and they have transgressed this landmark by placing the idle and distended carcasses of monks in cells and brothels, to be pampered on the substance of others. There was a father²⁷

²⁴ Acat. in lib. 11. cap. 16. Trip. Hist. Amb. lib. 2. de Off. c. 28.

²⁵ Spiridion. Trip. Hist. lib. 1. c. 10.

²⁶ Trip. Hist. lib. 8. c. 1. August. de Opere Mon. c. 17.

²⁷ Epiph. Epist. ab. Hier. vers. Con. Eliber. c. 36.

who said, that to see a painted image of Christ, or of any saint, in the temples of Christians, is a dreadful abomination. Nor was this merely the sentence of an individual; it was also decreed by an ecclesiastical council, that the object of worship should not be painted on the walls. They are far from confining themselves within these landmarks, for every corner is filled with images. Another father²⁸ has advised that, after having discharged the office of humanity towards the dead by the rites of sepulture, we should leave them to their repose. They break through these landmarks by inculcating a constant solicitude for the dead. There was one of the fathers²⁹ who asserted that the substance of bread and wine in the eucharist ceases not, but remains, just as the substance of the human nature remains in the Lord Christ united with the divine. They transgress this landmark therefore by pretending that, on the words of the Lord being recited, the substance of bread and wine ceases, and is transubstantiated into his body and blood. There were fathers³⁰ who, while they exhibited to the universal Church only one eucharist, and forbade all scandalous and immoral persons to approach it, at the same time severely censured all who, when present, did not partake of it. How far have they removed these landmarks, when they fill not only the churches, but even private houses, with their masses, admit all who choose to be spectators of them, and

²⁸ Amb. de Abra. lib. 1. c. 7.

²⁹ Gelas. Pap. in Conc. Rom.

³⁰ Chrys. in 1 Cap. Ephes. Calix. Papa de Cons. dist. 2.

every one the more readily in proportion to the magnitude of his contribution, however chargeable with impurity and wickedness! They invite none to faith in Christ and a faithful participation of the sacraments; but rather for purposes of gain bring forward their own work instead of the grace and merit of Christ. There were two fathers,³¹ of whom one contended that the use of Christ's sacred supper should be wholly forbidden to those who, content with partaking of one kind, abstained from the other; the other strenuously maintained that Christian people ought not to be refused the blood of their Lord, for the confession of whom they are required to shed their own. These landmarks also they have removed, in appointing, by an inviolable law, that very thing which the former punished with excommunication, and the latter gave a powerful reason for disapproving. There was a father³² who asserted the temerity of deciding on either side of an obscure subject, without clear and evident testimonies of Scripture. This landmark they forgot when they made so many constitutions, canons, and judicial determinations, without any authority from the word of God. There was a father³³ who upbraided Montanus with having, among other heresies, been the first imposer of laws for the observance of fasts. They have gone far beyond this landmark also, in establishing fasts by the strictest

³¹ Gelas. can. *Comperimus de Cons. dist. 2. Cypr. Epist. 2. lib. 1, de Laps.*

³² August. lib. 2. *de Pec. Mer. cap. ult.*

³³ Apollon. *de quo Eccl. Hist. lib. 5. cap. 11, 12.*

laws. There was a father³⁴ who denied that marriage ought to be forbidden to the ministers of the Church, and pronounced cohabitation with a wife to be real chastity; and there were fathers who assented to his judgment. They have transgressed these landmarks by enjoining on their priests the strictest celibacy. There was a father who thought that attention should be paid to Christ only, of whom it is said, "Hear ye him," and that no regard should be had to what others before us have either said or done, only to what has been commanded by Christ, who is preëminent over all. This landmark they neither prescribe to themselves, nor permit to be observed by others, when they set up over themselves and others any masters rather than Christ. There was a father³⁵ who contended that the Church ought not to take the precedence of Christ, because his judgment is always according to truth; but ecclesiastical judges, like other men, may generally be deceived. Breaking down this landmark also, they scruple not to assert, that all the authority of the Scripture depends on the decision of the Church. All the fathers, with one heart and voice, have declared it execrable and detestable for the holy word of God to be contaminated with the subtleties of sophists, and perplexed by the wrangles of logicians. Do they confine themselves within these landmarks, when the whole business of their lives is to involve the simplicity of the Scripture in endless controversies, and worse than sophistical wrangles?

³⁴ Paphnut. Trip. Hist. lib. 2. c. 14. Cypr. Epist. 2. lib. 2.

³⁵ Aug. cap. 2. contr. Cresc. Grammatic.

so that if the fathers were now restored to life, and heard this art of wrangling, which they call speculative divinity, they would not suspect the dispute to have the least reference to God. But if I would enumerate all the instances in which the authority of the fathers is insolently rejected by those who would be thought their dutiful children, my address would exceed all reasonable bounds. Months and years would be insufficient for me. And yet such is their consummate and incorrigible impudence, they dare to censure us for presuming to transgress the ancient landmarks.

Nor can they gain any advantage against us by their argument from custom; for, if we were compelled to submit to custom, we should have to complain of the greatest injustice. Indeed, if the judgments of men were correct, custom should be sought among the good. But the fact is often very different. What appears to be practised by many soon obtains the force of a custom. And human affairs have scarcely ever been in so good a state as for the majority to be pleased with things of real excellence. From the private vices of multitudes, therefore, has arisen public error, or rather a common agreement of vices, which these good men would now have to be received as law. It is evident to all who can see, that the world is inundated with more than an ocean of evils, that it is overrun with numerous destructive pests, that every thing is fast verging to ruin, so that we must altogether despair of human affairs, or vigorously and even violently oppose such immense evils. And the remedy is rejected for no other reason, but because we have been accustomed to the evils so long. But

let public error be tolerated in human society; in the kingdom of God nothing but his eternal truth should be heard and regarded, which no succession of years, no custom, no confederacy, can circumscribe. Thus Isaiah once taught the chosen people of God: “Say ye not, A confederacy, to all to whom this people shall say, A confederacy;” that is, that they should not unite in the wicked consent of the people; “nor fear their fear, nor be afraid,” but rather “sanctify the Lord of hosts,” that he might “be their fear and their dread.”³⁶ Now, therefore, let them, if they please, object against us past ages and present examples; if we “sanctify the Lord of hosts,” we shall not be much afraid. For, whether many ages agree in similar impiety, he is mighty to take vengeance on the third and fourth generation; or whether the whole world combine in the same iniquity, he has given an example of the fatal end of those who sin with a multitude, by destroying all men with a deluge, and preserving Noah and his small family, in order that his individual faith might condemn the whole world. Lastly, a corrupt custom is nothing but an epidemical pestilence, which is equally fatal to its objects, though they fall with a multitude. Besides, they ought to consider a remark, somewhere made by Cyprian,³⁷ that persons who sin through ignorance, though they cannot be wholly exculpated, may yet be considered in some degree excusable; but those who obstinately reject the truth offered by the Divine goodness, are without any excuse at

³⁶ Isaiah viii. 12, 13.

³⁷ Epist. 3. lib. 2. et in Epist. ad Julian. de Hæret. baptiz.

all.

Nor are we so embarrassed by their dilemma as to be obliged to confess, either that the Church was for some time extinct, or that we have now a controversy with the Church. The Church of Christ has lived, and will continue to live, as long as Christ shall reign at the right hand of the Father, by whose hand she is sustained, by whose protection she is defended, by whose power she is preserved in safety. For he will undoubtedly perform what he once promised, to be with his people “even to the end of the world.”³⁸ We have no quarrel against the Church, for with one consent we unite with all the company of the faithful in worshipping and adoring the one God and Christ the Lord, as he has been adored by all the pious in all ages. But our opponents deviate widely from the truth when they acknowledge no Church but what is visible to the corporeal eye, and endeavour to circumscribe it by those limits within which it is far from being included. Our controversy turns on the two following points: – first, they contend that the form of the Church is always apparent and visible; secondly, they place that form in the see of the Roman Church and her order of prelates. We assert, on the contrary, first, that the Church may exist without any visible form; secondly, that its form is not contained in that external splendour which they foolishly admire, but is distinguished by a very different criterion, viz. the pure preaching of God's word, and the legitimate administration of the sacraments. They are

³⁸ Matt. xxviii. 20.

not satisfied unless the Church can always be pointed out with the finger. But how often among the Jewish people was it so disorganized, as to have no visible form left? What splendid form do we suppose could be seen, when Elias deplored his being left alone?³⁹ How long, after the coming of Christ, did it remain without any external form? How often, since that time, have wars, seditions, and heresies, oppressed and totally obscured it? If they had lived at that period, would they have believed that any Church existed? Yet Elias was informed that there were “left seven thousand” who had “not bowed the knee to Baal.” Nor should we entertain any doubt of Christ's having always reigned on earth ever since his ascension to heaven. But if the pious at such periods had sought for any form evident to their senses, must not their hearts have been quite discouraged? Indeed it was already considered by Hilary in his day as a grievous error, that people were absorbed in foolish admiration of the episcopal dignity, and did not perceive the dreadful mischiefs concealed under that disguise. For this is his language:⁴⁰ “One thing I advise you – beware of Antichrist, for you have an improper attachment to walls; your veneration for the Church of God is misplaced on houses and buildings; you wrongly introduce under them the name of peace. Is there any doubt that they will be seats of Antichrist? I think mountains, woods, and lakes, prisons and whirlpools, less dangerous; for these were the scenes of

³⁹ 1 Kings xix. 14, 18.

⁴⁰ Contr. Auxent.

retirement or banishment in which the prophets prophesied.” But what excites the veneration of the multitude in the present day for their horned bishops, but the supposition that those are the holy prelates of religion whom they see presiding over great cities? Away, then, with such stupid admiration. Let us rather leave it to the Lord, since he alone “knoweth them that are his,”⁴¹ sometimes to remove from human observation all external knowledge of his Church. I admit this to be a dreadful judgment of God on the earth; but if it be deserved by the impiety of men, why do we attempt to resist the righteous vengeance of God? Thus the Lord punished the ingratitude of men in former ages; for, in consequence of their resistance to his truth, and extinction of the light he had given them, he permitted them to be blinded by sense, deluded by absurd falsehoods, and immersed in profound darkness, so that there was no appearance of the true Church left; yet, at the same time, in the midst of darkness and errors, he preserved his scattered and concealed people from total destruction. Nor is this to be wondered at; for he knew how to save in all the confusion of Babylon, and the flame of the fiery furnace. But how dangerous it is to estimate the form of the Church by I know not what vain pomp, which they contend for; I shall rather briefly suggest than state at large, lest I should protract this discourse to an excessive length. The Pope, they say, who holds the Apostolic see, and the bishops anointed and consecrated by him, provided they are equipped

⁴¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

with mitres and crosiers, represent the Church, and ought to be considered as the Church. Therefore they cannot err. How is this? – Because they are pastors of the Church, and consecrated to the Lord. And did not the pastoral character belong to Aaron, and the other rulers of Israel? Yet Aaron and his sons, after their designation to the priesthood, fell into error when they made the golden calf.⁴² According to this mode of reasoning, why should not the four hundred prophets, who lied to Ahab, have represented the Church?⁴³ But the Church remained on the side of Micaiah, solitary and despised as he was, and out of his mouth proceeded the truth. Did not those prophets exhibit both the name and appearance of the Church, who with united violence rose up against Jeremiah, and threatened and boasted, “the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet”?⁴⁴ Jeremiah is sent singly against the whole multitude of prophets, with a denunciation from the Lord, that the “law shall perish from the priest, counsel from the wise, and the word from the prophet.”⁴⁵ And was there not the like external respectability in the council convened by the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees, to consult about putting Christ to death?⁴⁶ Now, let them go and adhere to the external appearance,

⁴² Exod. xxxii. 4.

⁴³ 1 Kings xxii. 6, 11-23.

⁴⁴ Jer. xviii. 18.

⁴⁵ Jer. iv. 9.

⁴⁶ Matt. xxvi. 3, 4.

and thereby make Christ and all the prophets schismatics, and, on the other hand, make the ministers of Satan instruments of the Holy Spirit. But if they speak their real sentiments, let them answer me sincerely, what nation or place they consider as the seat of the Church, from the time when, by a decree of the council of Basil, Eugenius was deposed and degraded from the pontificate, and Amadeus substituted in his place. They cannot deny that the council, as far as relates to external forms, was a lawful one, and summoned not only by one pope, but by two. There Eugenius was pronounced guilty of schism, rebellion, and obstinacy, together with all the host of cardinals and bishops who had joined him in attempting a dissolution of the council. Yet afterwards, assisted by the favour of princes, he regained the quiet possession of his former dignity. That election of Amadeus, though formally made by the authority of a general and holy synod, vanished into smoke; and he was appeased with a cardinal's hat, like a barking dog with a morsel. From the bosom of those heretics and rebels have proceeded all the popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, and priests, ever since. Here they must stop. For to which party will they give the title of the Church? Will they deny that this was a general council, which wanted nothing to complete its external majesty, being solemnly convened by two papal bulls, consecrated by a presiding legate of the Roman see, and well regulated in every point of order, and invariably preserving the same dignity to the last? Will they acknowledge Eugenius to be a schismatic, with all his adherents,

by whom they have all been consecrated? Either, therefore, let them give a different definition of the form of the Church, or, whatever be their number, we shall account them all schismatics, as having been knowingly and voluntarily ordained by heretics. But if it had never been ascertained before, that the Church is not confined to external pomps, they would themselves afford us abundant proof of it, who have so long superciliously exhibited themselves to the world under the title of the Church, though they were at the same time the deadly plagues of it. I speak not of their morals, and those tragical exploits with which all their lives abound, since they profess themselves to be Pharisees, who are to be heard and not imitated. I refer to the very doctrine itself, on which they found their claim to be considered as the Church. If you devote a portion of your leisure, Sire, to the perusal of our writings, you will clearly discover that doctrine to be a fatal pestilence of souls, the firebrand, ruin, and destruction of the Church.

Finally, they betray great want of candour, by invidiously repeating what great commotions, tumults, and contentions, have attended the preaching of our doctrine, and what effects it produces in many persons. For it is unfair to charge it with those evils which ought to be attributed to the malice of Satan. It is the native property of the Divine word, never to make its appearance without disturbing Satan, and rousing his opposition. This is the most certain and unequivocal criterion by which it is distinguished from false doctrines, which are easily broached

when they are heard with general attention, and received with applauses by the world. Thus, in some ages, when all things were immersed in profound darkness, the prince of this world amused and diverted himself with the generality of mankind, and, like another Sardanapalus, gave himself up to his ease and pleasures in perfect peace; for what would he do but amuse and divert himself, in the quiet and undisturbed possession of his kingdom? But when the light shining from above dissipated a portion of his darkness – when that Mighty One alarmed and assaulted his kingdom – then he began to shake off his wonted torpor, and to hurry on his armour. First, indeed, he stirred up the power of men to suppress the truth by violence at its first appearance; and when this proved ineffectual, he had recourse to subtlety. He made the Catabaptists, and other infamous characters, the instruments of exciting dissensions and doctrinal controversies, with a view to obscure and finally to extinguish it. And now he continues to attack it in both ways; for he endeavours to root up this genuine seed by means of human force, and at the same time tries every effort to choke it with his tares, that it may not grow and produce fruit. But all his attempts will be vain, if we attend to the admonitions of the Lord, who hath long ago made us acquainted with his devices, that we might not be caught by him unawares, and has armed us with sufficient means of defence against all his assaults. But to charge the word of God with the odium of seditions, excited against it by wicked and rebellious men, or of sects raised by impostors, –

is not this extreme malignity? Yet it is not without example in former times. Elias was asked whether it was not he “that troubled Israel.”⁴⁷ Christ was represented by the Jews as guilty of sedition.⁴⁸ The apostles were accused of stirring up popular commotions.⁴⁹ Wherein does this differ from the conduct of those who, at the present day, impute to us all the disturbances, tumults, and contentions, that break out against us? But the proper answer to such accusations has been taught us by Elias, that the dissemination of errors and the raising of tumults is not chargeable on us, but on those who are resisting the power of God. But as this one reply is sufficient to repress their temerity, so, on the other hand, we must meet the weakness of some persons, who are frequently disturbed with such offences, and become unsettled and wavering in their minds. Now, that they may not stumble and fall amidst this agitation and perplexity, let them know that the apostles in their day experienced the same things that now befall us. There were “unlearned and unstable” men, Peter says, who “wrested” the inspired writings of Paul “to their own destruction.”⁵⁰ There were despisers of God, who, when they heard that “where sin abounded grace did much more abound,” immediately concluded, Let us “continue in sin, that grace may abound.” When they heard that the faithful were “not

⁴⁷ 1 Kings xviii. 17.

⁴⁸ Luke xxiii. 2, 5.

⁴⁹ Acts xvii. 6. xxiv. 5.

⁵⁰ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

under the law,” they immediately croaked, “We will sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace.”⁵¹ There were some who accused him as an encourager of sin. Many false apostles crept in, to destroy the churches he had raised. “Some preached” the gospel “of envy and strife, not in sincerity,” maliciously “supposing to add affliction to his bonds.”⁵² In some places the Gospel was attended with little benefit. “All were seeking their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.”⁵³ Others returned “like dogs to their vomit, and like swine to their wallowing in the mire.”⁵⁴ Many perverted the liberty of the spirit into the licentiousness of the flesh. Many insinuated themselves as brethren, who afterwards brought the pious into dangers. Various contentions were excited among the brethren themselves. What was to be done by the apostles in such circumstances? Should they not have dissembled for a time, or rather have rejected and deserted that Gospel which appeared to be the nursery of so many disputes, the cause of so many dangers, the occasion of so many offences? But in such difficulties as these, their minds were relieved by this reflection, that Christ is the “stone of stumbling and rock of offence,”⁵⁵ “set for the fall and rising again of many,

⁵¹ Rom. v. 20. vi. 1, 14, 15.

⁵² Phil. i. 15, 16.

⁵³ Phil. ii. 21.

⁵⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 22.

⁵⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 8.

and for a sign which shall be spoken against;”⁵⁶ and armed with this confidence, they proceeded boldly through all the dangers of tumults and offences. The same consideration should support us, since Paul declares it to be the perpetual character of the Gospel, that it is “a savour of death unto death in them that perish,”⁵⁷ although it was rather given us to be the “savour of life unto life,” and “the power of God to” the “salvation” of the faithful;⁵⁸ which we also should certainly experience it to be, if we did not corrupt this eminent gift of God by our ingratitude, and pervert to our destruction what ought to be a principal instrument of our salvation.

But I return to you, Sire. Let not your Majesty be at all moved by those groundless accusations with which our adversaries endeavour to terrify you; as that the sole tendency and design of this new Gospel – for so they call it – is to furnish a pretext for seditions, and to gain impunity for all crimes. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace;”⁵⁹ nor is “the Son of God,” who came to “destroy the works of the devil, the minister of sin.”⁶⁰ And it is unjust to charge us with such motives and designs, of which we have never given cause for the least suspicion. Is it probable that we are meditating the subversion of kingdoms? –

⁵⁶ Luke ii. 34.

⁵⁷ 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

⁵⁸ Rom. i. 16.

⁵⁹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

⁶⁰ 1 John iii. 8. Gal. ii. 17.

we, who were never heard to utter a factious word, whose lives were ever known to be peaceable and honest while we lived under your government, and who, even now in our exile, cease not to pray for all prosperity to attend yourself and your kingdom! Is it probable that we are seeking an unlimited license to commit crimes with impunity? in whose conduct, though many things may be blamed, yet there is nothing worthy of such severe reproach! Nor have we, by Divine Grace, profited so little in the Gospel, but that our life may be an example to our detractors of chastity, liberality, mercy, temperance, patience, modesty, and every other virtue. It is an undeniable fact, that we sincerely fear and worship God, whose name we desire to be sanctified both by our life and by our death; and envy itself is constrained to bear testimony to the innocence and civil integrity of some of us, who have suffered the punishment of death for that very thing which ought to be accounted their highest praise. But if the Gospel be made a pretext for tumults, which has not yet happened in your kingdom; if any persons make the liberty of divine grace an excuse for the licentiousness of their vices, of whom I have known many, – there are laws and legal penalties, by which they may be punished according to their deserts; only let not the Gospel of God be reproached for the crimes of wicked men. You have now, Sire, the virulent iniquity of our calumniators laid before you in a sufficient number of instances, that you may not receive their accusations with too credulous an ear. – I fear I have gone too much into the detail, as this preface already

approaches the size of a full apology; whereas I intended it not to contain our defence, but only to prepare your mind to attend to the pleading of our cause; for, though you are now averse and alienated from us, and even inflamed against us, we despair not of regaining your favour, if you will only once read with calmness and composure this our confession, which we intend as our defence before your Majesty. But, on the contrary, if your ears are so preoccupied with the whispers of the malevolent, as to leave no opportunity for the accused to speak for themselves, and if those outrageous furies, with your connivance, continue to persecute with imprisonments, scourges, tortures, confiscations, and flames, we shall indeed, like sheep destined to the slaughter, be reduced to the greatest extremities. Yet shall we in patience possess our souls, and wait for the mighty hand of the Lord, which undoubtedly will in time appear, and show itself armed for the deliverance of the poor from their affliction, and for the punishment of their despisers, who now exult in such perfect security. May the Lord, the King of kings, establish your throne with righteousness, and your kingdom with equity.

Basil, *1st August, 1536.*

General Syllabus

The design of the Author in these Christian Institutes is twofold, relating, First, to the knowledge of God, as the way to attain a blessed immortality; and, in connection with and subservience to this, Secondly, to the knowledge of ourselves.

In the prosecution of this design, he strictly follows the method of the Apostles' Creed, as being most familiar to all Christians. For as the Creed consists of four parts, the first relating to God the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Spirit, the fourth to the Church; so the Author distributes the whole of this work into Four Books, corresponding respectively to the four parts of the Creed; as will clearly appear from the following detail: —

I. The first article of the Creed relates to God the Father, and to the creation, conservation, and government of all things, which are included in his omnipotence.

So the first book is on the knowledge of God, considered as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe at large, and of every thing contained in it. It shows both the nature and tendency of the true knowledge of the Creator — that this is not learned in the schools, but that every man from his birth is self-taught it — Yet that the depravity of men is so great as to corrupt and extinguish this knowledge, partly by ignorance, partly by wickedness; so that it neither leads him to glorify God

as he ought, nor conducts him to the attainment of happiness – And though this internal knowledge is assisted by all the creatures around, which serve as a mirror to display the Divine perfections, yet that man does not profit by it – Therefore, that to those, whom it is God's will to bring to an intimate and saving knowledge of himself, he gives his written word; which introduces observations on the sacred Scripture – That he has therein revealed himself; that not the Father only, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united, is the Creator of heaven and earth; whom neither the knowledge innate by nature, nor the very beautiful mirror displayed to us in the world, can, in consequence of our depravity, teach us to know so as to glorify him. This gives occasion for treating of the revelation of God in the Scripture, of the unity of the Divine Essence, and the trinity of Persons. – To prevent man from attributing to God the blame of his own voluntary blindness, the Author shows the state of man at his creation, and treats of the image of God, free-will, and the primitive integrity of nature. – Having finished the subject of creation, he proceeds to the conservation and government of all things, concluding the first book with a full discussion of the doctrine of divine providence.

II. But since man is fallen by sin from the state in which he was created, it is necessary to come to Christ. Therefore it follows in the Creed, “And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord,” &c.

So in the second book of the Institutes our Author treats of the knowledge of God as the Redeemer in Christ; and having

shown the fall of man, leads him to Christ the Mediator. Here he states the doctrine of original sin – that man possesses no inherent strength to enable him to deliver himself from sin and the impending curse, but that, on the contrary, nothing can proceed from him, antecedently to reconciliation and renovation, but what is deserving of condemnation – Therefore, that, man being utterly lost in himself, and incapable of conceiving even a good thought by which he may restore himself, or perform actions acceptable to God, he must seek redemption out of himself, in Christ – That the Law was given for this purpose, not to confine its observers to itself, but to conduct them to Christ; which gives occasion to introduce an exposition of the Moral Law – That he was known, as the Author of salvation, to the Jews under the Law, but more fully under the Gospel, in which he is manifested to the world. – Hence follows the doctrine of the similarity and difference of the Old and New Testament, of the Law and Gospel. – It is next stated, that, in order to the complete accomplishment of salvation, it was necessary for the eternal Son of God to become man, and that he actually assumed a real human nature: – it is also shown how these two natures constitute one person – That the office of Christ, appointed for the acquisition and application of complete salvation by his merit and efficacy, is sacerdotal, regal, and prophetic. – Next follows the manner in which Christ executed his office, or actually performed the part of a Mediator, being an exposition of the Articles respecting his death, resurrection,

and ascension to heaven. – Lastly, the Author shows the truth and propriety of affirming that Christ merited the grace of God and salvation for us.

III. As long as Christ is separate from us, he profits us nothing. Hence the necessity of our being ingrafted into him, as branches into a vine. Therefore the doctrine concerning Christ is followed, in the third part of the Creed, by this clause, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” as being the bond of union between us and Christ.

So in the third book our Author treats of the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ – and consequently of faith, by which we embrace Christ, with his twofold benefit, free righteousness, which he imputes to us, and regeneration, which he commences within us, by bestowing repentance upon us. – And to show that we have not the least room to glory in such faith as is unconnected with the pursuit of repentance, before proceeding to the full discussion of justification, he treats at large of repentance and the continual exercise of it, which Christ, apprehended by faith, produces in us by his Spirit. – He next fully discusses the first and chief benefit of Christ when united to us by the Holy Spirit, that is, justification – and then treats of prayer, which resembles the hand that actually receives those blessings to be enjoyed, which faith knows, from the word of promise, to be laid up with God for our use. – But as all men are not united to Christ, the sole Author of salvation, by the Holy Spirit, who creates and preserves faith in us, he treats of God's eternal election; which is the cause that we, in whom he foresaw no good but what he intended freely to

bestow, have been favoured with the gift of Christ, and united to God by the effectual call of the Gospel. – Lastly, he treats of complete regeneration, and the fruition of happiness; that is, the final resurrection, towards which our eyes must be directed, since in this world the felicity of the pious, in respect of enjoyment, is only begun.

IV. But as the Holy Spirit does not unite all men to Christ, or make them partakers of faith, and on those to whom he imparts it he does not ordinarily bestow it without means, but employs for this purpose the preaching of the Gospel and the use of the sacraments, with the administration of all discipline, therefore it follows in the Creed, “I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,” whom, though involved in eternal death, yet, in pursuance of the gratuitous election, God has freely reconciled to himself in Christ, and made partakers of the Holy Spirit, that, being ingrafted into Christ, they may have communion with him as their head, whence flows a perpetual remission of sins, and a full restoration to eternal life.

So in the fourth book our Author treats of the Church – then of the means used by the Holy Spirit in effectually calling from spiritual death, and preserving the church – the word and sacraments – baptism and the Lord's supper – which are as it were Christ's regal sceptre, by which he commences his spiritual reign in the Church by the energy of his Spirit, and carries it forwards from day to day during the present life, after the close of which he perfects it without those means.

And as political institutions are the asylums of the Church in this life, though civil government is distinct from the spiritual kingdom of Christ, our Author instructs us respecting it as a signal blessing of God, which the Church ought to acknowledge with gratitude of heart, till we are called out of this transitory state to the heavenly inheritance, where God will be all in all.

This is the plan of the Institutes, which may be comprised in the following brief summary: —

Man, created originally upright, being afterwards ruined, not partially, but totally, finds salvation out of himself, wholly in Christ; to whom being united by the Holy Spirit, freely bestowed, without any regard of future works, he enjoys in him a twofold benefit, the perfect imputation of righteousness, which attends him to the grave, and the commencement of sanctification, which he daily increases, till at length he completes it at the day of regeneration or resurrection of the body, so that in eternal life and the heavenly inheritance his praises are celebrated for such stupendous mercy.

Book I. On The Knowledge Of God The Creator

Argument

The first book treats of the knowledge of God the Creator; but, this being chiefly manifested in the creation of man, man also is made the subject of discussion. Thus the principal topics of the whole treatise are two – the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of man. In the first chapter, they are considered together; in the following chapters, separately; yet some things are introduced, which may be referred to either or both. What respects the Scripture and images may belong to the knowledge of God; what respects the formation of the world, the holy angels, and the devils, to the knowledge of man; and what respects the manner in which God governs the world, to both.

On the first of these topics, the knowledge of God, this book shows,

First, What kind of knowledge God himself requires – Chap. II.

Secondly, Where it must be sought – Chap. III. – IX., as follows:

1. Not in man; because, though the human mind is naturally

endued with it, yet it is extinguished, partly by ignorance, partly by wickedness – Chap. III. IV.

2. Nor in the structure of the world; because, though it shines there with the brightest evidence, testimonies of that kind, however plain, are, through our stupidity, wholly useless to us – Chap. V.

3. But in the Scripture – Chap. VI. – IX.

Thirdly, What kind of a being God is – Chap. X.

Fourthly, The impiety of ascribing to God a visible form, with observations on the adoration and origin of images – Chap. XI.

Fifthly, The reasonableness that God alone should be supremely worshipped – Chap. XII.

Lastly, The unity of the Divine Essence, and the distinction of three Persons – Chap. XIII.

On the other of these topics, the knowledge of man, it contains,

First, A dissertation on the creation of the world, and on the good and evil angels, all which relate to man – Chap. XIV.

Secondly, Proceeding to man himself, an examination of his nature and powers – Chap. XV.

But, in order to a clearer illustration of the knowledge of God and man, the three remaining chapters treat of the government of all human actions and of the whole world, in opposition to fortune and fate, stating the pure doctrine, and showing its use; and conclude with proving that, though God uses the agency of the wicked, he is pure from all pollution, and chargeable with no

blame.

Chapter I. The Connection Between The Knowledge Of God And The Knowledge Of Ourselves

True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves. But, while these two branches of knowledge are so intimately connected, which of them precedes and produces the other, is not easy to discover. For, in the first place, no man can take a survey of himself but he must immediately turn to the contemplation of God, in whom he “lives and moves;”⁶¹ since it is evident that the talents which we possess are not from ourselves, and that our very existence is nothing but a subsistence in God alone. These bounties, distilling to us by drops from heaven, form, as it were, so many streams conducting us to the fountain-head. Our poverty conduces to a clearer display of the infinite fulness of God. Especially, the miserable ruin, into which we have been plunged by the defection of the first man, compels us to raise our eyes towards heaven, not only as hungry and famished, to seek thence a supply for our wants, but, aroused with fear, to learn humility. For, since man is subject to a world of miseries, and has been spoiled of his divine array, this melancholy exposure discovers an immense mass of deformity: every one, therefore, must be

⁶¹ Acts xvii. 2.

so impressed with a consciousness of his own infelicity, as to arrive at some knowledge of God. Thus a sense of our ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity, depravity, and corruption, leads us to perceive and acknowledge that in the Lord alone are to be found true wisdom, solid strength, perfect goodness, and unspotted righteousness; and so, by our imperfections, we are excited to a consideration of the perfections of God. Nor can we really aspire toward him, till we have begun to be displeased with ourselves. For who would not gladly rest satisfied with himself? where is the man not actually absorbed in self-complacency, while he remains unacquainted with his true situation, or content with his own endowments, and ignorant or forgetful of his own misery? The knowledge of ourselves, therefore, is not only an incitement to seek after God, but likewise a considerable assistance towards finding him.

II. On the other hand, it is plain that no man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself, without having first contemplated the divine character, and then descended to the consideration of his own. For, such is the native pride of us all, we invariably esteem ourselves righteous, innocent, wise, and holy, till we are convinced, by clear proofs, of our unrighteousness, turpitude, folly, and impurity. But we are never thus convinced, while we confine our attention to ourselves, and regard not the Lord, who is the only standard by which this judgment ought to be formed. Because, from our natural proneness to hypocrisy, any vain appearance of righteousness abundantly contents us instead

of the reality; and, every thing within and around us being exceedingly defiled, we are delighted with what is least so, as extremely pure, while we confine our reflections within the limits of human corruption. So the eye, accustomed to see nothing but black, judges that to be very white, which is but whitish, or perhaps brown. Indeed, the senses of our bodies may assist us in discovering how grossly we err in estimating the powers of the soul. For if at noon-day we look either on the ground, or at any surrounding objects, we conclude our vision to be very strong and piercing; but when we raise our eyes and steadily look at the sun, they are at once dazzled and confounded with such a blaze of brightness, and we are constrained to confess, that our sight, so piercing in viewing terrestrial things, when directed to the sun, is dimness itself. Thus also it happens in the consideration of our spiritual endowments. For as long as our views are bounded by the earth, perfectly content with our own righteousness, wisdom, and strength, we fondly flatter ourselves, and fancy we are little less than demigods. But, if we once elevate our thoughts to God, and consider his nature, and the consummate perfection of his righteousness, wisdom, and strength, to which we ought to be conformed, – what before charmed us in ourselves under the false pretext of righteousness, will soon be loathed as the greatest iniquity; what strangely deceived us under the title of wisdom, will be despised as extreme folly; and what wore the appearance of strength, will be proved to be most wretched impotence. So very remote from the divine purity is what seems in us the highest

perfection.

III. Hence that horror and amazement with which the Scripture always represents the saints to have been impressed and disturbed, on every discovery of the presence of God. For when we see those, who before his appearance stood secure and firm, so astonished and affrighted at the manifestation of his glory, as to faint and almost expire through fear, – we must infer that man is never sufficiently affected with a knowledge of his own meanness, till he has compared himself with the Divine Majesty. Of this consternation we have frequent examples in the Judges and Prophets; so that it was a common expression among the Lord's people – “We shall die, because we have seen God.”⁶² Therefore the history of Job, to humble men with a consciousness of their pollution, impotence, and folly, derives its principal argument from a description of the Divine purity, power, and wisdom. And not without reason. For we see how Abraham, the nearer he approached to behold the glory of the Lord, the more fully acknowledged himself to be but “dust and ashes;”⁶³ and how Elias⁶⁴ could not bear his approach without covering his face, his appearance is so formidable. And what can man do, all vile and corrupt, when fear constrains even the cherubim themselves to veil their faces? This is what the prophet Isaiah speaks of – “the moon shall be confounded, and the sun

⁶² Judg. xiii. 22.

⁶³ Gen. xviii. 27.

⁶⁴ 1 Kings xix. 13.

ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign:”⁶⁵ that is, when he shall make a fuller and nearer exhibition of his splendour, it shall eclipse the splendour of the brightest object besides. But, though the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves be intimately connected, the proper order of instruction requires us first to treat of the former, and then to proceed to the discussion of the latter.

⁶⁵ Isaiah vi. 2; xxiv. 23.

Chapter II. The Nature And Tendency Of The Knowledge Of God

By the knowledge of God, I intend not merely a notion that there is such a Being, but also an acquaintance with whatever we ought to know concerning Him, conducing to his glory and our benefit. For we cannot with propriety say, there is any knowledge of God where there is no religion or piety. I have no reference here to that species of knowledge by which men, lost and condemned in themselves, apprehend God the Redeemer in Christ the Mediator; but only to that first and simple knowledge, to which the genuine order of nature would lead us, if Adam had retained his innocence. For though, in the present ruined state of human nature, no man will ever perceive God to be a Father, or the Author of salvation, or in any respect propitious, but as pacified by the mediation of Christ; yet it is one thing to understand, that God our Maker supports us by his power, governs us by his providence, nourishes us by his goodness, and follows us with blessings of every kind, and another to embrace the grace of reconciliation proposed to us in Christ. Therefore, since God is first manifested, both in the structure of the world and in the general tenor of Scripture, simply as the Creator, and afterwards reveals himself in the person of Christ as a Redeemer, hence arises a twofold knowledge of him; of which the former is first to be considered, and the other will

follow in its proper place. For though our mind cannot conceive of God, without ascribing some worship to him, it will not be sufficient merely to apprehend that he is the only proper object of universal worship and adoration, unless we are also persuaded that he is the fountain of all good, and seek for none but in him. This I maintain, not only because he sustains the universe, as he once made it, by his infinite power, governs it by his wisdom, preserves it by his goodness, and especially reigns over the human race in righteousness and judgment, exercising a merciful forbearance, and defending them by his protection; but because there cannot be found the least particle of wisdom, light, righteousness, power, rectitude, or sincere truth which does not proceed from him, and claim him for its author: we should therefore learn to expect and supplicate all these things from him, and thankfully to acknowledge what he gives us. For this sense of the divine perfections is calculated to teach us piety, which produces religion. By piety, I mean a reverence and love of God, arising from a knowledge of his benefits. For, till men are sensible that they owe every thing to God, that they are supported by his paternal care, that he is the Author of all the blessings they enjoy, and that nothing should be sought independently of him, they will never voluntarily submit to his authority; they will never truly and cordially devote themselves to his service, unless they rely upon him alone for true felicity.

II. Cold and frivolous, then, are the speculations of those who employ themselves in disquisitions on the essence of God, when

it would be more interesting to us to become acquainted with his character, and to know what is agreeable to his nature. For what end is answered by professing, with Epicurus, that there is a God, who, discarding all concern about the world, indulges himself in perpetual inactivity? What benefit arises from the knowledge of a God with whom we have no concern? Our knowledge of God should rather tend, first, to teach us fear and reverence; and, secondly, to instruct us to implore all good at his hand, and to render him the praise of all that we receive. For how can you entertain a thought of God without immediately reflecting, that, being a creature of his formation, you must, by right of creation, be subject to his authority? that you are indebted to him for your life, and that all your actions should be done with reference to him? If this be true, it certainly follows that your life is miserably corrupt, unless it be regulated by a desire of obeying him, since his will ought to be the rule of our conduct. Nor can you have a clear view of him without discovering him to be the fountain and origin of all good. This would produce a desire of union to him, and confidence in him, if the human mind were not seduced by its own depravity from the right path of investigation. For, even at the first, the pious mind dreams not of any imaginary deity, but contemplates only the one true God; and, concerning him, indulges not the fictions of fancy, but, content with believing him to be such as he reveals himself, uses the most diligent and unremitting caution, lest it should fall into error by a rash and presumptuous transgression of his will. He who thus knows him,

sensible that all things are subject to his control, confides in him as his Guardian and Protector, and unreservedly commits himself to his care. Assured that he is the author of all blessings, in distress or want he immediately flies to his protection, and expects his aid. Persuaded of his goodness and mercy, he relies on him with unlimited confidence, nor doubts of finding in his clemency a remedy provided for all his evils. Knowing him to be his Lord and Father, he concludes that he ought to mark his government in all things, revere his majesty, endeavour to promote his glory, and obey his commands. Perceiving him to be a just Judge, armed with severity for the punishment of crimes, he keeps his tribunal always in view, and is restrained by fear from provoking his wrath. Yet he is not so terrified at the apprehension of his justice, as to wish to evade it, even if escape were possible; but loves him as much in punishing the wicked as in blessing the pious, because he believes it as necessary to his glory to punish the impious and abandoned, as to reward the righteous with eternal life. Besides, he restrains himself from sin, not merely from a dread of vengeance, but because he loves and reveres God as his Father, honours and worships him as his Lord, and, even though there were no hell, would shudder at the thought of offending him. See, then, the nature of pure and genuine religion. It consists in faith, united with a serious fear of God, comprehending a voluntary reverence, and producing legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law. And this requires to be the more carefully remarked, because men in general render

to God a formal worship, but very few truly reverence him; while great ostentation in ceremonies is universally displayed, but sincerity of heart is rarely to be found.

Chapter III. The Human Mind Naturally Endued With The Knowledge Of God

We lay it down as a position not to be controverted, that the human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of a Deity. For that no man might shelter himself under the pretext of ignorance, God hath given to all some apprehension of his existence,⁶⁶ the memory of which he frequently and insensibly renews; so that, as men universally know that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, they must be condemned by their own testimony, for not having worshipped him and consecrated their lives to his service. If we seek for ignorance of a Deity, it is nowhere more likely to be found, than among tribes the most stupid and furthest from civilization. But, as the celebrated Cicero observes, there is no nation so barbarous, no race so savage, as not to be firmly persuaded of the being of a God.⁶⁷ Even those who in other respects appear to differ but little from brutes, always retain some sense of religion; so fully are the minds of men possessed with this common principle, which is closely interwoven with their original composition. Now, since there has never been a country or family, from the beginning of the world, totally destitute of religion, it is a tacit confession, that

⁶⁶ Rom. i. 20.

⁶⁷ Cicer. de Natur. Deor. lib. i. Lactant. Inst. lib. iii. cap. 10.

some sense of the Divinity is inscribed on every heart. Of this opinion, idolatry itself furnishes ample proof. For we know how reluctantly man would degrade himself to exalt other creatures above him. His preference of worshipping a piece of wood or stone, to being thought to have no god, evinces the impression of a Deity on the human mind to be very strong, the obliteration of which is more difficult than a total change of the natural disposition; and this is certainly changed, whenever man leaves his natural pride, and voluntarily descends to such meannesses under the notion of worshipping God.

II. It is most absurd, then, to pretend, as is asserted by some, that religion was the contrivance of a few subtle and designing men, a political machine to confine the simple multitude to their duty, while those who inculcated the worship of God on others, were themselves far from believing that any god existed. I confess, indeed, that artful men have introduced many inventions into religion, to fill the vulgar with reverence, and strike them with terror, in order to obtain the greater command over their minds. But this they never could have accomplished, if the minds of men had not previously been possessed of a firm persuasion of the existence of God, from which the propensity to religion proceeds. And that they who cunningly imposed on the illiterate, under the pretext of religion, were themselves wholly destitute of any knowledge of God, is quite incredible. For though there were some in ancient times, and many arise in the present age, who deny the existence of God, yet, in spite of their reluctance,

they are continually receiving proofs of what they desire to disbelieve. We read of no one guilty of more audacious or unbridled contempt of the Deity than Caligula; yet no man ever trembled with greater distress at any instance of Divine wrath, so that he was constrained to dread the Divinity whom he professed to despise. This you may always see exemplified in persons of similar character. For the most audacious contemnors of God are most alarmed, even at the noise of a falling leaf. Whence arises this, but from the vengeance of the Divine Majesty, smiting their consciences the more powerfully in proportion to their efforts to fly from it? They try every refuge to hide themselves from the Lord's presence, and to efface it from their minds; but their attempts to elude it are all in vain. Though it may seem to disappear for a moment, it presently returns with increased violence; so that, if they have any remission of the anguish of conscience, it resembles the sleep of persons intoxicated, or subject to frenzy, who enjoy no placid rest while sleeping, being continually harassed with horrible and tremendous dreams. The impious themselves, therefore, exemplify the observation, that the idea of a God is never lost in the human mind.

III. It will always be evident to persons of correct judgment, that the idea of a Deity impressed on the mind of man is indelible. That all have by nature an innate persuasion of the Divine existence, a persuasion inseparable from their very constitution, we have abundant evidence in the contumacy of the wicked, whose furious struggles to extricate themselves from the fear

of God are unavailing. Though Diagoras, and others like him, turn to ridicule what all ages have believed of religion;⁶⁸ though Dionysius scoff at the judgment of Heaven, – it is but a forced laughter, for the worm of a guilty conscience torments them within, worse than if they were seared with hot irons. I agree not with Cicero, that errors in process of time become obsolete, and that religion is increased and ameliorated daily. For the world, as will shortly be observed, uses its utmost endeavours to banish all knowledge of God, and tries every method of corrupting his worship. I only maintain, that while the stupid insensibility which the wicked wish to acquire, to promote their contempt of God, preys upon their minds, yet the sense of a Deity, which they ardently desire to extinguish, is still strong, and frequently discovers itself. Whence we infer, that this is a doctrine, not first to be learned in the schools, but which every man from his birth is self-taught, and which, though many strain every nerve to banish it from them, yet nature itself permits none to forget. Now, if the end for which all men are born and live, be to know God, – and unless the knowledge of God have reached this point, it is uncertain and vain, – it is evident, that all who direct not every thought and action of life to this end, are degenerated from the law of their creation. Of this the heathen philosophers themselves were not ignorant. This was Plato's meaning, when he taught that the chief good of the soul consists in similitude to God, when the soul, having a clear knowledge of him, is wholly transformed into

⁶⁸ Cicer. de Nat. Deor. lib. 1 & 3. Valer. Maxim. lib. 1, cap. 1.

his likeness.⁶⁹ The reasoning also of Gryllus, in Plutarch, is very accurate, when he affirms, that men entirely destitute of religion, not only do not excel the brutes, but are in many respects far more wretched, being obnoxious to evil under so many forms, and always dragging on a tumultuous and restless life. The worship of God is therefore the only thing which renders men superior to brutes, and makes them aspire to immortality.

⁶⁹ In Phæd. & Theæt.

Chapter IV. This Knowledge Extinguished Or Corrupted, Partly By Ignorance, Partly By Wickedness

While experience testifies that the seeds of religion are sown by God in every heart, we scarcely find one man in a hundred who cherishes what he has received, and not one in whom they grow to maturity, much less bear fruit in due season. Some perhaps grow vain in their own superstitions, while others revolt from God with intentional wickedness; but all degenerate from the true knowledge of him. The fact is, that no genuine piety remains in the world. But, in saying that some fall into superstition through error, I would not insinuate that their ignorance excuses them from guilt; because their blindness is always connected with pride, vanity, and contumacy. Pride and vanity are discovered, when miserable men, in seeking after God, rise not, as they ought, above their own level, but judge of him according to their carnal stupidity, and leave the proper path of investigation in pursuit of speculations as vain as they are curious. Their conceptions of him are formed, not according to the representations he gives of himself, but by the inventions of their own presumptuous imaginations. This gulf being opened, whatever course they take, they must be rushing forwards to destruction. None of their subsequent attempts for

the worship or service of God can be considered as rendered to him; because they worship not him, but a figment of their own brains in his stead. This depravity Paul expressly remarks: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."⁷⁰ He had before said, "they became vain in their imaginations." But lest any should exculpate them, he adds that they were deservedly blinded, because, not content within the bounds of sobriety, but arrogating to themselves more than was right, they wilfully darkened, and even infatuated themselves with pride, vanity, and perverseness. Whence it follows, that their folly is inexcusable, which originates not only in a vain curiosity, but in false confidence, and an immoderate desire to exceed the limits of human knowledge.

II. David's assertion, that "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,"⁷¹ is primarily, as we shall soon see in another place, to be restricted to those who extinguish the light of nature, and wilfully stupefy themselves. For we see many, become hardened by bold and habitual transgressions, striving to banish all remembrance of God, which the instinct of nature is still suggesting to their minds. To render their madness more detestable, he introduces them as expressly denying the existence of God; not that they deprive him of his being, but because they rob him of his justice and providence, shutting him up as an idler in heaven. Now, as nothing would be more inconsistent with

⁷⁰ Rom. i. 22.

⁷¹ Psalm xiv. 1.

Deity, than to abandon the government of the world, leave it to fortune, and connive at the crimes of men, that they might wanton with impunity, – whoever extinguishes all fear of the heavenly judgment, and indulges himself in security, denies that there is any God. After the impious have wilfully shut their own eyes, it is the righteous vengeance of God upon them, to darken their understandings, so that, seeing, they may not perceive.⁷² David is the best interpreter of his own meaning, in another place, where he says, “The wicked have no fear of God before their eyes;”⁷³ and again, that they encourage themselves in their iniquities with the flattering persuasion that God doth not see them.⁷⁴ Though they are constrained to acknowledge the existence of God, yet they rob him of his glory, by detracting from his power. For as God, according to the testimony of Paul, “cannot deny himself,”⁷⁵ because he perpetually remains like himself, – those who feign him to be a vain and lifeless image, are truly said to deny God. It must also be remarked, that, though they strive against their own natural understanding, and desire not only to banish him thence, but even to annihilate him in heaven, their insensibility can never prevail, so as to prevent God from sometimes recalling them to his tribunal. But as no dread restrains them from violent opposition to the divine will,

⁷² Isaiah vi. 9.

⁷³ Psalm xxxvi. 1.

⁷⁴ Psalm x. 11.

⁷⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 13.

it is evident, as long as they are carried away with such a blind impetuosity, that they are governed by a brutish forgetfulness of God.

III. Thus is overthrown the vain excuse pleaded by many for their superstition; for they satisfy themselves with any attention to religion, however preposterous, not considering that the Divine Will is the perpetual rule to which true religion ought to be conformed; that God ever continues like himself; that he is no spectre or phantasm, to be metamorphosed according to the fancy of every individual. It is easy to see how superstition mocks God with hypocritical services, while it attempts to please him. For, embracing only those things which he declares he disregards, it either contemptuously practises, or even openly rejects, what he prescribes and declares to be pleasing in his sight. Persons who introduce newly-invented methods of worshipping God, really worship and adore the creature of their distempered imaginations; for they would never have dared to trifle in such a manner with God, if they had not first feigned a god conformable to their own false and foolish notions. Wherefore the apostle pronounces a vague and unsettled notion concerning the Deity to be ignorance of God. “When ye knew not God, (says he,) ye did service unto them which by nature were no gods.”⁷⁶ And in another place he speaks of the Ephesians as having been “without God,”⁷⁷ while they were strangers to a right knowledge of the

⁷⁶ Gal. iv. 8.

⁷⁷ Eph. ii. 12.

only true God. Nor, in this respect, is it of much importance, whether you imagine to yourself one god or more; for in either case you depart and revolt from the true God, and, forsaking him, you have nothing left you but an execrable idol. We must therefore decide, with Lactantius, that there is no legitimate religion unconnected with truth.

IV. Another sin is, that they never think of God but against their inclinations, nor approach him till their reluctance is overcome by constraint; and then they are influenced, not by a voluntary fear, proceeding from reverence of the Divine Majesty, but by a servile and constrained fear, extorted by the divine judgment, which they dread because it is inevitable, at the same time that they hate it. Now, to impiety, and to this species of it alone, is applicable that assertion of Statius, that fear first made gods in the world.⁷⁸ They, whose minds are alienated from the righteousness of God, earnestly desire the subversion of that tribunal, which they know to be established for the punishment of transgressions against it. With this disposition, they wage war against the Lord, who cannot be deprived of his judgment; but when they apprehend his irresistible arm to be impending over their heads, unable to avert or evade it, they tremble with fear. That they may not seem altogether to despise him, whose majesty troubles them, they practise some form of religion; at the same time not ceasing to pollute themselves with vices of every kind, and to add one flagitious act to another, till they

⁷⁸ Statii Thebaid. lib. 3.

have violated every part of God's holy law, and dissipated all its righteousness. It is certain, at least, that they are not prevented by that pretended fear of God from enjoying pleasure and satisfaction in their sins, practising self-adulation, and preferring the indulgence of their own carnal intemperance to the salutary restraints of the Holy Spirit. But that being a false and vain shadow of religion, and scarcely worthy even to be called its shadow, – it is easy to infer the wide difference between such a confused notion of God, and the piety which is instilled only into the minds of the faithful, and is the source of religion. Yet hypocrites, who are flying from God, resort to the artifices of superstition, for the sake of appearing devoted to him. For whereas the whole tenor of their life ought to be a perpetual course of obedience to him, they make no scruple of rebelling against him in almost all their actions, only endeavouring to appease him with a few paltry sacrifices. Whereas he ought to be served with sanctity of life and integrity of heart, they invent frivolous trifles and worthless observances, to conciliate his favour. They abandon themselves to their impurities with the greater licentiousness, because they confide in being able to discharge all their duty to him by ridiculous expiations. In a word, whereas their confidence ought to be placed on him, they neglect him, and depend upon themselves or on other creatures. At length they involve themselves in such a vast accumulation of errors, that those sparks which enable them to discover the glory of God are smothered, and at last extinguished by the

criminal darkness of iniquity. That seed, which it is impossible to eradicate, a sense of the existence of a Deity, yet remains; but so corrupted as to produce only the worst of fruits. Yet this is a further proof of what I now contend for, that an idea of God is naturally engraved on the hearts of men, since necessity extorts a confession of it, even from reprobates themselves. In the moment of tranquillity, they facetiously mock the Divine Being, and with loquacious impertinence derogate from his power. But if any despair oppress them, it stimulates them to seek him, and dictates concise prayers, which prove that they are not altogether ignorant of God, but that what ought to have appeared before had been suppressed by obstinacy.

Chapter V. The Knowledge Of God Conspicuous In The Formation And Continual Government Of The World

As the perfection of a happy life consists in the knowledge of God, that no man might be precluded from attaining felicity, God hath not only sown in the minds of men the seed of religion, already mentioned, but hath manifested himself in the formation of every part of the world, and daily presents himself to public view, in such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold him. His essence indeed is incomprehensible, so that his Majesty is not to be perceived by the human senses; but on all his works he hath inscribed his glory in characters so clear, unequivocal, and striking, that the most illiterate and stupid cannot exculpate themselves by the plea of ignorance. The Psalmist therefore, with great propriety, exclaims, “He covereth himself with light as with a garment;”⁷⁹ as if he had said, that his first appearance in visible apparel was at the creation of the world, when he displayed those glories which are still conspicuous on every side. In the same place, the Psalmist compares the expanded heavens to a royal pavilion; – he says that “he layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; maketh the clouds his chariot; walketh upon the wings

⁷⁹ Psalm civ. 2.

of the wind;" and maketh the winds and the lightnings his swift messengers. And because the glory of his power and wisdom is more refulgently displayed above, heaven is generally called his palace. And, in the first place, whithersoever you turn your eyes, there is not an atom of the world in which you cannot behold some brilliant sparks at least of his glory. But you cannot at one view take a survey of this most ample and beautiful machine in all its vast extent, without being completely overwhelmed with its infinite splendour. Wherefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews elegantly represents the worlds as the manifestations of invisible things;⁸⁰ for the exact symmetry of the universe is a mirror, in which we may contemplate the otherwise invisible God. For which reason the Psalmist⁸¹ attributes to the celestial bodies a language universally known; for they afford a testimony of the Deity too evident to escape the observation even of the most ignorant people in the world. But the Apostle more distinctly asserts this manifestation to men of what was useful to be known concerning God; "for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead."⁸²

II. Of his wonderful wisdom, both heaven and earth contain innumerable proofs; not only those more abstruse things, which are the subjects of astronomy, medicine, and the whole science

⁸⁰ Heb. xi. 3.

⁸¹ Psalm xix. 1, 3.

⁸² Rom. i. 20.

of physics, but those things which force themselves on the view of the most illiterate of mankind, so that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to witness them. Adepts, indeed, in those liberal arts, or persons just initiated into them, are thereby enabled to proceed much further in investigating the secrets of Divine Wisdom. Yet ignorance of those sciences prevents no man from such a survey of the workmanship of God, as is more than sufficient to excite his admiration of the Divine Architect. In disquisitions concerning the motions of the stars, in fixing their situations, measuring their distances, and distinguishing their peculiar properties, there is need of skill, exactness, and industry; and the providence of God being more clearly revealed by these discoveries, the mind ought to rise to a sublimer elevation for the contemplation of his glory. But since the meanest and most illiterate of mankind, who are furnished with no other assistance than their own eyes, cannot be ignorant of the excellence of the Divine skill, exhibiting itself in that endless, yet regular variety of the innumerable celestial host, – it is evident, that the Lord abundantly manifests his wisdom to every individual on earth. Thus it belongs to a man of preëminent ingenuity to examine, with the critical exactness of Galen, the connection, the symmetry, the beauty, and the use of the various parts of the human body. But the composition of the human body is universally acknowledged to be so ingenious, as to render its Maker the object of deserved admiration.

III. And therefore some of the philosophers⁸³ of antiquity have justly called man a microcosm, or world in miniature; because he is an eminent specimen of the power, goodness, and wisdom of God, and contains in him wonders enough to occupy the attention of our minds, if we are not indisposed to such a study. For this reason, Paul, having remarked that the blind “might feel after God and find him,” immediately adds, that “he is not far from every one of us;”⁸⁴ because every man has undoubtedly an inward perception of the celestial goodness, by which he is quickened. But if, to attain some ideas of God, it be not necessary for us to go beyond ourselves, what an unpardonable indolence is it in those who will not descend into themselves that they may find him! For the same reason, David, having briefly celebrated the wonderful name and honour of God, which are universally conspicuous, immediately exclaims, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”⁸⁵ Again, “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength.” Thus declaring not only that the human race is a clear mirror of the works of God, but that even infants at the breast have tongues so eloquent for the publication of his glory, that there is no necessity for other orators; whence he hesitates not to produce them as fully capable of confuting the madness of those whose diabolical pride would wish to extinguish the name of God. Hence also what Paul quotes

⁸³ Macrobian lib. 2. de Somn. Scip. c. 12. Boet. de Defin. Arist. lib. 1. de Hist. Animal.

⁸⁴ Acts xvii. 27.

⁸⁵ Psalm viii. 2, 4.

from Aratus, that “we are the offspring of God;”⁸⁶ since his adorning us with such great excellence has proved him to be our Father. So, from the dictates of common sense and experience, the heathen poets called him the Father of men. Nor will any man freely devote himself to the service of God, unless he have been allured to love and reverence him, by first experiencing his paternal love.

IV. But herein appears the vile ingratitude of men – that, while they ought to be proclaiming the praises of God for the wonderful skill displayed in their formation, and the inestimable bounties he bestows on them, they are only inflated with the greater pride. They perceive how wonderfully God works within them, and experience teaches them what a variety of blessings they receive from his liberality. They are constrained to know, whether willingly or not, that these are proofs of his divinity: yet they suppress this knowledge in their hearts. Indeed, they need not go out of themselves, provided they do not, by arrogating to themselves what is given from heaven, smother the light which illuminates their minds to a clearer discovery of God. Even in the present day, there are many men of monstrous dispositions, who hesitate not to pervert all the seeds of divinity sown in the nature of man, in order to bury in oblivion the name of God. How detestable is this frenzy, that man, discovering in his body and soul a hundred vestiges of God, should make this very excellence a pretext for the denial of his being! They will not

⁸⁶ Acts xvii. 28.

say that they are distinguished from the brutes by chance; but they ascribe it to nature, which they consider as the author of all things, and remove God out of sight. They perceive most exquisite workmanship in all their members, from the head to the feet. Here also they substitute nature in the place of God. But above all, the rapid motions of the soul, its noble faculties, and excellent talents, discover a Divinity not easily concealed; unless the Epicureans, like the Cyclops, from this eminence should audaciously wage war against God. Do all the treasures of heavenly wisdom concur in the government of a worm five feet in length? and shall the universe be destitute of this privilege? To state that there is in the soul a certain machinery corresponding to every part of the body, is so far from obscuring the divine glory, that it is rather an illustration of it. Let Epicurus answer; what concourse of atoms in the concoction of food and drink distributes part into excrements and part into blood, and causes the several members to perform their different offices with as much diligence as if so many souls by common consent governed one body?

V. But my present concern is not with that sty of swines: I rather address those who, influenced by preposterous subtilties, would indirectly employ that frigid dogma of Aristotle to destroy the immortality of the soul, and deprive God of his rights. For, because the organs of the body are directed by the faculties of the soul, they pretend the soul to be so united to the body as to be incapable of subsisting without it; and by their

eulogies of nature do all they can to suppress the name of God. But the powers of the soul are far from being limited to functions subservient to the body. For what concern has the body in measuring the heavens, counting the number of the stars, computing their several magnitudes, and acquiring a knowledge of their respective distances, of the celerity or tardiness of their courses, and of the degrees of their various declinations? I grant, indeed, the usefulness of astronomy, but only remark that, in these profound researches relating to the celestial orbs, there is no corporeal coöperation, but that the soul has its functions distinct from the body. I have proposed one example, whence inferences may readily be drawn by the readers. The manifold agility of the soul, which enables it to take a survey of heaven and earth; to join the past and the present; to retain the memory of things heard long ago; to conceive of whatever it chooses by the help of imagination; its ingenuity also in the invention of such admirable arts, – are certain proofs of the divinity in man. Besides, in sleep, it not only turns and moves itself round, but conceives many useful ideas, reasons on various subjects, and even divines future events. What shall we say, but that the vestiges of immortality impressed upon man are absolutely indelible? Now, what reason can be given, why man, who is of divine original, should not acknowledge his Creator? Shall we indeed, by the judgment with which we are endued, discern right from wrong, and shall there be no judge in heaven? Shall we, even in our sleep, have some remains of intelligence, and shall there be no God to govern the

world? Shall we be esteemed the inventers of so many useful arts, that God may be defrauded of his praise? Whereas experience abundantly teaches, that all we have is variously distributed to us by some superior Being. The clamour of some, about a secret inspiration animating the whole world, is not only weak, but altogether profane. They are pleased with the celebrated passage of Virgil —

“Know, first, a spirit, with an active flame,
Fills, feeds, and animates this mighty frame;
Runs through the watery worlds, the fields of air,
The ponderous earth, the depths of heaven; and there
Glowes in the sun and moon, and burns in every star.
Thus, mingling with the mass, the general soul
Lives in the parts, and agitates the whole.
From that celestial energy began
The low-browed brute, th' imperial race of man,
The painted birds who wing th' aërial plain,
And all the mighty monsters of the main;
Their souls at first from high Olympus came,” &c.⁸⁷

Just as if the world, which is a theatre erected for displaying the glory of God, were its own creator! For thus writes the same poet in another place, following the common opinion of the Greeks and Latins —

⁸⁷ Æneid vi. Pitt's Translation.

“Led by such wonders, sages have opined,
That bees have portions of a heavenly mind;
That God pervades, and, like one common soul,
Fills, feeds, and animates the world's great whole;
That flocks, herds, beasts, and men, from him receive
Their vital breath; in him all move and live;
That souls discerpt from him shall never die,
But back resolved to God and heaven shall fly,
And live for ever in the starry sky.”⁸⁸

See the efficacy of that jejune speculation concerning a universal mind animating and actuating the world, in the production and encouragement of piety in the human heart. This more fully appears also from the profane expressions of the filthy Lucretius, which are deductions from the same principle.⁸⁹ Its true tendency is to set up a shadowy deity, and to banish all ideas of the true God, the proper object of fear and worship. I confess, indeed, that the expression, that nature is God, may be used in a pious sense by a pious mind; but, as it is harsh and inconsistent with strict propriety of speech, nature being rather an order prescribed by God, it is dangerous in matters so momentous, and demanding peculiar caution, to confound the Deity with the inferior course of his works.

VI. Let us remember, then, in every consideration of our own nature, that there is one God, who governs all natures, and

⁸⁸ Georg. iv. Warton's Translation.

⁸⁹ De Rerum Natur. lib. 1.

who expects us to regard him, to direct our faith to him, to worship and invoke him. For nothing is more preposterous than to enjoy such splendid advantages, which proclaim within us their divine origin, and to neglect the Author who bountifully bestows them. Now, what illustrious specimens of his power have we to arrest our attention! unless it be possible for us not to know what strength is required to sustain with his word this immense fabric of heaven and earth; now by his mere nod to shake the heaven with roaring peals of thunder, to consume whatever he choose with lightnings, and set the atmosphere on fire with the flame; now to disturb it with tempests in various forms, and immediately, if he please, to compose all to instantaneous serenity; to restrain, suspended as it were in air, the sea, which, by its elevation, seems to threaten the earth with continual devastation; now raising it in a tremendous manner, by the tumultuous violence of the winds, and now appeasing the waves to render it calm. To this purpose are the numerous praises of the power of God, drawn from the testimonies of nature, particularly in the book of Job, and in the prophecies of Isaiah; which I now purposely omit, as they will be more suitably introduced, when I discuss the scriptural account of the creation of the world. Only I wished at present to hint, that this way of seeking God, by tracing the lineaments which, both above and below us, exhibit such a lively adumbration of him, is common to aliens, and to those who belong to his family. His power leads us to the consideration of his eternity; because he, from whom

all things derive their origin, must necessarily be eternal and self-existent. But if we inquire the reason that induced him first to create all things, and now to preserve them, we shall find the sole cause to be his own goodness. But though this be the only cause, it should be more than sufficient to attract us to love him, since, according to the Psalmist,⁹⁰ there is no creature that does not participate in the effusions of his mercy.

VII. In the second species of his works, such as happen out of the ordinary course of nature, the proofs of his perfections are equally clear. For he so regulates his providence in the government of human society, that, while he exhibits, in innumerable ways, his benignity and beneficence to all, he likewise declares, by evident and daily indications, his clemency to the pious, and his severity to the wicked and ungodly. For no doubt can be entertained respecting his punishment of flagitious crimes; inasmuch as he clearly demonstrates himself to be the guardian and avenger of innocence, in prospering with his blessing the life of good men, in assisting their necessities, assuaging and comforting their sorrows, alleviating their calamities, and providing in all things for their safety. Nor should it perplex or eclipse his perpetual rule of righteousness, that he frequently permits the wicked and guilty for a time to exult in impunity; but suffers good men to be undeservedly harassed with much adversity, and even to be oppressed by the iniquitous malice of the ungodly. We ought rather to make

⁹⁰ Psalm cxlv. 9.

a very different reflection; that, when he clearly manifests his wrath in the punishment of one sin, he hates all sins; and that, since he now passes by many sins unpunished, there will be a judgment hereafter, till which the punishment is deferred. So, also, what ample occasion he supplies us for the consideration of his mercy, while, with unwearied benignity, he pursues the miserable, calling them back to himself with more than paternal indulgence, till his beneficence overcomes their depravity!

VIII. To this end the Psalmist,⁹¹ mentioning that God, in desperate cases, suddenly and wonderfully succors, beyond all expectation, those who are miserable and ready to perish, either protecting from beasts of prey such as are wandering in deserts, and, at length, reconducting them into the right way, or supplying with food the needy and hungry, or delivering captives from dreary dungeons and iron chains, or bringing the shipwrecked safe into port, or healing the diseases of some who are almost dead, or scorching the earth with excessive heat and drought, or fertilizing it with the secret showers of his mercy, or elevating the meanest of the vulgar, or degrading nobles from their dignified stations, – the Psalmist, I say, having proposed such examples as these, infers from them that what are accounted fortuitous accidents, are so many proofs of his heavenly providence, especially of his paternal clemency; and that hence the pious have cause to rejoice, while the mouths of the impious and reprobate are stopped. But, since the majority of men, immersed in their

⁹¹ Psalm cvii.

errors, are blind amidst the greatest opportunities of seeing, he accounts it a rare instance of singular wisdom discreetly to consider these works of God;⁹² from the sight of which, some, who, in other instances, discover the greatest acuteness, receive no benefit. And, notwithstanding all the displays of the glory of God, scarcely one man in a hundred, is really a spectator of it. His power and wisdom are equally conspicuous. His power is illustriously manifested, when the ferocity of the impious, universally deemed insuperable, is quelled in an instant, their arrogance subdued, their strongest fortresses demolished, their weapons and armour broken in pieces, their strength diminished, their machinations confounded, and they fall by their own exertions; when the audacity, which exalted itself above the heavens, is thrown down to the centre of the earth; when, on the contrary, “the poor are raised out of the dust, and the needy out of the dunghill;”⁹³ the oppressed and afflicted extricated from distressing extremities, and the desperate restored to a good hope; when the unarmed are victorious over those who are armed, the few over the many, the weak over the strong. But his wisdom is eminently displayed in ordering every dispensation at the best possible time, confounding the greatest worldly sagacity, “taking the wise in their own craftiness,”⁹⁴ and finally disposing all things according to the dictates of the highest reason.

⁹² Psalm cvii. 43.

⁹³ Psalm cxiii. 7.

⁹⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 19.

IX. We see that there is no need of any long or laborious argumentation, to obtain and produce testimonies for illustrating and asserting the Divine Majesty; since, from the few which we have selected and cursorily mentioned, it appears that they are every where so evident and obvious, as easily to be distinguished by the eyes, and pointed out with the fingers. And here it must again be observed, that we are invited to a knowledge of God; not such as, content with empty speculation, merely floats in the brain, but such as will be solid and fruitful, if rightly received and rooted in our hearts. For the Lord is manifested by his perfections: perceiving the influence and enjoying the benefits of which, we must necessarily be more acutely impressed with such a knowledge, than if we imagined a Deity of whose influence we had no perception. Whence we conclude this to be the right way, and the best method of seeking God; not with presumptuous curiosity to attempt an examination of his essence, which is rather to be adored than too curiously investigated; but to contemplate him in his works, in which he approaches and familiarizes, and, in some measure, communicates himself to us. To this the Apostle referred, when he said, that he is not to be sought far off, since, by his attribute of omnipresence, he dwells in every one of us.⁹⁵ Therefore David, having before confessed his greatness ineffable, after he descends to the mention of his works, adds, that he will “declare this greatness.”⁹⁶ Wherefore

⁹⁵ Acts xvii. 27.

⁹⁶ Psalm cxlv. 6.

it becomes us also to apply ourselves to such an investigation of God, as may fill our understanding with admiration, and powerfully interest our feelings. And, as Augustine somewhere teaches, being incapable of comprehending him, and fainting, as it were, under his immensity, we must take a view of his works, that we may be refreshed with his goodness.⁹⁷

X. Now, such a knowledge ought not only to excite us to the worship of God, but likewise to awaken and arouse us to the hope of a future life. For when we consider, that the specimens given by the Lord, both of his clemency and of his severity, are only begun, and not completed, we certainly should esteem these as preludes to greater things, of which the manifestation and full exhibition are deferred to another life. When we see that pious men are loaded with afflictions by the impious, harassed with injuries, oppressed with calumnies, and vexed with contumelious and opprobrious treatment; that the wicked, on the contrary, flourish, prosper, obtain ease and dignity, and all with impunity, – we should immediately conclude, that there is another life, to which is reserved the vengeance due to iniquity, and the reward of righteousness. Moreover, when we observe the faithful frequently chastised by the Lord's rod, we may conclude, with great certainty, that the impious shall not always escape his vengeance. For that is a wise observation of Augustine – “If open punishment were now inflicted for every sin, it would be supposed that nothing would be reserved till the last judgment.

⁹⁷ Aug. in Psal. cxliv.

Again, if God now did not openly punish any sin, it would be presumed that there was no divine providence.”⁹⁸ It must therefore be confessed, that in each of the works of God, but more especially in the whole considered together, there is a bright exhibition of the divine perfections; by which the whole human race is invited and allured to the knowledge of God, and thence to true and complete felicity. But, though those perfections are most luminously portrayed around us, we only discover their principal tendency, their use, and the end of our contemplation of them, when we descend into our own selves, and consider by what means God displays in us his life, wisdom, and power, and exercises towards us his righteousness, goodness, and mercy. For, though David justly complains that unbelievers are fools, because they consider not the profound designs of God in the government of mankind,⁹⁹ yet there is much truth in what he says in another place – that the wonders of Divine Wisdom in this respect exceed in number the hairs of our head.¹⁰⁰ But as this argument must be treated more at large in due course, I at present omit it.

XI. But, notwithstanding the clear representations given by God in the mirror of his works, both of himself and of his everlasting dominion, such is our stupidity, that, always inattentive to these obvious testimonies, we derive no advantage from them. For, with regard to the structure and very beautiful

⁹⁸ De Civit. Dei. lib. 1, cap. 8.

⁹⁹ Psalm xcii. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Psalm xl. 12.

organization of the world, how few of us are there, who, when lifting up their eyes to heaven, or looking round on the various regions of the earth, direct their minds to the remembrance of the Creator, and do not rather content themselves with a view of his works, to the total neglect of their Author! And with respect to those things that daily happen out of the ordinary course of nature, is it not the general opinion, that men are rolled and whirled about by the blind temerity of fortune, rather than governed by the providence of God? Or if, by the guidance and direction of these things, we are ever driven (as all men must sometimes be) to the consideration of a God, yet, when we have rashly conceived an idea of some deity, we soon slide into our own carnal dreams, or depraved inventions, corrupting by our vanity the purity of divine truth. We differ from one another, in that each individual imbibes some peculiarity of error; but we perfectly agree in a universal departure from the one true God, to preposterous trifles. This disease affects, not only the vulgar and ignorant, but the most eminent, and those who, in other things, discover peculiar sagacity. How abundantly have all the philosophers, in this respect, betrayed their stupidity and folly! For, to spare others, chargeable with greater absurdities, Plato himself, the most religious and judicious of them all, loses himself in his round globe.¹⁰¹ And what would not befall others, when their principal men, whose place it was to enlighten the rest, stumble upon such gross errors! So also, while the government

¹⁰¹ Plut. de Philosoph. placitis, lib. 1. Plato in Timæo. Cic. lib. 1, de Natur. Deor.

of human actions proves a providence too plainly to admit of a denial, men derive no more advantage from it, than if they believed all things to be agitated forwards and backwards by the uncertain caprice of fortune; so great is our propensity to vanity and error! I speak exclusively of the excellent of mankind, not of the vulgar, whose madness in the profanation of divine truth has known no bounds.

XII. Hence that immense flood of errors, which has deluged the whole world. For every man's understanding is like a labyrinth to him; so that it is not to be wondered at, that the different nations were drawn aside into various inventions, and even that almost every individual had his own particular deity. For, amidst the union of temerity and wantonness with ignorance and darkness, scarcely a man could be found who did not frame to himself some idol or phantasm instead of God. Indeed, the immense multitude of gods proceeding from the mind of man, resembles the ebullition of waters from a vast and ample spring, while every one, with an extreme licentiousness of error, invents one thing or another concerning God himself. It is not necessary here to compose a catalogue of the superstitions which have perplexed the world; for it would be an endless task; and, without a word more being said, the horrible blindness of the human mind sufficiently appears from such a multiplicity of corruptions. I pass over the rude and unlearned vulgar. But among the philosophers,¹⁰² who attempted with reason and learning to

¹⁰² Lactant. Institut. div.

penetrate heaven, how shameful is the diversity! In proportion to the vigour of his natural genius, and the polish acquired by art and science, each of them seemed to give the more specious colouring to his own opinion; but, on a close inspection, you will find them all fading colours. The Stoics said, in their own opinion very shrewdly, that from all the parts of nature may be collected various names of God, but yet that the one God is not therefore divided;¹⁰³ as if we were not already too much inclined to vanity, without being further and more violently seduced into error, by the notion of such a various abundance of gods. The mystical theology of the Egyptians also shows that they all sedulously endeavoured to preserve the appearance of reason in the midst of their folly.¹⁰⁴ And any thing apparently probable might at first sight, perhaps, deceive the simple and incautious; but there never was any human invention by which religion was not basely corrupted. And this confused diversity imboldened the Epicureans, and other gross despisers of piety, to reject all idea of God. For, seeing the wisest of men contending with each other for contrary opinions, they hesitated not, from their dissensions, and from the frivolous and absurd doctrines maintained by the different parties, to infer, that it was vain and foolish for men to torment themselves with investigations concerning God, who does not exist. And this they thought they might do with impunity, supposing that a compendious denial

¹⁰³ Seneca, lib. 4, de benef., &c.

¹⁰⁴ Plutarch. lib. 1, de Isid. & Osirid. Cic. lib. 1, de Nat. Deor.

of any God at all would be better than feigning uncertain gods, and thereby occasioning endless controversies. They reason very ignorantly, or rather endeavour to conceal their own impiety behind the ignorance of men, which not at all justifies any encroachment on God. But from the general confession, that there is no subject productive of so many dissensions among the learned as well as the unlearned, it is inferred, that the minds of men, which err so much in investigations concerning God, are extremely blind and stupid in celestial mysteries. Others commend the answer of Simonides,¹⁰⁵ who, being asked by Hiero the Tyrant what God was, requested a day to consider it. When the tyrant, the next day, repeated the inquiry, he begged to be allowed two days longer; and, having often doubled the number of days, at length answered, "The longer I consider the subject, the more obscure it appears to me." He prudently suspended his opinion on a subject so obscure to him; yet this shows that men, who are taught only by nature, have no certain, sound, or distinct knowledge, but are confined to confused principles; so that they worship an unknown God.

XIII. Now, it must also be maintained, that whoever adulterates the pure religion, (which must necessarily be the case of all who are influenced by their own imagination,) he is guilty of a departure from the one God. They will profess, indeed, a different intention; but what they intend, or what they persuade themselves, is of little importance; since the Holy Spirit

¹⁰⁵ Cic. lib. de Nat. Deor.

pronounces all to be apostates, who, in the darkness of their minds, substitute demons in the place of God. For this reason Paul declares the Ephesians to have been “without God”¹⁰⁶— till they had learned from the gospel the worship of the true God. Nor should this be restricted to one nation only, since, in another place, he asserts of men in general, that they “became vain in their imaginations,”¹⁰⁷ after the majesty of the Creator had been discovered to them in the structure of the world. And therefore the Scripture, to make room for the only true God, condemns, as false and lying, whatever was formerly worshipped as divine among the Gentiles,¹⁰⁸ and leaves no Deity but in Mount Sion, where flourished the peculiar knowledge of God. Indeed, among the Gentiles, the Samaritans, in the days of Christ, seemed to approach very nearly to true piety; yet we hear, from the mouth of Christ, that they “worshipped they knew not what;”¹⁰⁹ whence it follows, that they were under a vain and erroneous delusion. In fine, though they were not all the subjects of gross vices, or open idolaters, there was no pure and approved religion, their notions being founded only in common sense. For, though there were a few uninfected with the madness of the vulgar, this assertion of Paul remains unshaken, that “none of the princes of this

¹⁰⁶ Ephes. ii. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Rom. i. 21.

¹⁰⁸ Hab. ii. 18, 20.

¹⁰⁹ John iv. 22.

world knew the wisdom of God.”¹¹⁰ But if the most exalted have been involved in the darkness of error, what must be said of the dregs of the people! Wherefore it is not surprising if the Holy Spirit reject, as spurious, every form of worship which is of human contrivance; because, in the mysteries of heaven, an opinion acquired by human means, though it may not always produce an immense mass of errors, yet always produces some. And though no worse consequence follow, it is no trivial fault to worship, at an uncertainty, an unknown god; of which, however, Christ pronounces all to be guilty who have not been taught by the law what god they ought to worship. And indeed the best legislators have proceeded no further than to declare religion to be founded upon common consent. And even Socrates, in Xenophon,¹¹¹ praises the answer of Apollo, which directed that every man should worship the gods according to the rites of his country, and the custom of his own city. But whence had mortals this right of determining, by their own authority, what far exceeds all the world? or who could so acquiesce in the decrees of the rulers or the ordinances of the people, as without hesitation to receive a god delivered to him by the authority of man? Every man will rather abide by his own judgment, than be subject to the will of another. Since, then, the following of the custom of a city, or the consent of antiquity, in divine worship, is too weak and frail a bond of piety, it remains for God himself to give a

¹¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

¹¹¹ Xenophon. de Dict. et Fact. Socrat. lib. 1. Cic. de Legib. lib. 2.

revelation concerning himself from heaven.

XIV. Vain, therefore, is the light afforded us in the formation of the world to illustrate the glory of its Author; which, though its rays be diffused all around us, is insufficient to conduct us into the right way. Some sparks, indeed, are kindled, but smothered before they have emitted any great degree of light. Wherefore the Apostle, in the place before cited, says, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God;”¹¹² thus intimating, that the invisible Deity was represented by such visible objects, yet that we have no eyes to discern him, unless they be illuminated through faith by an internal revelation of God. Nor does Paul, where he observes, that “that which may be known of God is manifest”¹¹³ in the creation of the world, design such a manifestation as human sagacity may comprehend; but rather shows, that its utmost extent is to render men inexcusable. The same writer also, though in one place¹¹⁴ he denies that God is to be traced far off, seeing he dwells within us, yet teaches, in another place,¹¹⁵ the consequences of such a proximity. God, says he, “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and

¹¹² Heb. xi. 3.

¹¹³ Rom. i. 19.

¹¹⁴ Rom. i. 20.

¹¹⁵ Acts xviii. 27.

fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”¹¹⁶ Though the Lord, then, is not destitute of a testimony concerning himself, while with various and most abundant benignity he sweetly allures mankind to a knowledge of him, yet they persist in following their own ways, their pernicious and fatal errors.

XV. But whatever deficiency of natural ability prevents us from attaining the pure and clear knowledge of God, yet, since that deficiency arises from our own fault, we are left without any excuse. Nor indeed can we set up any pretence of ignorance, that will prevent our own consciences from perpetually accusing us of indolence and ingratitude. Truly it would be a defence worthy to be admitted, if a man should plead that he wanted ears to hear the truth, for the publication of which even the mute creatures are supplied with most melodious voices; if he should allege that his eyes are not capable of seeing what is demonstrated by the creatures without the help of the eyes; if he should plead mental imbecility, while all the irrational creatures instruct us. Wherefore we are justly excluded from all excuse for our uncertain and extravagant deviations, since all things conspire to show us the right way. But, however men are chargeable with sinfully corrupting the seeds of divine knowledge, which, by the wonderful operation of nature, are sown in their hearts, so that they produce no good and fair crop, yet it is beyond a doubt, that the simple testimony magnificently borne by the creatures to the glory of God, is very insufficient for our instruction. For as soon

¹¹⁶ Acts xiv. 16, 17.

as a survey of the world has just shown us a deity, neglecting the true God, we set up in his stead the dreams and phantasms of our own brains; and confer on them the praise of righteousness, wisdom, goodness, and power, due to him. We either obscure his daily acts, or pervert them by an erroneous estimate; thereby depriving the acts themselves of their glory, and their Author of his deserved praise.

Chapter VI. The Guidance And Teaching Of The Scripture Necessary To Lead To The Knowledge Of God The Creator

Though the light which presents itself to all eyes, both in heaven and in earth, is more than sufficient to deprive the ingratitude of men of every excuse, since God, in order to involve all mankind in the same guilt, sets before them all, without exception, an exhibition of his majesty, delineated in the creatures, – yet we need another and better assistance, properly to direct us to the Creator of the world. Therefore he hath not unnecessarily added the light of his word, to make himself known unto salvation, and hath honoured with this privilege those whom he intended to unite in a more close and familiar connection with himself. For, seeing the minds of all men to be agitated with unstable dispositions, when he had chosen the Jews as his peculiar flock, he enclosed them as in a fold, that they might not wander after the vanities of other nations. And it is not without cause that he preserves us in the pure knowledge of himself by the same means; for, otherwise, they who seem comparatively to stand firm, would soon fall. For, as persons who are old, or whose eyes are by any means become dim, if you show them the most beautiful book, though they perceive something written, but can scarcely read two words together, yet,

by the assistance of spectacles, will begin to read distinctly, – so the Scripture, collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of Deity, dispels the darkness, and gives us a clear view of the true God. This, then, is a singular favour, that, in the instruction of the Church, God not only uses mute teachers, but even opens his own sacred mouth; not only proclaims that some god ought to be worshipped, but at the same time pronounces himself to be the Being to whom this worship is due; and not only teaches the elect to raise their view to a Deity, but also exhibits himself as the object of their contemplation. This method he hath observed toward his Church from the beginning; beside those common lessons of instruction, to afford them also his word; which furnishes a more correct and certain criterion to distinguish him from all fictitious deities. And it was undoubtedly by this assistance that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the rest of the patriarchs, attained to that familiar knowledge which distinguished them from unbelievers. I speak not yet of the peculiar doctrine of faith which illuminated them into the hope of eternal life. For, to pass from death to life, they must have known God, not only as the Creator, but also as the Redeemer; as they certainly obtained both from his word. For that species of knowledge, which related to him as the Creator and Governor of the world, in order, preceded the other. To this was afterwards added the other internal knowledge, which alone vivifies dead souls, and apprehends God, not only as the Creator of the world, and as the sole Author and Arbiter of all events, but also as the

Redeemer in the person of the Mediator. But, being not yet come to the fall of man and the corruption of nature, I also forbear to treat of the remedy. Let the reader remember, therefore, that I am not yet treating of that covenant by which God adopted the children of Abraham, and of that point of doctrine by which believers have always been particularly separated from the profane nations, since that is founded on Christ; but am only showing how we ought to learn from the Scripture, that God, who created the world, may be certainly distinguished from the whole multitude of fictitious deities. The series of subjects will, in due time, lead us to redemption. But, though we shall adduce many testimonies from the New Testament, and some also from the Law and the Prophets, in which Christ is expressly mentioned, yet they will all tend to prove, that the Scripture discovers God to us as the Creator of the world, and declares what sentiments we should form of him, that we may not be seeking after a deity in a labyrinth of uncertainty.

II. But, whether God revealed himself to the patriarchs by oracles and visions, or suggested, by means of the ministry of men, what should be handed down by tradition to their posterity, it is beyond a doubt that their minds were impressed with a firm assurance of the doctrine, so that they were persuaded and convinced that the information they had received came from God. For God always secured to his word an undoubted credit, superior to all human opinion. At length, that the truth might remain in the world in a continual course of instruction to all

ages, he determined that the same oracles which he had deposited with the patriarchs should be committed to public records. With this design the Law was promulgated, to which the Prophets were afterwards annexed, as its interpreters. – For, though the uses of the law were many, as will be better seen in the proper place, and particularly the intention of Moses, and of all the prophets, was to teach the mode of reconciliation between God and man, (whence also Paul calls Christ “the end of the law,”)¹¹⁷ – yet I repeat again, that, beside the peculiar doctrine of faith and repentance, which proposes Christ as the Mediator, the Scripture distinguishes the only true God by certain characters and titles, as the Creator and Governor of the world, that he may not be confounded with the multitude of false gods. Therefore, though every man should seriously apply himself to a consideration of the works of God, being placed in this very splendid theatre to be a spectator of them, yet he ought principally to attend to the word, that he may attain superior advantages. And, therefore, it is not surprising, that they who are born in darkness grow more and more hardened in their stupidity; since very few attend to the word of God with teachable dispositions, to restrain themselves within the limits which it prescribes, but rather exult in their own vanity. This, then, must be considered as a fixed principle, that, in order to enjoy the light of true religion, we ought to begin with the doctrine of heaven; and that no man can have the least knowledge of true and sound doctrine, without having been a

¹¹⁷ Rom. x. 4.

disciple of the Scripture. Hence originates all true wisdom, when we embrace with reverence the testimony which God hath been pleased therein to deliver concerning himself. For obedience is the source, not only of an absolutely perfect and complete faith, but of all right knowledge of God. And truly in this instance God hath, in his providence, particularly consulted the true interests of mankind in all ages.

III. For, if we consider the mutability of the human mind, – how easy its lapse into forgetfulness of God; how great its propensity to errors of every kind; how violent its rage for the perpetual fabrication of new and false religions, – it will be easy to perceive the necessity of the heavenly doctrine being thus committed to writing, that it might not be lost in oblivion, or evaporate in error, or be corrupted by the presumption of men. Since it is evident, therefore, that God, foreseeing the inefficacy of his manifestation of himself in the exquisite structure of the world, hath afforded the assistance of his word to all those to whom he determined to make his instructions effectual, – if we seriously aspire to a sincere contemplation of God, it is necessary for us to pursue this right way. We must come, I say, to the word, which contains a just and lively description of God as he appears in his works, when those works are estimated, not according to our depraved judgment, but by the rule of eternal truth. If we deviate from it, as I have just observed, though we run with the utmost celerity, yet, being out of the course, we shall never reach the goal. For it must be concluded, that the

light of the Divine countenance, which even the Apostle says “no man can approach unto,”¹¹⁸ is like an inexplicable labyrinth to us, unless we are directed by the line of the word; so that it were better to halt in this way, than to run with the greatest rapidity out of it. Therefore David, inculcating the necessity of the removal of superstitions out of the world, that pure religion may flourish, frequently introduces God as “reigning;”¹¹⁹ by the word “reigning,” intending, not the power which he possesses, and which he exercises in the universal government of nature, but the doctrine in which he asserts his legitimate sovereignty; because errors can never be eradicated from the human heart, till the true knowledge of God is implanted in it.

IV. Therefore the same Psalmist, having said, that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge,”¹²⁰ afterwards proceeds to the mention of the word: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” For, though he also comprehends other uses of the law, yet he suggests, in general, that, since God's invitation of all nations to him by the view of heaven and earth is ineffectual, this is the

¹¹⁸ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

¹¹⁹ Ps. xciii. xcvi., &c.

¹²⁰ Ps. xix. 1, &c.

peculiar school of the children of God. The same is adverted to in the twenty-ninth Psalm, where the Psalmist, having preached the terrors of the Divine voice, which in thunders, in winds, in showers, in whirlwinds, and in tempests, shakes the earth, makes the mountains tremble, and breaks the cedars, adds, at length, towards the close, “in his temple doth every one speak of his glory;” because unbelievers are deaf to all the voices of God, which resound in the air. So, in another Psalm, after describing the terrible waves of the sea, he concludes thus: “Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.”¹²¹ Hence also proceeds the observation of Christ to the Samaritan woman, that her nation and all others worshipped they knew not what; and that the Jews were the only worshippers of the true God.¹²² For, since the human mind is unable, through its imbecility, to attain any knowledge of God without the assistance of his sacred word, all mankind, except the Jews, as they sought God without the word, must necessarily have been wandering in vanity and error.

¹²¹ Ps. xciii. 5.

¹²² John iv. 22.

Chapter VII. The Testimony Of The Spirit Necessary To Confirm The Scripture, In Order To The Complete Establishment Of Its Authority. The Suspension Of Its Authority On The Judgment Of The Church, An Impious Fiction

Before I proceed any further, it is proper to introduce some remarks on the authority of the Scripture, not only to prepare the mind to regard it with due reverence, but also to remove every doubt. For, when it is admitted to be a declaration of the word of God, no man can be so deplorably presumptuous, unless he be also destitute of common sense and of the common feelings of men, as to dare to derogate from the credit due to the speaker. But since we are not favoured with daily oracles from heaven, and since it is only in the Scriptures that the Lord hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God himself. The subject, indeed, merits a diffuse discussion, and a most accurate examination. But the reader will pardon me, if I attend rather to what the design of

this work admits, than to what the extensive nature of the present subject requires. But there has very generally prevailed a most pernicious error, that the Scriptures have only so much weight as is conceded to them by the suffrages of the Church; as though the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended on the arbitrary will of men. For thus, with great contempt of the Holy Spirit, they inquire, Who can assure us that God is the author of them? Who can with certainty affirm, that they have been preserved safe and uncorrupted to the present age? Who can persuade us that this book ought to be received with reverence, and that expunged from the sacred number, unless all these things were regulated by the decisions of the Church? It depends, therefore, (say they,) on the determination of the Church, to decide both what reverence is due to the Scripture, and what books are to be comprised in its canon. Thus sacrilegious men, while they wish to introduce an unlimited tyranny, under the name of the Church, are totally unconcerned with what absurdities they embarrass themselves and others, provided they can extort from the ignorant this one admission, that the Church can do every thing. But, if this be true, what will be the condition of those wretched consciences, which are seeking a solid assurance of eternal life, if all the promises extant concerning it rest only on the judgment of men? Will the reception of such an answer cause their fluctuations to subside, and their terrors to vanish? Again, how will the impious ridicule our faith, and all men call it in question, if it be understood to possess only a precarious authority depending on

the favour of men!

II. But such cavillers are completely refuted even by one word of the Apostle. He testifies that the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."¹²³ If the doctrine of the prophets and apostles be the foundation of the Church, it must have been certain, antecedently to the existence of the Church. Nor is there any foundation for this cavil, that though the Church derive its origin from the Scriptures, yet it remains doubtful what writings are to be ascribed to the prophets and apostles, unless it be determined by the Church. For if the Christian Church has been from the beginning founded on the writings of the prophets and the preaching of the apostles, wherever that doctrine is found, the approbation of it has certainly preceded the formation of the Church; since without it the Church itself had never existed. It is a very false notion, therefore, that the power of judging of the Scripture belongs to the Church, so as to make the certainty of it dependent on the Church's will. Wherefore, when the Church receives it, and seals it with her suffrage, she does not authenticate a thing otherwise dubious or controvertible; but, knowing it to be the truth of her God, performs a duty of piety, by treating it with immediate veneration. But, with regard to the question, How shall we be persuaded of its divine original, unless we have recourse to the decree of the Church? this is just as if any one should inquire, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? For the Scripture

¹²³ Eph. ii. 20.

exhibits as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black things do of their colour, or sweet and bitter things of their taste.

III. I know, indeed, that they commonly cite the opinion of Augustine, where he says, “that he would not believe the Gospel unless he were influenced by the authority of the Church.”¹²⁴ But how falsely and unfairly this is cited in support of such a notion, it is easy to discover from the context. He was in that contending with the Manichees, who wished to be credited, without any controversy, when they affirmed the truth to be on their side, but never proved it. Now, as they made the authority of the Gospel a pretext in order to establish the credit of their Manichæus, he inquires what they would do if they met with a man who did not believe the Gospel; with what kind of persuasion they would convert him to their opinion. He afterwards adds, “Indeed, I would not give credit to the Gospel,” &c., intending, that he himself, when an alien from the faith, could not be prevailed on to embrace the Gospel as the certain truth of God, till he was convinced by the authority of the Church. And is it surprising that any one, yet destitute of the knowledge of Christ, should pay a respect to men? Augustine, therefore, does not there maintain that the faith of the pious is founded on the authority of the Church, nor does he mean that the certainty of the Gospel depends on it; but simply, that unbelievers would have no assurance of the truth of the Gospel, that would win them to Christ, unless they were influenced by the consent of the Church.

¹²⁴ Contr. Epist. Fundam. cap. 5.

And a little before, he clearly confirms it in these words: “When I shall have commended my own creed, and derided yours, what judgment, think you, ought we to form, what conduct ought we to pursue, but to forsake those who invite us to acknowledge things that are certain, and afterwards command us to believe things that are uncertain; and to follow those who invite us first to believe what we cannot yet clearly see, that, being strengthened by faith, we may acquire an understanding of what we believe; our mind being now internally strengthened and illuminated, not by men, but by God himself?” These are the express words of Augustine; whence the inference is obvious to every one, that this holy man did not design to suspend our faith in the Scriptures on the arbitrary decision of the Church, but only to show (what we all confess to be true) that they who are yet unilluminated by the Spirit of God, are, by a reverence for the Church, brought to such a docility as to submit to learn the faith of Christ from the Gospel; and that thus the authority of the Church is an introduction to prepare us for the faith of the Gospel. For we see that he will have the certainty of the pious to rest on a very different foundation. Otherwise I do not deny his frequently urging on the Manichees the universal consent of the Church, with a view to prove the truth of the Scripture, which they rejected. Whence his rebuke of Faustus, “for not submitting to the truth of the Gospel, so founded, so established, so gloriously celebrated, and delivered through certain successions from the apostolic age.” But he nowhere insinuates that the authority which we attribute

to the Scripture depends on the definitions or decrees of men: he only produces the universal judgment of the Church, which was very useful to his argument, and gave him an advantage over his adversaries. If any one desire a fuller proof of this, let him read his treatise “Of the Advantage of Believing;” where he will find, that he recommends no other facility of believing, than such as may afford us an introduction, and be a proper beginning of inquiry, as he expresses himself; yet that we should not be satisfied with mere opinion, but rest upon certain and solid truth.

IV. It must be maintained, as I have before asserted, that we are not established in the belief of the doctrine till we are indubitably persuaded that God is its Author. The principal proof, therefore, of the Scriptures is every where derived from the character of the Divine Speaker. The prophets and apostles boast not of their own genius, or any of those talents which conciliate the faith of the hearers; nor do they insist on arguments from reason; but bring forward the sacred name of God, to compel the submission of the whole world. We must now see how it appears, not from probable supposition, but from clear demonstration, that this use of the divine name is neither rash nor fallacious. Now, if we wish to consult the true interest of our consciences; that they may not be unstable and wavering, the subjects of perpetual doubt; that they may not hesitate at the smallest scruples, – this persuasion must be sought from a higher source than human reasons, or judgments, or conjectures – even from the secret testimony of the Spirit. It is true that,

if we were inclined to argue the point, many things might be adduced which certainly evince, if there be any God in heaven, that he is the Author of the Law, and the Prophecies, and the Gospel. Even though men of learning and deep judgment rise up in opposition, and exert and display all the powers of their minds in this dispute, yet, unless they are wholly lost to all sense of shame, this confession will be extorted from them, that the Scripture exhibits the plainest evidences that it is God who speaks in it, which manifests its doctrine to be divine. And we shall soon see, that all the books of the sacred Scripture very far excel all other writings. If we read it with pure eyes and sound minds, we shall immediately perceive the majesty of God, which will subdue our audacious contradictions, and compel us to obey him. Yet it is acting a preposterous part, to endeavour to produce sound faith in the Scripture by disputations. Though, indeed, I am far from excelling in peculiar dexterity or eloquence, yet, if I were to contend with the most subtle despisers of God, who are ambitious to display their wit and their skill in weakening the authority of Scripture, I trust I should be able, without difficulty, to silence their obstreperous clamour. And, if it were of any use to attempt a refutation of their cavils, I would easily demolish the boasts which they mutter in secret corners. But though any one vindicates the sacred word of God from the aspersions of men, yet this will not fix in their hearts that assurance which is essential to true piety. Religion appearing, to profane men, to consist wholly in opinion, in order that they may not believe any

thing on foolish or slight grounds, they wish and expect it to be proved by rational arguments, that Moses and the prophets spake by divine inspiration. But I reply, that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to all reason. For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit. It is necessary, therefore, that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets, should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them. And this connection is very suitably expressed in these words: “My Spirit that is upon thee, and my word which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, for ever.”¹²⁵ Some good men are troubled that they are not always prepared with clear proof to oppose the impious, when they murmur with impunity against the divine word; as though the Spirit were not therefore denominated a “seal,” and “an earnest,” for the confirmation of the faith of the pious; because, till he illuminate their minds, they are perpetually fluctuating amidst a multitude of doubts.

V. Let it be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; but it

¹²⁵ Isaiah lix. 21.

obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it conciliate our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgment, but submit our judgments and understandings as to a thing concerning which it is impossible for us to judge; and that not like some persons, who are in the habit of hastily embracing what they do not understand, which displeases them as soon as they examine it, but because we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth; nor like those unhappy men who surrender their minds captives to superstitions, but because we perceive in it the undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge. With the greatest justice, therefore, God exclaims by Isaiah,¹²⁶ that the prophets and all the people were his witnesses; because, being taught by prophecies, they were certain that God had spoken without the least fallacy or ambiguity. It is such a persuasion, therefore, as

¹²⁶ Isaiah xliii. 10.

requires no reasons; such a knowledge as is supported by the highest reason, in which, indeed, the mind rests with greater security and constancy than in any reasons; it is, finally, such a sentiment as cannot be produced but by a revelation from heaven. I speak of nothing but what every believer experiences in his heart, except that my language falls far short of a just explication of the subject. I pass over many things at present, because this subject will present itself for discussion again in another place. Only let it be known here, that that alone is true faith which the Spirit of God seals in our hearts. And with this one reason every reader of modesty and docility will be satisfied: Isaiah predicts that “all the children” of the renovated Church “shall be taught of God.”¹²⁷ Herein God deigns to confer a singular privilege on his elect, whom he distinguishes from the rest of mankind. For what is the beginning of true learning but a prompt alacrity to hear the voice of God? By the mouth of Moses he demands our attention in these terms: “Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The word is even in thy mouth.”¹²⁸ If God hath determined that this treasury of wisdom shall be reserved for his children, it is neither surprising nor absurd, that we see so much ignorance and stupidity among the vulgar herd of mankind. By this appellation I designate even those of the greatest talents and highest rank, till they are incorporated into the Church. Moreover, Isaiah, observing that

¹²⁷ Isaiah liv. 13.

¹²⁸ Deut. xxx. Rom. x.

the prophetic doctrine would be incredible, not only to aliens, but also to the Jews, who wished to be esteemed members of the family, adds, at the same time, the reason – Because the arm of the Lord will not be revealed to all.¹²⁹ Whenever, therefore, we are disturbed at the paucity of believers, let us, on the other hand, remember that none, but those to whom it was given, have any apprehension of the mysteries of God.

¹²⁹ Isaiah liii. 1.

Chapter VIII. Rational Proofs To Establish The Belief Of The Scripture

Without this certainty, better and stronger than any human judgment, in vain will the authority of the Scripture be either defended by arguments, or established by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other supports; since, unless the foundation be laid, it remains in perpetual suspense. Whilst, on the contrary, when, regarding it in a different point of view from common things, we have once religiously received it in a manner worthy of its excellence, we shall then derive great assistance from things which before were not sufficient to establish the certainty of it in our minds. For it is admirable to observe how much it conduces to our confirmation, attentively to study the order and disposition of the Divine Wisdom dispensed in it, the heavenly nature of its doctrine, which never savours of any thing terrestrial, the beautiful agreement of all the parts with each other, and other similar characters adapted to conciliate respect to any writings. But our hearts are more strongly confirmed, when we reflect that we are constrained to admire it more by the dignity of the subjects than by the beauties of the language. For even this did not happen without the particular providence of God, that the sublime mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should be communicated, for the most part, in a humble and contemptible style; lest, if they had been illustrated with more

of the splendour of eloquence, the impious might cavil that their triumph is only the triumph of eloquence. Now, since that uncultivated and almost rude simplicity procures itself more reverence than all the graces of rhetoric, what opinion can we form, but that the force of truth in the sacred Scripture is too powerful to need the assistance of verbal art? Justly, therefore, does the apostle argue that the faith of the Corinthians was founded, “not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,” because his preaching among them was, “not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”¹³⁰ For the truth is vindicated from every doubt, when, unassisted by foreign aid, it is sufficient for its own support. But that this is the peculiar property of the Scripture, appears from the insufficiency of any human compositions, however artificially polished, to make an equal impression on our minds. Read Demosthenes or Cicero; read Plato, Aristotle, or any others of that class; I grant that you will be attracted, delighted, moved, and enraptured by them in a surprising manner; but if, after reading them, you turn to the perusal of the sacred volume, whether you are willing or unwilling, it will affect you so powerfully, it will so penetrate your heart, and impress itself so strongly on your mind, that, compared with its energetic influence, the beauties of rhetoricians and philosophers will almost entirely disappear; so that it is easy to perceive something divine in the sacred Scriptures, which far surpasses the highest

¹³⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

attainments and ornaments of human industry.

II. I grant, indeed, that the diction of some of the prophets is neat and elegant, and even splendid; so that they are not inferior in eloquence to the heathen writers. And by such examples the Holy Spirit hath been pleased to show, that he was not deficient in eloquence, though elsewhere he hath used a rude and homely style. But whether we read David, Isaiah, and others that resemble them, who have a sweet and pleasant flow of words, or Amos the herdsman, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, whose rougher language savours of rusticity, – that majesty of the Spirit, which I have mentioned, is every where conspicuous. I am not ignorant that Satan in many things imitates God, in order that, by the fallacious resemblance, he may more easily insinuate himself into the minds of the simple; and has therefore craftily disseminated, in unpolished and even barbarous language, the most impious errors, by which multitudes have been miserably deceived, and has often used obsolete forms of speech as a mask to conceal his impostures. But the vanity and fraud of such affectation are visible to all men of moderate understanding. With respect to the sacred Scripture, though presumptuous men try to cavil at various passages, yet it is evidently replete with sentences which are beyond the powers of human conception. Let all the prophets be examined; not one will be found, who has not far surpassed the ability of men; so that those to whom their doctrine is insipid must be accounted utterly destitute of all true taste.

III. This argument has been copiously treated by other writers; wherefore it may suffice at present merely to hint at a few things which chiefly relate to the subject in a general view. Beside what I have already treated on, the antiquity of the Scripture is of no small weight. For, notwithstanding the fabulous accounts of the Greek writers concerning the Egyptian theology, yet there remains no monument of any religion, but what is much lower than the age of Moses. Nor does Moses invent a new deity; he only makes a declaration of what the Israelites had, through a long series of years, received by tradition from their forefathers concerning the eternal God. For what does he aim at, but to recall them to the covenant made with Abraham? If he had advanced a thing till then unheard of, it would not have been received; but their liberation from the servitude in which they were detained must have been a thing well known to them all; so that the mention of it immediately excited universal attention. It is probable also that they had been informed of the number of four hundred years. Now, we must consider, if Moses (who himself preceded all other writers by such a long distance of time) derives the tradition of his doctrine from so remote a beginning, how much the sacred Scripture exceeds in antiquity all other books.

IV. Unless any would choose to credit the Egyptians, who extend their antiquity to six thousand years before the creation of the world. But since their garrulity has been ridiculed even by all the profane writers, I need not trouble myself with refuting it.

Josephus, in his book against Appion, cites from the most ancient writers testimonies worthy of being remembered; whence we may gather, that the doctrine contained in the law has, according to the consent of all nations, been renowned from the remotest ages, although it was neither read nor truly understood. Now, that the malicious might have no room for suspicion, nor even the wicked any pretence for cavilling, God hath provided the most excellent remedies for both these dangers. When Moses relates what Jacob had, almost three hundred years before, by the spirit of inspiration pronounced concerning his posterity, how does he disgrace his own tribe! He even brands it, in the person of Levi, with perpetual infamy. “Simeon,” says he, “and Levi, instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.”¹³¹ He certainly might have been silent on that disgraceful circumstance, not only to spare his father, but also to avoid aspersing himself, as well as all his family, with part of the same ignominy. How can any suspicion be entertained of him, who, voluntarily publishing, from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the first of the family from which he was descended was guilty of detestable conduct, neither consults his own personal honours, nor refuses to incur the resentment of his relations, to whom this must undoubtedly have given offence? When he mentions also the impious murmurings of Aaron, his brother,

¹³¹ Gen. xlix. 5.

and Miriam, his sister,¹³² shall we say that he spake according to the dictates of the flesh, or obeyed the command of the Holy Spirit? Besides, as he enjoyed the supreme authority, why did he not leave to his own sons, at least, the office of the high-priesthood, but place them in the lowest station? I only hint at a few things out of many. But in the law itself many arguments will every where occur, which challenge a full belief, that, without controversy, the legation of Moses was truly divine.

V. Moreover, the miracles which he relates, and which are so numerous and remarkable, are so many confirmations of the law which he delivered, and of the doctrine which he published. For that he was carried up into the mountain in a cloud; that he continued there forty days, deprived of all human intercourse; that, in the act of proclaiming the law, his face shone as with the rays of the sun; that lightnings flashed all around; that thunders and various noises were heard through the whole atmosphere; that a trumpet sounded, but a trumpet not blown by human breath; that the entrance of the tabernacle was concealed from the view of the people by an intervening cloud; that his authority was so miraculously vindicated by the horrible destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all their impious faction; that a rock smitten with a rod immediately emitted a river; that manna rained from heaven at his request;¹³³— are not all these so many testimonies from heaven of his being a true prophet?

¹³² Num. xii. 1.

¹³³ Exod. xxiv. 18; xxxiv. 29; xix. 16; xl. 34. Num. xvi. 24, &c.; xx. 11; xi. 9.

If any one object that I assume, as granted, things which are the subjects of controversy, this cavil is easily answered. For, as Moses published all these things in an assembly of the people, what room was there for fiction among those who had been eye-witnesses of the events? Is it probable that he would make his appearance in public, and, accusing the people of infidelity, contumacy, ingratitude, and other crimes, boast that his doctrine had been confirmed in their sight by miracles which they had never seen?

VI. For this also is worthy of being remarked, that all his accounts of miracles are connected with such unpleasant circumstances, as were calculated to stimulate all the people, if there had been but the smallest occasion, to a public and positive contradiction; whence it appears, that they were induced to coincide with him only by the ample conviction of their own experience. But since the matter was too evident for profane writers to take the liberty of denying the performance of miracles by Moses, the father of lies has suggested the calumny of ascribing them to magical arts. But by what kind of conjecture can they pretend to charge him with having been a magician, who had so great an abhorrence of that superstition, as to command, that he who merely consulted magicians and soothsayers should be stoned?¹³⁴ Certainly no impostor practises such juggling tricks, who does not make it his study, for the sake of acquiring fame, to astonish the minds of the vulgar. But

¹³⁴ Lev. xx. 6.

what is the practice of Moses? Openly avowing that himself and his brother Aaron are nothing,¹³⁵ but that they only execute the commands of God, he sufficiently clears his character from every unfavourable aspersion. Now, if the events themselves be considered, what incantation could cause manna to rain daily from heaven sufficient to support the people, and, if any one laid up more than the proper quantity, cause it to putrefy, as a punishment from God for his unbelief? Add also the many serious examinations which God permitted his servant to undergo, so that the clamour of the wicked can now be of no avail. For as often as this holy servant of God was in danger of being destroyed, at one time by proud and petulant insurrections of all the people, at another by the secret conspiracies of a few, – how was it possible for him to elude their inveterate rage by any arts of deception? And the event evidently proves, that by these circumstances his doctrine was confirmed to all succeeding ages.

VII. Moreover, who can deny that his assigning, in the person of the patriarch Jacob, the supreme power to the tribe of Judah, proceeded from a spirit of prophecy,¹³⁶ especially if we consider the eventual accomplishment of this prediction? Suppose Moses to have been the first author of it; yet after he committed it to writing, there elapsed four hundred years in which we have no mention of the sceptre in the tribe of Judah. After the inauguration of Saul, the regal power seemed to be fixed in the

¹³⁵ Exod. xvi. 7.

¹³⁶ Gen. xlix. 10.

tribe of Benjamin. When Samuel anointed David, what reason appeared for transferring it? Who would have expected a king to arise out of the plebeian family of a herdsman? And of seven brothers, who would have conjectured that such an honour was destined for the youngest? And by what means did he attain a hope of the kingdom? Who can assert that this unction was directed by human art, or industry, or prudence, and was not rather a completion of the prediction of heaven? And in like manner do not his predictions, although obscure, concerning the admission of the Gentiles into the covenant of God, which were accomplished almost two thousand years after, clearly prove him to have spoken under a divine inspiration? I omit other predictions, which so strongly savour of a divine inspiration, that all who have the use of their reason must perceive that it is God who speaks. In short, one song of his is a clear mirror in which God evidently appears.¹³⁷

VIII. But in the other prophets this is yet far more conspicuous. I shall only select a few examples; for to collect all would be too laborious. When, in the time of Isaiah, the kingdom of Judah was in peace, and even when they thought themselves safe in the alliance of the Chaldeans, Isaiah publicly spake of the destruction of the city and the banishment of the people.¹³⁸ Now, even if to predict long before things which then seemed false, but have since appeared to be true, were not a

¹³⁷ Deut. xxxii.

¹³⁸ Isaiah xxxix. 6.

sufficiently clear proof of a divine inspiration, to whom but God shall we ascribe the prophecies which he uttered concerning their deliverance? He mentions the name of Cyrus, by whom the Chaldeans were to be subdued, and the people restored to liberty.¹³⁹ More than a century elapsed after this prophecy before the birth of Cyrus; for he was not born till about the hundredth year after the prophet's death. No man could then divine, that there would be one Cyrus, who would engage in a war with the Babylonians, who would subjugate such a powerful monarchy, and release the people of Israel from exile. Does not this bare narration, without any ornaments of diction, plainly demonstrate that Isaiah delivered the undoubted oracles of God, and not the conjectures of men? Again, when Jeremiah, just before the people were carried away, limited the duration of their captivity to seventy years, and predicted their liberation and return, must not his tongue have been under the direction of the Spirit of God?¹⁴⁰ What impudence must it be to deny that the authority of the prophets has been confirmed by such proofs, or that what they themselves assert, in order to vindicate the credit due to their declarations, has been actually fulfilled! "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them."¹⁴¹ I shall not speak of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who, living in distant countries, but prophesying at

¹³⁹ Isaiah xlv. 1.

¹⁴⁰ Jer. xxv. 11, 12.

¹⁴¹ Isaiah xlii. 9.

the same time, so exactly accord in their declarations, as though they had mutually dictated the words to each other. What shall we say of Daniel? Has not he prophesied of the events of nearly six hundred years in such a connected series, as if he were composing a history of transactions already past and universally known? If pious men properly consider these things, they will be sufficiently prepared to curb the petulance of the wicked; for the demonstration is too clear to be liable to any cavils.

IX. I know what is objected by some clamorous men, who would ostentatiously display the force of their understanding in opposing divine truth. For they inquire, Who has assured us that Moses and the prophets actually wrote those books which bear their names? They even dare to question whether such a man as Moses ever existed. But if any man should call in question the existence of Plato, or Aristotle, or Cicero, who would deny that such madness ought to receive corporal punishment? The law of Moses has been wonderfully preserved, rather by the providence of heaven than by the endeavours of men. And though, through the negligence of the priests, it lay for a short time concealed, since it was found by the pious king Josiah, it has continued in the hands of men through every succeeding age.¹⁴² Nor, indeed, did Josiah produce it as a thing unknown or new, but as what had always been public, and the memory of which was then famous. The protograph had been appointed to be kept in the temple,

¹⁴² 2 Kings xxii. 8.

and a transcript of it to be deposited in the royal archives;¹⁴³ only the priests had discontinued their ancient custom of publishing the law, and the people themselves had neglected their wonted reading of it: yet there scarcely passed an age in which its sanction was not confirmed and renewed. Were they, who had the writings of David, ignorant of Moses? But, to speak of all at once, it is certain, that their writings descended to posterity only from hand to hand, (so to speak,) through a long series of years transmitted from the fathers, who partly had heard them speak, and partly learned from others who heard them, while it was fresh in their memory, that they had thus spoken.

X. With regard to what they object from the history of the Maccabees, to diminish the credit of the Scripture, nothing could be conceived more adapted to establish it. But first let us divest it of their artificial colouring, and then retort upon them the weapon which they direct against us. When Antiochus, say they, commanded all the books to be burned, whence proceeded the copies which we now have? I, on the contrary, inquire, where they could so speedily be fabricated. For it is evident, that, as soon as the persecution subsided, they immediately appeared, and were, without controversy, acknowledged as the same by all pious men; who, having been educated in their doctrine, had been familiarly acquainted with them. Nay, even when all the impious, as if by a general conspiracy, so wantonly insulted the Jews, no man ever dared to charge them with forging their books. For,

¹⁴³ Deut. xvii. 18.

whatever be their opinion of the Jewish religion, yet they confess that Moses was the author of it. What, then, do these clamorous objectors, but betray their own consummate impudence, when they slander, as supposititious, books whose sacred antiquity is confirmed by the consent of all histories? But, to waste no more useless labour in refuting such stale calumnies, let us rather consider how carefully the Lord preserved his own word, when, beyond all hope, he rescued it from the fury of the most cruel of tyrants, as from a devouring fire; – that he endued the pious priests and others with so much constancy, that they hesitated not to redeem this treasure, if necessary, with their lives, to transmit it to posterity; and that he frustrated the most diligent inquisition of so many governors and soldiers. Who is there but must acknowledge it to have been an eminent and wonderful work of God, that those sacred monuments, which the impious had flattered themselves were utterly destroyed, were soon public again, as it were, fully restored to mankind, and, indeed, with far greater honour? For soon after followed the Greek Translation, which published them throughout the world. Nor was God's preserving the tables of his covenant from the sanguinary edicts of Antiochus, the only instance of his wonderful operation, but that, amidst such various miseries, with which the Jewish nation was diminished and laid waste, and at last nearly exterminated, these records still remained entire. The Hebrew language lay not only despised, but almost unknown; and surely, had not God consulted the interest of religion, it had been totally lost. For

how much the Jews, after their return from captivity, departed from the genuine use of their native language, appears from the prophets of that age; which it is therefore useful to observe, because this comparison more clearly evinces the antiquity of the law and the prophets. And by whom hath God preserved to us the doctrine of salvation contained in the law and the prophets, that Christ might be manifested in due time? By his most inveterate enemies, the Jews; whom Augustine therefore justly denominates the librarians of the Christian Church, because they have furnished us with a book of which themselves make no use.

XI. If we proceed to the New Testament, by what solid foundations is its truth supported? Three Evangelists recite their history in a low and mean style. Many proud men are disgusted with that simplicity, because they attend not to the principal points of doctrine; whence it were easy to infer, that they treat of heavenly mysteries which are above human capacity. They who have a spark of ingenuous modesty will certainly be ashamed, if they peruse the first chapter of Luke. Now, the discourses of Christ, a concise summary of which is comprised in these three Evangelists, easily exempt their writings from contempt. But John, thundering from his sublimity, more powerfully than any thunderbolt, levels to the dust the obstinacy of those whom he does not compel to the obedience of faith. Let all those censorious critics whose supreme pleasure consists in banishing all reverence for the Scripture out of their own hearts and the hearts of others, come forth to public view. Let them read the

Gospel of John: whether they wish it or not, they will there find numerous passages, which, at least, arouse their indolence; and which will even imprint a horrible brand on their consciences to restrain their ridicule. Similar is the method of Paul and of Peter, in whose writings, though the greater part be blind, yet their heavenly majesty attracts universal attention. But this one circumstance raises their doctrine sufficiently above the world, that Matthew, who had before been confined to the profit of his table, and Peter and John, who had been employed in fishing-boats, – all plain, unlettered men, – had learned nothing in any human school which they could communicate to others. And Paul, from not only a professed, but a cruel and sanguinary enemy, being converted to a new man, proves, by his sudden and unlooked for change, that he was constrained, by a command from heaven, to vindicate that doctrine which he had before opposed. Let these men deny that the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles; or, at least, let them dispute the credibility of the history; yet the fact itself loudly proclaims, that they were taught by the Spirit, who, though before despised as some of the meanest of the people, suddenly began to discourse in such a magnificent manner on the mysteries of heaven.

XII. Besides, there are also other very substantial reasons why the consent of the Church should have its weight. For it is not an unimportant consideration, that, since the publication of the Scripture, so many generations of men should have agreed in voluntarily obeying it; and that however Satan, together with the

whole world, has endeavoured by strange methods to suppress or destroy it, or utterly to erase and obliterate it from the memory of man, yet it has always, like a palm-tree, risen superior to all opposition, and remained invincible. Indeed, there has scarcely ever been a sophist or orator of more than common abilities, who has not tried his strength in opposing it; yet they have all availed nothing. All the powers of the earth have armed themselves for its destruction; but their attempts have all evaporated into smoke. How could it have so firmly resisted attacks on every quarter, if it had been supported only by human power? Indeed, an additional proof of its Divine origin arises from this very circumstance, that, notwithstanding all the strenuous resistance of men, it has, by its own power, risen superior to every danger. Moreover, not one city, or one nation, only, has conspired to receive and embrace it; but, as far as the world extends, it has obtained its authority by the holy consent of various nations, who agreed in nothing besides. And as such an agreement of minds, so widely distant in place, and so completely dissimilar in manners and opinions, ought to have great influence with us, since it is plain that it was effected only by the power of heaven, so it acquires no small weight from a consideration of the piety of those who unite in this agreement; not indeed of all, but of those, who, it hath pleased the Lord, should shine as luminaries in his Church.

XIII. Now, with what unlimited confidence should we submit to that doctrine, which we see confirmed and witnessed by the blood of so many saints! Having once received it, they hesitated

not, with intrepid boldness, and even with great alacrity, to die in its defence: transmitted to us with such a pledge, how should we not receive it with a firm and unshaken conviction? Is it therefore no small confirmation of the Scripture, that it has been sealed with the blood of so many martyrs? especially when we consider that they died to bear testimony to their faith, not through intemperate fanaticism, as is sometimes the case with men of erroneous minds, but through a firm and constant, yet sober zeal for God. There are other reasons, and those neither few nor weak, by which the native dignity and authority of the Scripture are not only maintained in the minds of the pious, but also completely vindicated against the subtleties of calumniators; but such as alone are not sufficient to produce firm faith in it, till the heavenly Father, discovering his own power therein, places its authority beyond all controversy. Wherefore the Scripture will then only be effectual to produce the saving knowledge of God, when the certainty of it shall be founded on the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Thus those human testimonies, which contribute to its confirmation, will not be useless, if they follow that first and principal proof, as secondary aids to our imbecility. But those persons betray great folly, who wish it to be demonstrated to infidels that the Scripture is the word of God, which cannot be known without faith. Augustine therefore justly observes,¹⁴⁴ that piety and peace of mind ought to precede, in order that a man may understand somewhat of such great

¹⁴⁴ Lib. de Util. Credend.

subjects.

Chapter IX. The Fanaticism Which Discards The Scripture, Under The Pretence Of Resorting To Immediate Revelations, Subversive Of Every Principle Of Piety

Persons who, abandoning the Scripture, imagine to themselves some other way of approaching to God, must be considered as not so much misled by error as actuated by frenzy. For there have lately arisen some unsteady men, who, haughtily pretending to be taught by the Spirit, reject all reading themselves, and deride the simplicity of those who still attend to (what they style) the dead and killing letter. But I would ask them, what spirit that is, by whose inspiration they are elevated to such a sublimity, as to dare to despise the doctrine of the Scripture, as puerile and mean. For, if they answer that it is the Spirit of Christ, how ridiculous is such an assurance! for that the apostles of Christ, and other believers in the primitive Church, were illuminated by no other Spirit, I think they will concede. But not one of them learned, from his teaching, to condemn the Divine word; they were rather filled with higher reverence for it, as their writings abundantly testify. This had been predicted by the mouth of Isaiah. For where he says, “My Spirit that is upon thee,

and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, for ever,”¹⁴⁵ he does not confine people under the old dispensation to the external letter, as though they were children learning to read, but declares, that it will be the true and complete felicity of the new Church, under the reign of Christ, to be governed by the word of God, as well as by his Spirit. Whence we infer, that these persons are guilty of detestable sacrilege, in disjoining these two things, which the prophet has connected in an inviolable union. Again; Paul, after he had been caught up into the third heaven, did not cease to study the doctrine of the law and the prophets; as he also exhorted Timothy, a teacher of more than common excellence, to “give attendance to reading.”¹⁴⁶ And worthy of remembrance is his eulogium on the Scripture, that it “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect.”¹⁴⁷ How diabolical, then, is that madness which pretends that the use of the Scripture is only transient and temporary, which guides the sons of God to the highest point of perfection! I would also ask them another question – whether they have imbibed a different spirit from that which the Lord promised to his disciples? Great as their infatuation is, I do not think them fanatical enough to hazard such an avowal. But what kind of Spirit did he promise? One, truly,

¹⁴⁵ Isaiah lix. 21.

¹⁴⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 13.

¹⁴⁷ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

who should “not speak of himself,”¹⁴⁸ but suggest and instil into their minds those things which he had orally delivered. The office of the Spirit, then, which is promised to us, is not to feign new and unheard of revelations, or to coin a new system of doctrine, which would seduce us from the received doctrine of the Gospel, but to seal to our minds the same doctrine which the Gospel delivers.

II. Hence we readily understand that it is incumbent on us diligently to read and attend to the Scripture, if we would receive any advantage or satisfaction from the Spirit of God; (thus also Peter¹⁴⁹ commends those who studiously attended to the doctrine of the prophets, which yet might be supposed to have retired after the light of the Gospel was risen;) but, on the contrary, that if any spirit, neglecting the wisdom of the word of God, obtrude on us another doctrine, he ought justly to be suspected of vanity and falsehood. For, as Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, what authority will the Spirit have with us, unless we can distinguish him by the most certain criterion? We find him clearly designated, indeed, in the word of the Lord; but these unhappy men are fondly bent on delusion, even to their own destruction, seeking a spirit rather from themselves than from him. But they plead, that it is unworthy of the Spirit of God, to whom all things ought to be subject, to be made subject to the Scripture; as though it were ignominious to the Holy Spirit

¹⁴⁸ John xvi. 13.

¹⁴⁹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

to be every where equal and uniform, in all things invariably consistent with himself. If he were to be conformed to the rules of men, or of angels, or of any other beings, I grant he might then be considered as degraded, or even reduced to a state of servitude; but while he is compared with himself, and considered in himself, who will assert that he is thereby injured? This is bringing him to the test of examination. I confess it is. But it is the way which he has chosen for the confirmation of his majesty among us. We ought to be satisfied, as soon as he communicates himself to us. But, lest the spirit of Satan should insinuate himself under his name, he chooses to be recognized by us from his image, which he hath impressed in the Scriptures. He is the author of the Scriptures: he cannot be mutable and inconsistent with himself. He must therefore perpetually remain such as he has there discovered himself to be. This is not disgraceful to him; unless we esteem it honourable for him to alter and degenerate from himself.

III. But their cavilling objection, that we depend on “the letter that killeth,” shows, that they have not escaped the punishment due to the despisers of the Scripture. For it is sufficiently evident, that Paul is there contending against the false apostles,¹⁵⁰ who, recommending the law to the exclusion of Christ, were seducing the people from the blessings of the New Covenant, in which the Lord engages to engrave his law in the minds of believers, and to inscribe it on their hearts. The letter therefore is dead,

¹⁵⁰ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

and the law of the Lord slays the readers of it, where it is separated from the grace of Christ, and only sounds in the ears, without affecting the heart. But if it be efficaciously impressed on our hearts by the Spirit, – if it exhibit Christ, – it is the word of life, “converting the soul, making wise the simple,” &c.¹⁵¹ But in the same place the Apostle also calls his preaching “the ministration of the Spirit;”¹⁵² doubtless intending, that the Holy Spirit so adheres to his own truth, which he hath expressed in the Scriptures, that he only displays and exerts his power where the word is received with due reverence and honour. Nor is this repugnant to what I before asserted, that the word itself has not much certainty with us, unless when confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit. For the Lord hath established a kind of mutual connection between the certainty of his word and of his Spirit; so that our minds are filled with a solid reverence for the word, when by the light of the Spirit we are enabled therein to behold the Divine countenance; and, on the other hand, without the least fear of mistake, we gladly receive the Spirit, when we recognize him in his image, that is, in the word. This is the true state of the case. God did not publish his word to mankind for the sake of momentary ostentation, with a design to destroy or annul it immediately on the advent of the Spirit; but he afterwards sent the same Spirit, by whose agency he had dispensed his word, to complete his work by an efficacious confirmation of that

¹⁵¹ Psalm xix. 7.

¹⁵² 2 Cor. iii. 8.

word. In this manner Christ opened the understanding of his two disciples;¹⁵³ not that, rejecting the Scriptures, they might be wise enough of themselves, but that they might understand the Scriptures. So when Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “quench not the Spirit,”¹⁵⁴ he does not lead them to empty speculations independent of the word; for he immediately adds, “despise not prophesyings;” clearly intimating, that the light of the Spirit is extinguished when prophecies fall into contempt. What answer can be given to these things, by those proud fanatics, who think themselves possessed of the only valuable illumination, when, securely neglecting and forsaking the Divine word, they, with equal confidence and temerity, greedily embrace every reverie which their distempered imaginations may have conceived? A very different sobriety becomes the children of God; who, while they are sensible that, exclusively of the Spirit of God, they are utterly destitute of the light of truth, yet are not ignorant that the word is the instrument, by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of his Spirit. For they know no other Spirit than that who dwelt in and spake by the apostles; by whose oracles they are continually called to the hearing of the word.

¹⁵³ Luke xxiv. 27, &c.

¹⁵⁴ 1 Thess. v. 19.

Chapter X. All Idolatrous Worship Discountenanced In The Scripture, By Its Exclusive Opposition Of The True God To All The Fictitious Deities Of The Heathen

But, since we have shown that the knowledge of God, which is otherwise exhibited without obscurity in the structure of the world, and in all the creatures, is yet more familiarly and clearly unfolded in the word, it will be useful to examine, whether the representation, which the Lord gives us of himself in the Scripture, agrees with the portraiture which he had before been pleased to delineate in his works. This is indeed an extensive subject, if we intended to dwell on a particular discussion of it. But I shall content myself with suggesting some hints, by which the minds of the pious may learn what ought to be their principal objects of investigation in Scripture concerning God, and may be directed to a certain end in that inquiry. I do not yet allude to the peculiar covenant which distinguished the descendants of Abraham from the rest of the nations. For in receiving, by gratuitous adoption, those who were his enemies into the number of his children, God even then manifested himself as a Redeemer; but we are still treating of that knowledge which

relates to the creation of the world, without ascending to Christ the Mediator. But though it will be useful soon to cite some passages from the New Testament, (since that also demonstrates the power of God in the creation, and his providence in the conservation of the world,) yet I wish the reader to be apprized of the point now intended to be discussed, that he may not pass the limits which the subject prescribes. At present, then, let it suffice to understand how God, the former of heaven and earth, governs the world which he hath made. Both his paternal goodness, and the beneficent inclinations of his will, are every where celebrated; and examples are given of his severity, which discover him to be the righteous punisher of iniquities, especially where his forbearance produces no salutary effects upon the obstinate.

II. In some places, indeed, we are favoured with more explicit descriptions, which exhibit to our view an exact representation of his genuine countenance. For Moses, in the description which he gives of it, certainly appears to have intended a brief comprehension of all that it was possible for men to know concerning him – “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children.”¹⁵⁵ Where we may observe, first, the

¹⁵⁵ Exod. xxxiv. 6.

assertion of his eternity and self-existence, in that magnificent name, which is twice repeated; and secondly, the celebration of his attributes, giving us a description, not of what he is in himself, but of what he is to us, that our knowledge of him may consist rather in a lively perception, than in vain and airy speculation. Here we find an enumeration of the same perfections which, as we have remarked, are illustriously displayed both in heaven and on earth – clemency, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, and truth. For power is comprised in the word Elohim, God. The prophets distinguish him by the same epithets, when they intend a complete exhibition of his holy name. But, to avoid the necessity of quoting many passages, let us content ourselves at present with referring to one Psalm;¹⁵⁶ which contains such an accurate summary of all his perfections, that nothing seems to be omitted. And yet it contains nothing but what may be known from a contemplation of the creatures. Thus, by the teaching of experience, we perceive God to be just what he declares himself in his word. In Jeremiah, where he announces in what characters he will be known by us, he gives a description, not so full, but to the same effect – “Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.”¹⁵⁷ These three things it is certainly of the highest importance for us to know – mercy, in which alone consists

¹⁵⁶ Psalm cxlv.

¹⁵⁷ Jer. ix. 24.

all our salvation; judgment, which is executed on the wicked every day, and awaits them in a still heavier degree to eternal destruction; righteousness, by which the faithful are preserved, and most graciously supported. When you understand these things, the prophecy declares that you have abundant reason for glorying in God. Nor is this representation chargeable with an omission of his truth, or his power, or his holiness, or his goodness. For how could we have that knowledge, which is here required, of his righteousness, mercy, and judgment, unless it were supported by his inflexible veracity? And how could we believe that he governed the world in judgment and justice, if we were ignorant of his power? And whence proceeds his mercy, but from his goodness? If all his ways, then, are mercy, judgment, and righteousness, holiness also must be conspicuously displayed in them. Moreover, the knowledge of God, which is afforded us in the Scriptures, is designed for the same end as that which we derive from the creatures: it invites us first to the fear of God, and then to confidence in him; that we may learn to honour him with perfect innocence of life, and sincere obedience to his will, and to place all our dependence on his goodness.

III. But here I intend to comprise a summary of the general doctrine. And, first, let the reader observe, that the Scripture, in order to direct us to the true God, expressly excludes and rejects all the gods of the heathen; because, in almost all ages, religion has been generally corrupted. It is true, indeed, that the name of one supreme God has been universally known

and celebrated. For those who used to worship a multitude of deities, whenever they spake according to the genuine sense of nature, used simply the name of God, in the singular number, as though they were contented with one God. And this was wisely remarked by Justin Martyr, who for this purpose wrote a book *On the Monarchy of God*, in which he demonstrates, from numerous testimonies, that the unity of God was a principle universally impressed on the hearts of men. Tertullian also proves the same point from the common phraseology.¹⁵⁸ But since all men, without exception, have by their own vanity been drawn into erroneous notions, and so their understandings have become vain, all their natural perception of the Divine unity has only served to render them inexcusable. For even the wisest of them evidently betray the vagrant uncertainty of their minds, when they wish for some god to assist them, and in their vows call upon unknown and fabulous deities. Besides, in imagining the existence of many natures in God, though they did not entertain such absurd notions as the ignorant vulgar concerning Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Minerva, and the rest, they were themselves by no means exempt from the delusions of Satan; and, as we have already remarked, whatever subterfuges their ingenuity has invented, none of the philosophers can exculpate themselves from the crime of revolting from God by the corruption of his truth. For this reason Habakkuk, after condemning all idols, bids

¹⁵⁸ Lib. de Idolol. Vid. Aug. Epist. 43 et 44.

us to seek “the Lord in his holy temple,”¹⁵⁹ that the faithful might acknowledge no other God than Jehovah, who had revealed himself in his word.

¹⁵⁹ Hab. ii. 20.

Chapter XI. Unlawfulness Of Ascribing To God A Visible Form. All Idolatry A Defection From The True God

Now, as the Scripture, in consideration of the ignorance and dulness of the human understanding, generally speaks in the plainest manner, – where it intends to discriminate between the true God and all false gods, it principally contrasts him with idols; not that it may sanction the more ingenious and plausible systems of the philosophers, but that it may better detect the folly and even madness of the world in researches concerning God, as long as every one adheres to his own speculations. That exclusive definition, therefore, which every where occurs, reduces to nothing whatever notions of the Deity men may form in their own imaginations; since God alone is a sufficient witness concerning himself. In the mean time, since the whole world has been seized with such brutal stupidity, as to be desirous of visible representations of the Deity, and thus to fabricate gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, and other inanimate and corruptible materials, we ought to hold this as a certain principle, that, whenever any image is made as a representation of God, the Divine glory is corrupted by an impious falsehood. Therefore God, in the law, after having asserted the glory of Deity to belong exclusively to himself, when he intends to show what worship

he approves or rejects, immediately adds, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness." In these words he forbids us to attempt a representation of him in any visible figure; and briefly enumerates all the forms by which superstition had already begun to change his truth into a lie. For the Persians, we know, worshipped the sun; and the foolish heathen made for themselves as many gods as they saw stars in the heavens. There was scarcely an animal, indeed, which the Egyptians did not consider as an image of God. The Greeks appeared wiser than the rest, because they worshipped the Deity under the human form.¹⁶⁰ But God compares not idols with each other, as though one were better or worse than another; but rejects, without a single exception, all statues, pictures, and other figures, in which idolaters imagined that he would be near them.

II. This it is easy to infer from the reasons which he annexes to the prohibition. First, in the writings of Moses: "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude, on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure," &c.¹⁶¹ We see how expressly God opposes his "voice" to every "manner of similitude," to show, that whoever desires visible representations of him, is guilty of departing from him. It will be sufficient to refer to one

¹⁶⁰ Maximus Tyrius, Plat. Serm. 38.

¹⁶¹ Deut. iv. 15.

of the Prophets, Isaiah,¹⁶² who insists more than all the others on this argument, that the Divine Majesty is dishonoured by mean and absurd fiction, when he that is incorporeal is likened to a corporeal form; he that is invisible, to a visible image; he that is a spirit, to inanimate matter; and he that fills immensity, to a log of wood, a small stone, or a lump of gold. Paul also reasons in the same manner: “Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.”¹⁶³ Whence it follows, that whatever statues are erected, or images painted, to represent God, they are only displeasing to him, as being so many insults to the Divine Majesty. And why should we wonder at the Holy Spirit thundering forth such oracles from heaven, since he compels the blind and wretched idolaters to make a similar confession on earth? Well known is the complaint of Seneca, which is cited by Augustine: “They dedicate (says he) the vilest and meanest materials to represent the sacred, immortal, and inviolable gods; and give them some a human form, and some a brutal one, and some a double sex, and different bodies; and they confer the name of gods upon images which, if animated, would be accounted monsters.” Hence it further appears that the pretence set up by the advocates for idols, that they were forbidden to the Jews because they were prone to superstition, is only a frivolous cavil, to evade the force of the argument.

¹⁶² Isaiah xl. 18; xli. 7, 29; xlv. 5, &c.

¹⁶³ Acts xviii. 29.

As if truly that were peculiarly applicable to one nation, which God deduces from his eternal existence, and the invariable order of nature! Besides, Paul was not addressing the Jews, but the Athenians, when he refuted the error of making any similitude of God.

III. Sometimes indeed God hath discovered his presence by certain signs, so that he was said to be seen “face to face;”¹⁶⁴ but all the signs which he ever adopted, were well calculated for the instruction of men, and afforded clear intimations of his incomprehensible essence. For “the cloud, and the smoke, and the flame,”¹⁶⁵ though they were symbols of celestial glory, nevertheless operated as a restraint on the minds of all, to prevent their attempting to penetrate any further. Wherefore even Moses (to whom he manifested himself more familiarly than to any other) obtained not by his prayers a sight of the face of God, but received this answer: “Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see my face and live.”¹⁶⁶ The Holy Spirit once appeared in the form of a dove;¹⁶⁷ but, as he presently disappeared again, who does not perceive that by this momentary symbol the faithful are taught that they should believe the Spirit to be invisible? that, being content with his power and grace, they might make no external representation of him. The appearances of God in the

¹⁶⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Deut. iv. 11.

¹⁶⁶ Exod. xxxiii. 20.

¹⁶⁷ Matt. iii. 16.

human form were preludes to his future manifestation in Christ. Therefore the Jews were not permitted to make this a pretext for erecting a symbol of Deity in the figure of a man. “The mercy seat”¹⁶⁸ also, from which, under the law, God displayed the presence of his power, was so constructed, as to suggest that the best contemplation of the Divine Being is when the mind is transported beyond itself with admiration. For “the cherubim” covered it with their extended wings; the veil was spread before it; and the place itself was sufficiently concealed by its secluded situation. It is manifestly unreasonable therefore to endeavour to defend images of God and of the saints, by the example of those cherubim. For, pray, what was signified by those little images but that images are not calculated to represent the Divine mysteries? since they were formed in such a manner as, by veiling the mercy seat with their wings, to prevent not only the eyes, but all the human senses, from prying into God, and so to restrain all temerity. Moreover, the Prophet describes the seraphim whom he saw in a vision, as having “their faces covered;”¹⁶⁹ to signify, that the splendour of the Divine glory is so great, that even the angels themselves cannot steadfastly behold it; and the faint sparks of it, which shine in the angels, are concealed from our view. The cherubim, however, of which we are now speaking, are acknowledged by all persons of sound judgment to have been peculiar to the old state of tutelage under the legal dispensation.

¹⁶⁸ Exod. xxv. 17, 18, &c.

¹⁶⁹ Isaiah vi. 2.

To adduce them, therefore, as examples for the imitation of the present age, is quite absurd. For that puerile period, as I may call it, for which such rudiments were appointed, is now past. And, indeed, it is a shameful consideration, that heathen writers are more expert interpreters of the Divine law than the papists. Juvenal reproaches and ridicules the Jews for worshipping the white clouds and Deity of heaven. This language, indeed, is perverse and impious; but in denying that there was any image of God among them, he speaks with more truth than the papists, who idly pretend that there was some visible figure of him. But as that nation frequently broke out into idolatry, with great and sudden impetuosity, resembling the violent ebullition of water from a large spring, hence let us learn the strong propensity of the human mind to idolatry, lest, imputing to the Jews a crime common to all, we should be fascinated by the allurements of sin, and sleep the sleep of death.

IV. To the same purpose is that passage, “The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands;”¹⁷⁰ for the Prophet concludes, from the very materials, that they are no gods, whose images are made of gold or of silver; and takes it for granted, that every conception we form of the Deity, merely from our own understandings, is a foolish imagination. He mentions gold and silver rather than clay or stone, that the splendour or the value of the materials may procure no reverence for the idols. But he concludes in general, that nothing is more improbable, than

¹⁷⁰ Psalm cxxxv. 15.

that gods should be manufactured from any inanimate matter. At the same time he insists equally on another point – that it is presumption and madness in mortal men, who are every moment in danger of losing the fleeting breath which they draw, to dare to confer upon idols the honour due to God. Man is constrained to confess that he is a creature of a day, and yet he will have a piece of metal to be worshipped as a god, of the deity of which he is the author; for whence did idols originate, but in the will of men? There is much propriety in that sarcasm of a heathen poet, who represents one of their idols as saying, “Formerly, I was the trunk of a wild fig-tree, a useless log; when the artificer, after hesitating whether he would make me a stool or a deity, at length determined that I should be a god.”¹⁷¹

A poor mortal, forsooth, who is, as it were, expiring almost every moment, will, by his workmanship, transfer to a dead stock the name and honour of God. But as that Epicurean, in his satirical effusions, has paid no respect to any religion, – leaving this sarcasm, and others of the same kind, we should be stung and penetrated by the rebuke which the Prophet¹⁷² has given to the extreme stupidity of those, who, with the same wood, make a fire to warm themselves, heat an oven for baking bread, roast or boil their meat, and fabricate a god, before which they prostrate themselves, to address their humble supplications. In another place, therefore, he not only pronounces them transgressors of

¹⁷¹ Hor. Sat. lib. 1, 8.

¹⁷² Isaiah xlv. 9-20.

the law, but reproaches them for not having learned from the foundations of the earth;¹⁷³ since, in reality, there is nothing more unreasonable than the thought of contracting the infinite and incomprehensible God within the compass of five feet. And yet this monstrous abomination, which is manifestly repugnant to the order of nature, experience demonstrates to be natural to man. It must be further observed, that idols are frequently stigmatized as being the works of men's hands, unsanctioned by Divine authority; in order to establish this principle, that all modes of worship which are merely of human invention, are detestable. The Psalmist aggravates this madness, forasmuch as men implore the aid of dead and insensible things, who are imbued with understanding to know that all things are directed solely by the power of God. But since the corruption of nature carries all nations in general, and each individual in particular, to such an excess of frenzy, the Spirit at length thunders out this direful imprecation: "Let those that make them be like unto them and every one that trusteth in them."¹⁷⁴ Let it be observed, that all similitudes are equally as much forbidden as graven images; which refutes the foolish subterfuge of the Greeks; for they think themselves quite safe, if they make no sculpture of Deity, while in pictures they indulge greater liberty than any other nations. But the Lord prohibits every representation of him, whether made by the statuary, or by any other artificer, because all similitudes are

¹⁷³ Isaiah xl. 21.

¹⁷⁴ Psalm cxv. 8.

criminal and insulting to the Divine Majesty.

V. I know that it is a very common observation, that images are the books of the illiterate. Gregory said so; but very different is the decision of the Spirit of God, in whose school had Gregory been taught, he would never have made such an assertion. For, since Jeremiah pronounces that “the stock is a doctrine of vanities,”¹⁷⁵ since Habakkuk represents “a molten image” as “a teacher of lies,”¹⁷⁶—certainly the general doctrine to be gathered from these passages is, that whatever men learn respecting God from images is equally frivolous and false. If any one object, that the Prophets only reprehended those who abuse images to the impious purposes of superstition, — that indeed I grant; but affirm also, what is evident to every one, that they utterly condemn what is assumed by the papists as an indubitable axiom, that images are substitutes for books. For they contrast images with the true God, as contraries, which can never agree. This comparison, I say, is laid down in those passages which I have just cited; that, since there is only one true God, whom the Jews worshipped, there can be no visible figures made, to serve as representations of the Divine Being, without falsehood and criminality; and all who seek the knowledge of God from such figures are under a miserable delusion. Were it not true, that all knowledge of God, sought from images, is corrupt and fallacious, it would not be so uniformly condemned by the Prophets. This

¹⁷⁵ Jer. x. 8.

¹⁷⁶ Hab. ii. 18.

at least must be granted to us, that, when we maintain the vanity and fallaciousness of the attempts of men to make visible representations of God, we do no other than recite the express declarations of the Prophets.

VI. Read likewise what has been written on this subject by Lactantius and Eusebius, who hesitate not to assume as a certainty, that all those whose images are to be seen, were mortal men. Augustine also confidently asserts the unlawfulness, not only of worshipping images, but even of erecting any with reference to God. Nor does he advance any thing different from what had, many years before, been decreed by the Elibertine council, the thirty-sixth chapter of which is as follows: "It hath been decreed, that no pictures be had in the churches, and that what is worshipped or adored be not painted on the walls." But most remarkable is what Augustine elsewhere cites from Varro, and to the truth of which he subscribes – "That they who first introduced images of the gods, removed fear and added error." If this had been a mere assertion of Varro alone, it might have perhaps but little authority; yet it should justly fill us with shame, that a heathen, groping as it were in the dark, attained so much light as to perceive that corporeal representations were unworthy of the Divine Majesty, being calculated to diminish the fear of God, and to increase error among mankind. The fact itself demonstrates this to have been spoken with equal truth and wisdom; but Augustine, having borrowed it from Varro, advances it as his own opinion. And first he observes that the most ancient

errors concerning God, in which men were involved, did not originate from images, but were increased by them, as by the superaddition of new materials. He next explains that the fear of God is thereby diminished, and even destroyed; since the foolish, ridiculous, and absurd fabrication of idols would easily bring his Divinity into contempt. Of the truth of this second remark, I sincerely wish that we had not such proofs in our own experience. Whoever, therefore, desires to be rightly instructed, he must learn from some other quarter than from images, what is to be known concerning God.

VII. If the papists have any shame, let them no longer use this subterfuge, that images are the books of the illiterate; which is so clearly refuted by numerous testimonies from Scripture. Yet, though I should concede this point to them, it would avail them but little in defence of their idols. What monsters they obtrude in the place of Deity is well known. But what they call the pictures or statues of their saints – what are they but examples of the most abandoned luxury and obscenity? which if any one were desirous of imitating, he would deserve corporal punishment. Even prostitutes in brothels are to be seen in more chaste and modest attire, than those images in their temples, which they wish to be accounted images of virgins. Nor do they clothe the martyrs in habits at all more becoming. Let them adorn their idols, then, with some small degree of modesty, that the pretence of their being books of some holiness, if not less false, may be less impudent. But even then, we will reply, that this is not

the method to be adopted in sacred places for the instruction of the faithful, whom God will have taught a very different doctrine from any that can be learned from such insignificant trifles. He hath commanded one common doctrine to be there proposed to all, in the preaching of his word, and in his sacred mysteries; to which they betray great inattention of mind, who are carried about by their eyes to the contemplation of idols. Whom, then, do the papists call illiterate, whose ignorance will suffer them to be taught only by images? Those, truly, whom the Lord acknowledges as his disciples; whom he honours with the revelation of his heavenly philosophy; whom he will have instructed in the healthful mysteries of his kingdom. I confess, indeed, as things are now circumstanced, that there are at present not a few who cannot bear to be deprived of such books. But whence arises this stupidity, but from being defrauded of that teaching which alone is adapted to their instruction? In fact, those who presided over the churches, resigned to idols the office of teaching, for no other reason but because they were themselves dumb. Paul testifies, that in the true preaching of this gospel, Christ is “evidently set forth,” and, as it were, “crucified before our eyes.”¹⁷⁷ To what purpose, then, was the erection of so many crosses of wood and stone, silver and gold, every where in the temples, if it had been fully and faithfully inculcated, that Christ died that he might bear our curse on the cross, expiate our sins by the sacrifice of his body, cleanse us by his blood, and, in a word,

¹⁷⁷ Gal. iii. 1.

reconcile us to God the Father? From this simple declaration they might learn more than from a thousand crosses of wood or stone; for perhaps the avaricious fix their minds and their eyes more tenaciously on the gold and silver crosses, than on any part of the Divine word.

VIII. Respecting the origin of idols, the generally received opinion agrees with what is asserted in the book of Wisdom;¹⁷⁸ namely, that the first authors of them were persons who paid this honour to the dead, from a superstitious reverence for their memory. I grant that this perverse custom was very ancient, and deny not that it greatly contributed to increase the rage of mankind after idolatry; nevertheless, I cannot concede that it was the first cause of that evil. For it appears from Moses, that idols were in use long before the introduction of that ostentatious consecration of the images of the dead, which is frequently mentioned by profane writers. When he relates that Rachel stole her father's idols,¹⁷⁹ he speaks as of a common corruption. Whence we may infer, that the mind of man is, if I may be allowed the expression, a perpetual manufactory of idols. After the deluge, there was, as it were, a regeneration of the world; but not many years elapsed before men fabricated gods according to their own fancy. And it is probable, that while the holy patriarch was yet alive, his posterity were addicted to idolatry, so that, with the bitterest grief, he might, with his own eyes, behold

¹⁷⁸ Wisdom xiv. 15.

¹⁷⁹ Gen. xxxi. 19.

the earth which God had lately purged from its corruptions by such a dreadful judgment, again polluted with idols. For Terah and Nachor, before the birth of Abraham, were worshippers of false gods, as is asserted by Joshua.¹⁸⁰ Since the posterity of Shem so speedily degenerated, what opinion must we entertain of the descendants of Ham, who had already been cursed in their father? The true state of the case is, that the mind of man, being full of pride and temerity, dares to conceive of God according to its own standard; and, being sunk in stupidity, and immersed in profound ignorance; imagines a vain and ridiculous phantom instead of God. These evils are followed by another; men attempt to express in the work of their hands such a deity as they have imagined in their minds. The mind then begets the idol, and the hand brings it forth. The example of the Israelites proves this to have been the origin of idolatry, namely, that men believe not God to be among them, unless he exhibit some external signs of his presence. “As for this Moses,” they said, “we wot not what is become of him; make us gods which shall go before us.”¹⁸¹ They knew, indeed, that there was a God, whose power they had experienced in so many miracles; but they had no confidence in his being present with them, unless they could see some corporeal symbol of his countenance, as a testimony of their Divine Guide. They wished, therefore, to understand, from the image going before them, that God was the leader of their

¹⁸⁰ Joshua xxiv. 2.

¹⁸¹ Exod. xxxii. 1.

march. Daily experience teaches, that the flesh is never satisfied, till it has obtained some image, resembling itself, in which it may be foolishly gratified, as an image of God. In almost all ages, from the creation of the world, in obedience to this stupid propensity, men have erected visible representations, in which they believed God to be presented to their carnal eyes.

IX. Such an invention is immediately attended with adoration; for when men supposed that they saw God in images, they also worshipped him in them. At length, both their eyes and their minds being wholly confined to them, they began to grow more stupid, and to admire them, as though they possessed some inherent divinity. Now, it is plain that men did not rush into the worship of images, till they had imbibed some very gross opinion respecting them; not, indeed, that they believed them to be gods, but they imagined that something of Divinity resided in them. When you prostrate yourself, therefore, in adoration of an image, whether you suppose it to represent God or a creature, you are already fascinated with superstition. For this reason the Lord hath prohibited, not only the erection of statues made as representations of him, but also the consecration of any inscriptions or monuments to stand as objects of worship. For the same reason, also, another point is annexed to the precept in the law concerning adoration. For as soon as men have made a visible figure of God, they attach Divine power to it. Such is the stupidity of men, that they confine God to any image which they make to represent him, and therefore cannot but worship it. Nor

is it of any importance, whether they worship simply the idol, or God in the idol; it is always idolatry, when Divine honours are paid to an idol, under any pretence whatsoever. And as God will not be worshipped in a superstitious or idolatrous manner, whatever is conferred on idols is taken from him. Let this be considered by those who seek such miserable pretexts for the defence of that execrable idolatry, with which, for many ages, true religion has been overwhelmed and subverted. The images, they say, are not considered as gods. Neither were the Jews so thoughtless as not to remember, that it was God by whose hand they had been conducted out of Egypt, before they made the calf. But when Aaron said that those were the gods by whom they had been liberated from Egypt, they boldly assented;¹⁸² signifying, doubtless, that they would keep in remembrance, that God himself was their deliverer, while they could see him going before them in the calf. Nor can we believe the heathen to have been so stupid, as to conceive that God was no other than wood and stone. For they changed the images at pleasure, but always retained in their minds the same gods; and there were many images for one god; nor did they imagine to themselves gods in proportion to the multitude of images: besides, they daily consecrated new images, but without supposing that they made new gods. Read the excuses, which, Augustine says,¹⁸³ were alleged by the idolaters of the age in which he lived. When

¹⁸² Exod. xxxii. 4-6.

¹⁸³ In Psalm cxiii.

they were charged with idolatry, the vulgar replied, that they worshipped, not the visible figure, but the Divinity that invisibly dwelt in it. But they, whose religion was, as he expresses himself, more refined, said, that they worshipped neither the image, nor the spirit represented by it; but that in the corporeal figure they beheld a sign of that which they ought to worship. What is to be inferred from this, but that all idolaters, whether Jewish or Gentile, have been guided by the notion which I have mentioned? Not content with a spiritual knowledge of God, they thought that they should receive more clear and familiar impressions of him by means of images. After they had once pleased themselves with such a preposterous representation of God, they ceased not from being deluded with new fallacies, till they imagined that God displayed his power in images. Nevertheless, the Jews were persuaded that, under such images, they worshipped the eternal God, the one true Lord of heaven and earth; and the heathen, that they worshipped their false gods, whom they pretended to be inhabitants of heaven.

X. Those who deny that this has been done in time past, and even within our own remembrance, assert an impudent falsehood. For why do they prostrate themselves before images? And when about to pray, why do they turn themselves towards them, as towards the ears of God? For it is true, as Augustine says,¹⁸⁴ “That no man prays or worships thus, looking on an image, who is not impressed with an opinion that he shall be

¹⁸⁴ In Psalm cxiii.

heard by it, and a hope that it will do for him as he desires.” Why is there so great a difference between images of the same god, that one is passed by with little or no respect, and another is honoured in the most solemn manner? Why do they fatigue themselves with votive pilgrimages, in going to see images resembling those which they have at home? Why do they at this day fight, even to slaughter and destruction, in defence of them, as of their country and religion, so that they could part with the only true God more easily than with their idols? Yet I am not here enumerating the gross errors of the vulgar, which are almost infinite, and occupy nearly the hearts of all; I only relate what they themselves allege, when they are most anxious to exculpate themselves from idolatry. “We never,” say they, “call them our gods.” Nor did the Jews or heathen in ancient times call them their gods; and yet the Prophets, in all their writings, were constantly accusing them of fornication with wood and stone, only on account of such things as are daily practised by those who wish to be thought Christians; that is, for worshipping God, by corporeal adoration before figures of wood or stone.

XI. I am neither ignorant, nor desirous of concealing, that they evade the charge by a more subtle distinction, which will soon be noticed more at large. They pretend that the reverence which they pay to images is *ειδωλοδοουλεια*, (service of images,) but deny that it is *ειδωλολατρεια* (worship of images.) For in this manner they express themselves, when they maintain, that the reverence which they call *dulia*, may be given to statues or pictures, without

injury to God. They consider themselves, therefore, liable to no blame, while they are only the servants of their idols, and not worshippers of them; as though worship were not rather inferior to service. And yet, while they seek to shelter themselves under a Greek term, they contradict themselves in the most childish manner. For since the Greek word λατρεύειν signifies nothing else but to worship, what they say is equivalent to a confession that they adore their images, but without adoration. Nor can they justly object, that I am trying to ensnare them with words: they betray their own ignorance in their endeavours to raise a mist before the eyes of the simple. But, however eloquent they may be, they will never be able, by their rhetoric, to prove one and the same thing to be two different things. Let them point out, I say, a difference in fact, that they may be accounted different from ancient idolaters. For as an adulterer, or homicide, will not escape the imputation of guilt, by giving his crime a new and arbitrary name, so it is absurd that these persons should be exculpated by the subtle invention of a name, if they really differ in no respect from those idolaters whom they themselves are constrained to condemn. But their case is so far from being different from that of former idolaters, that the source of all the evil is a preposterous emulation, with which they have rivalled them by exercising their minds in contriving, and their hands in forming, visible symbols of the Deity.

XII. Nevertheless, I am not so scrupulous as to think that no images ought ever to be permitted. But since sculpture and

painting are gifts of God, I wish for a pure and legitimate use of both; lest those things, which the Lord hath conferred on us for his glory and our benefit, be not only corrupted by preposterous abuse, but even perverted to our ruin. We think it unlawful to make any visible figure as a representation of God, because he hath himself forbidden it, and it cannot be done without detracting, in some measure, from his glory. Let it not be supposed that we are singular in this opinion; for that all sound writers have uniformly reprobated the practice, must be evident to persons conversant with their works. If, then, it be not lawful to make any corporeal representation of God, much less will it be lawful to worship it for God, or to worship God in it. We conclude, therefore, that nothing should be painted and engraved but objects visible to our eyes: the Divine Majesty, which is far above the reach of human sight, ought not to be corrupted by unseemly figures. The subjects of those arts consist partly of histories and transactions, partly of images and corporeal forms, without reference to any transactions. The former are of some use in information or recollection; the latter, as far as I see, can furnish nothing but amusement. And yet it is evident, that almost all the images, which have hitherto been set up in the churches, have been of this latter description. Hence it may be seen, that they were placed there, not with judgment and discrimination, but from a foolish and inconsiderate passion for them. I say nothing here of the impropriety and indecency conspicuous in most of them, and the wanton licentiousness displayed in them

by the painters and statuaries, at which I have before hinted: I only assert, that even if they were intrinsically faultless, still they would be altogether unavailing for the purposes of instruction.

XIII. But, passing over that difference also, let us consider, as we proceed, whether it be expedient to have any images at all in Christian temples, either descriptive of historical events, or representative of human forms. In the first place, if the authority of the ancient Church have any influence with us, let us remember, that for about five hundred years, while religion continued in a more prosperous state, and purer doctrine prevailed, the Christian churches were generally without images. They were then first introduced, therefore, to ornament the churches, when the purity of the ministry had begun to degenerate. I will not dispute what was the reason which influenced the first authors of them; but if you compare one age with another, you will see that they were much declined from the integrity of those who had no images. Who can suppose, that those holy fathers would have permitted the Church to remain so long destitute of what they judged useful and salutary for it? The fact was, that, instead of omitting them through ignorance or negligence, they perceived them to be of little or no use, but, on the contrary, pregnant with much danger; and, therefore, intentionally and wisely rejected them. This is asserted in express terms by Augustine: "When they are fixed," says he, "in those places in an honourable elevation, to attract the attention of those who are praying and sacrificing, though

they are destitute of sense and life, yet, by the very similitude of living members and senses, they affect weak minds, so that they appear to them to live and breathe,” &c.¹⁸⁵ And in another place: “For that representation of members leads, and, as it were, constrains, the mind, which animates a body, to suppose that body to be endued with perception, which it sees to be very similar to its own,” &c. And a little after: “Idols have more influence to bow down an unhappy soul, because they have a mouth, eyes, ears, and feet, than to correct it, because they neither speak, nor see, nor hear, nor walk.” This indeed appears to be the reason of John's exhortation to “keep ourselves,” not only from the worship of idols, but “from idols” themselves. And we have found it too true, that, through the horrible frenzy, which, almost to the total destruction of piety, hath heretofore possessed the world, as soon as images are set up in churches, there is, as it were, a standard of idolatry erected; for the folly of mankind cannot refrain from immediately falling into idolatrous worship. But, even if the danger were less, yet, when I consider the use for which temples were designed, it appears to me extremely unworthy of their sanctity, to receive any other images, than those natural and expressive ones, which the Lord hath consecrated in his word; I mean Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord, and the other ceremonies, with which our eyes ought to be more attentively engaged, and more sensibly affected, than to require any others formed by human ingenuity. Behold the

¹⁸⁵ Epist. 49. De Civ. Dei. lib. iv. cap. 31.

incomparable advantages of images! the loss of which, if you believe the papists, nothing can compensate.

XIV. The remarks already made on this subject, I think, would be sufficient, if it were not necessary to take some notice of the Council of Nice; not that very celebrated one, which was convened by Constantine the Great, but that which was held about eight hundred years ago, by the command, and under the auspices, of the Empress Irene. For that Council decreed, not only that images should be had in churches, but also that they should be worshipped. And, notwithstanding what I have advanced, the authority of the Council would raise a strong prejudice on the contrary side. Though, to confess the truth, I am not much concerned at this, as I am to show the reader their extreme madness, whose fondness for images exceeded any thing that was becoming in Christians. But let us despatch this point first: the present advocates for the use of images, allege the authority of that Nicene Council in their defence. There is a book extant, written in refutation of this practice, under the name of Charlemagne; which, from the diction, we may conclude was composed at the same time. In this work are recited the opinions of the bishops who attended the Council, and the arguments they used in the controversy. John, the delegate of the Eastern churches, said, "God created man in his own image;" and hence he inferred that we ought to have images. The same prelate thought that images were recommended to us by this sentence: "Show me thy face, for it is glorious." Another, to prove that

they ought to be placed on the altars, cited this testimony: "No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it under a bushel." Another, to show the contemplation of these to be useful to us, adduced a verse from a Psalm: "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is sealed upon us." Another pressed this comparison into his service: "As the patriarchs used the sacrifices of the heathen, so Christians ought to have the images of saints, instead of the idols of the heathen." In the same manner they tortured that expression, "Lord, I have loved the beauty of thy house." But the most ingenious of all was their interpretation of this passage: "As we have heard, so have we seen;" that therefore God is known, not only by the hearing of his word, but by the contemplation of images. Similar is the subtlety of Bishop Theodore: "God is glorious in his saints." And in another place it is said, "In the saints that are in the earth:" therefore this ought to be referred to images. But their impertinencies and absurdities are so disgusting, that I am quite ashamed to repeat them.

XV. When they dispute concerning adoration, they bring forward Jacob's worshipping of Pharaoh, and of the staff of Joseph, and of the inscription erected by himself; although, in this last instance, they not only corrupt the sense of the Scripture, but allege what is nowhere to be found. These passages also, "Worship his footstool;" "Worship in his holy hill;" and, "All the rich of the people shall supplicate thy face;" they consider as apposite and conclusive proofs. If any one wished to represent the advocates for images in a ridiculous point of view, could he

possibly ascribe to them greater and grosser instances of folly? But, that no doubt of this might remain, Theodosius, bishop of Mira, defends the propriety of worshipping images from the dreams of his archdeacon, as seriously as if he had an immediate revelation from heaven. Now, let the advocates of images go and urge upon us the decree of that Council; as though those venerable fathers had not entirely destroyed all their credit by such puerile treatment of the sacred Scriptures, or such impious and shameful mutilation of them.

XVI. I come now to those prodigies of impiety, which it is wonderful that they ever ventured to broach; and more wonderful still, that they have not been opposed with universal detestation. It is right to expose this flagitious madness, that the worship of images may at least be deprived of the pretence of antiquity, which the papists falsely urge in its favour. Theodosius, bishop of Amorum, denounces an anathema against all who are averse to the worship of images. Another imputes all the calamities of Greece and the East to the crime of not having worshipped them. What punishments, then, did the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs deserve, in whose time images were unknown? They add further, If the image of the emperor be met by processions with perfumes and incense, much more is this honour due to the images of the saints. Constantius, bishop of Constance, in Cyprus, professes his reverence for images, and avows that he will pay them the same worship and honour as is due to the Trinity, the source of all life; and whoever refuses to do the

same, he anathematizes and dismisses with the Manichees and Marcionites. And, lest you should suppose this to be the private opinion of an individual, they all declare their assent to it. John, the delegate of the Eastern churches, carried by the fervour of his zeal to still greater lengths, asserts it to be better to admit all the brothels of the world into one city, than to reject the worship of images. At length it was unanimously decreed, that the Samaritans were worse than all heretics, and that the adversaries of images were worse than the Samaritans. But, that the farce might not want its usual plaudit, they add this clause: "Let them rejoice and exult, who have the image of Christ, and offer sacrifice to it." Where is now the distinction of *latria* and *dulia*, with which they attempt to deceive both God and men? For the Council gives the same honour, without any exception, to images and to the living God.

Chapter XII. God Contradistinguished From Idols, That He May Be Solely And Supremely Worshipped

We said, at the beginning, that the knowledge of God consists not in frigid speculation, but is accompanied by the worship of him. We also cursorily touched on the right method of worshipping him, which will be more fully explained in other places. I now only repeat, in few words, that whenever the Scripture asserts that there is but one God, it contends not for the bare name, but also teaches, that whatever belongs to the Deity, should not be transferred to another. This shows how pure religion differs from idolatry. The Greek word ευσέβεια certainly signifies right worship, since even blind mortals, groping in the dark, have always perceived the necessity of some certain rule, that the worship of God may not be involved in disorder and confusion. Although Cicero ingeniously and correctly derives the word *religion* from a verb signifying “to read over again,” or “to gather again;” yet the reason he assigns for it, that good worshippers often recollect, and diligently reconsider what is true, is forced and far-fetched. I rather think the word is opposed to a liberty of wandering without restraint; because the greater part of the world rashly embrace whatever they meet with, and also ramble from one thing to another; but

piety, in order to walk with a steady step, collects itself within its proper limits. The word *superstition* also appears to me to import a discontent with the method and order prescribed, and an accumulation of a superfluous mass of vain things. But to leave the consideration of words, it has been generally admitted, in all ages, that religion is corrupted and perverted by errors and falsehoods; whence we infer, that when we allow ourselves any thing from inconsiderate zeal, the pretext alleged by the superstitious is altogether frivolous. Although this confession is in the mouths of all, they betray, at the same time, a shameful ignorance, neither adhering to the one true God, nor observing any discrimination in his worship, as we have before shown. But God, to assert his own right, proclaims that he is “jealous,” and will be a severe avenger, if men confound him with any fictitious deity; and then, to retain mankind in obedience, he defines his legitimate worship. He comprises both in his law, where he first binds the faithful to himself, as their sole legislator; and then prescribes a rule for the right worship of him according to his will. Now, of the law, since the uses and ends of it are various, I shall treat in its proper place: at present, I only remark, that it sets up a barrier to prevent men turning aside to corrupt modes of worship. Let us remember, what I have already stated, that, unless every thing belonging to Divinity remain in God alone, he is spoiled of his honour, and his worship is violated. And here it is necessary to animadvert more particularly on the subtle fallacies of superstition. For it revolts not to strange gods, in such

a manner as to appear to desert the supreme God, or to degrade him to a level with others; but, allowing him the highest place, it surrounds him with a multitude of inferior deities, among whom it distributes his honours; and thus, in a cunning and hypocritical manner, the glory of Divinity is divided among many, instead of remaining wholly in one. Thus the ancient idolaters, Jews as well as Gentiles, imagined one God, the Father and Governor of all, and subordinate to him a vast multitude of other deities; to whom, in common with the supreme God, they attributed the government of heaven and earth. Thus the saints, who departed out of this life some ages ago, are exalted to the society of God, to be worshipped, and invoked, and celebrated like him. We suppose, indeed, the glory of God not to be sullied with this abomination; whereas it is, in a great measure, suppressed and extinguished, except that we retain some faint notion of his supreme power; but, at the same time, deceived with such impostures, we are seduced to the worship of various deities.

II. On this account was invented the distinction of *latría* and *dulia*, as they express themselves, by which they conceived they might safely ascribe divine honours to angels and deceased men. For it is evident, that the worship which papists pay to the saints, differs not in reality from the worship of God; for they adore God and them promiscuously; but when they are accused of it, they evade the charge with this subterfuge, that they preserve inviolate to God what belongs to him, because they leave him λατρεία. But since the question relates to a thing, not to a word,

who can bear their careless trifling on the most important of all subjects? But, to pass this also, they will gain nothing at last by their distinction, but that they render worship to God alone, and service to the saints. For λατρεία, in Greek, signifies the same as *cultus* in Latin, [and *worship* in English;] but δουλεία properly signifies *servitus*, [*service*;] and yet, in the Scriptures, this distinction is sometimes disregarded. But, suppose it to be a constant distinction, it remains to be inquired, what is the meaning of each term. Λατρεία is *worship*; δουλεία is *service*. Now, no one doubts, that to serve is more than to worship or honour. For it would be irksome to serve many persons, whom you would not refuse to honour. So unjust is the distribution, to assign the greater to the saints, and leave to God that which is less. But many of the ancients, it is urged, have used this distinction. What is that to the purpose, if every one perceives it to be not only improper, but altogether frivolous?

III. Leaving these subtleties, let us consider the subject itself. Paul, when he reminds the Galatians what they had been before they were illuminated in the knowledge of God, says, that they “did service to them which by nature were no gods.”¹⁸⁶ Though he mentions not λατρεία, (worship,) is their idolatry therefore excusable? He certainly condemns that perverse superstition, which he denominates δουλεία, (service,) equally as much as if he had used the word λατρεία, (worship.) And when Christ repels the assault of Satan with this shield, “It is written, Thou

¹⁸⁶ Gal. iv. 8.

shalt worship the Lord thy God,”¹⁸⁷ the word λατρεία came not into the question; for Satan required nothing but προσκυνησις, (prostration, or adoration.) So, when John is reprehended by an angel, for having fallen on his knees before him,¹⁸⁸ we must not understand that John was so stupid as to intend to transfer to an angel the honour due exclusively to God. But since all worship, that is connected with religion, cannot but savour of Divine, he could not (προσκυνειν) prostrate himself before the angel, without detracting from the glory of God. We read, indeed, frequently, of men having been worshipped; but that was civil honour, so to speak; religion has a different design; and no sooner is religion connected with worship, or homage, than it produces a profanation of the Divine honour. We may see the same in Cornelius, who had not made such a small progress in piety, as not to ascribe supreme worship to God alone. When he “fell down” before Peter, therefore, it certainly was not with an intention of worshipping him instead of God:¹⁸⁹ yet Peter positively forbade him to do it. And why was this, but because men never so particularly distinguish between the worship or homage of God, and that of the creatures, as to avoid transferring to a creature what belongs exclusively to God? Wherefore, if we desire to have but one God, let us remember, that his glory ought not, in the least, to be diminished; but that he must retain

¹⁸⁷ Matt. iv. 10.

¹⁸⁸ Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9.

¹⁸⁹ Acts x. 25.

all that belongs to him. Therefore Zechariah, when speaking of the restoration of the Church, expressly declares, not only that “there shall be one Lord,” but also “that his name shall be one;”¹⁹⁰ signifying, without doubt, that he will have nothing in common with idols. Now, what kind of worship God requires, will be seen, in due course, in another place. For he hath been pleased, in his law, to prescribe to mankind what is lawful and right; and so to confine them to a certain rule, that every individual might not take the liberty of inventing a mode of worship according to his own fancy. But, since it is not proper to burden the reader, by confounding many subjects together, I shall not enter on that point yet; let it suffice to know, that no religious services can be transferred to any other than God alone, without committing sacrilege. At first, indeed, superstition ascribed Divine honours either to the sun, or to the other stars, or to idols. Afterwards followed ambition, which, adorning men with the spoils of God, dared to profane every thing that was sacred. And although there remained a persuasion, that they ought to worship a supreme God, yet it became customary to offer sacrifices promiscuously to genii, and inferior deities, and deceased heroes. So steep is the descent to this vice, to communicate to a vast multitude that which God particularly challenges to himself alone!

¹⁹⁰ Zech. xiv. 9.

Chapter XIII. One Divine Essence, Containing Three Persons; Taught In The Scriptures From The Beginning

What is taught in the Scriptures concerning the immensity and spirituality of the essence of God, should serve not only to overthrow the foolish notions of the vulgar, but also to refute the subtleties of profane philosophy. One of the ancients,¹⁹¹ in his own conception very shrewdly, said, that whatever we see, and whatever we do not see, is God. But he imagined that the Deity was diffused through every part of the world. But, although God, to keep us within the bounds of sobriety, speaks but rarely of his essence, yet, by those two attributes, which I have mentioned, he supersedes all gross imaginations, and represses the presumption of the human mind. For, surely, his immensity ought to inspire us with awe, that we may not attempt to measure him with our senses; and the spirituality of his nature prohibits us from entertaining any earthly or carnal speculations concerning him. For the same reason, he represents his residence to be “in heaven;” for though, as he is incomprehensible, he fills the earth also; yet, seeing that our minds, from their dulness, are continually dwelling on the earth, in order to shake off our sloth and inactivity, he properly raises us above the

¹⁹¹ Seneca, Præf. lib. 1. Quæst. Nat.

world. And here is demolished the error of the Manichees, who, by maintaining the existence of two original principles, made the devil, as it were, equal to God. This certainly was both dividing the unity of God, and limiting his immensity. For their daring to abuse certain testimonies of Scripture betrayed a shameful ignorance; as the error itself evidenced an execrable madness. The Anthropomorphites also, who imagined God to be corporeal, because the Scripture frequently ascribes to him a mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet, are easily refuted. For who, even of the meanest capacity, understands not, that God lisps, as it were, with us, just as nurses are accustomed to speak to infants? Wherefore, such forms of expression do not clearly explain the nature of God, but accommodate the knowledge of him to our narrow capacity; to accomplish which, the Scripture must necessarily descend far below the height of his majesty.

II. But he also designates himself by another peculiar character, by which he may be yet more clearly distinguished; for, while he declares himself to be but One, he proposes himself to be distinctly considered in Three Persons, without apprehending which, we have only a bare and empty name of God floating in our brains, without any idea of the true God. Now, that no one may vainly dream of three gods, or suppose that the simple essence of God is divided among the three Persons, we must seek for a short and easy definition, which will preserve us from all error. But since some violently object to the word Person, as of human invention, we must first

examine the reasonableness of this objection. When the Apostle denominates the Son the express image of the hypostasis of the Father, he undoubtedly ascribes to the Father some subsistence, in which he differs from the Son. For to understand this word as synonymous with Essence, (as some interpreters have done, as though Christ, like wax impressed with a seal, represented in himself the substance of the Father,) were not only harsh, but also absurd. For the essence of God being simple and indivisible, he who contains all in himself, not in part, or by derivation, but in complete perfection, could not, without impropriety, and even absurdity, be called the express image of it. But since the Father, although distinguished by his own peculiar property, hath expressed himself entirely in his Son, it is with the greatest reason asserted that he hath made his hypostasis conspicuous in him; with which the other appellation, given him in the same passage, of “the brightness of his glory,” exactly corresponds. From the words of the Apostle, we certainly conclude, that there is in the Father a proper hypostasis, which is conspicuous in the Son. And thence also we easily infer the hypostasis of the Son, which distinguishes him from the Father. The same reasoning is applicable to the Holy Spirit; for we shall soon prove him also to be God; and yet he must, of necessity, be considered as distinct from the Father. But this is not a distinction of the essence, which it is unlawful to represent as any other than simple and undivided. It follows, therefore, if the testimony of the Apostle be credited, that there are in God three *hypostases*. And, as the Latins have

expressed the same thing by the word *person*, it is too fastidious and obstinate to contend about so clear a matter. If we wish to translate word for word, we may call it *subsistence*. Many, in the same sense, have called it *substance*. Nor has the word *person* been used by the Latins only; but the Greeks also, for the sake of testifying their consent to this doctrine, taught the existence of three *πρόσωπα* (persons) in God. But both Greeks and Latins, notwithstanding any verbal difference, are in perfect harmony respecting the doctrine itself.

III. Now, though heretics rail at the word *person*, or some morose and obstinate men clamorously refuse to admit a name of human invention; since they cannot make us assert that there are three, each of whom is entirely God, nor yet that there are more gods than one, how very unreasonable is it to reprobate words which express nothing but what is testified and recorded in the Scriptures! It were better, say they, to restrain not only our thoughts, but our expressions also, within the limits of the Scripture, than to introduce exotic words, which may generate future dissensions and disputes; for thus we weary ourselves with verbal controversies; thus the truth is lost in altercation; thus charity expires in odious contention. If they call every word exotic, which cannot be found in the Scriptures in so many syllables, they impose on us a law which is very unreasonable, and which condemns all interpretation, but what is composed of detached texts of Scripture connected together. But if by exotic they mean that which is curiously contrived,

and superstitiously defended, which tends to contention more than to edification, the use of which is either unseasonable or unprofitable, which offends pious ears with its harshness, and seduces persons from the simplicity of the Divine word, I most cordially embrace their modest opinion. For I think that we ought to speak of God with the same religious caution, which should govern our thoughts of him; since all the thoughts that we entertain concerning him merely from ourselves, are foolish, and all our expressions absurd. But there is a proper medium to be observed: we should seek in the Scriptures a certain rule, both for thinking and for speaking; by which we may regulate all the thoughts of our minds, and all the words of our mouths. But what forbids our expressing, in plainer words, those things which, in the Scriptures, are, to our understanding, intricate and obscure, provided our expressions religiously and faithfully convey the true sense of the Scripture, and are used with modest caution, and not without sufficient occasion? Of this, examples sufficiently numerous are not wanting. But, when it shall have been proved, that the Church was absolutely necessitated to use the terms Trinity and Persons, if any one then censures the novelty of the words, may he not be justly considered as offended at the light of the truth? as having no other cause of censure, but that the truth is explained and elucidated?

IV. But such verbal novelty (if it must have this appellation) is principally used, when the truth is to be asserted in opposition to malicious cavillers, who elude it by crafty evasions; of which

we have too much experience in the present day, who find great difficulty in refuting the enemies of pure and sound doctrine: possessed of serpentine lubricity, they escape by the most artful expedients, unless they are vigorously pursued, and held fast when once caught. Thus the ancients, pestered with various controversies against erroneous dogmas, were constrained to express their sentiments with the utmost perspicuity, that they might leave no subterfuges to the impious, who availed themselves of obscure expressions, for the concealment of their errors. Unable to resist the clear testimonies of the Scriptures, Arius confessed Christ to be God, and the Son of God; and, as though this were all that was necessary, he pretended to agree with the Church at large. But, at the same time, he continued to maintain that Christ was created, and had a beginning like other creatures. To draw the versatile subtlety of this man from its concealment, the ancient Fathers proceeded further, and declared Christ to be the eternal Son of the Father, and consubstantial with the Father. Here impiety openly discovered itself, when the Arians began inveterately to hate and execrate the name ὁμοούσιος, (consubstantial.) But if, in the first instance, they had sincerely and cordially confessed Christ to be God, they would not have denied him to be consubstantial with the Father. Who can dare to censure those good men, as quarrelsome and contentious, for having kindled such a flame of controversy, and disturbed the peace of the Church on account of one little word? That little word distinguished Christians, who held the

pure faith, from sacrilegious Arians. Afterwards arose Sabellius, who considered the names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as little more than empty sounds; arguing, that they were not used on account of any real distinction, but were different attributes of God, whose attributes of this kind are numerous. If the point came to be controverted, he confessed, that he believed the Father to be God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; but he would readily evade all the force of this confession, by adding, that he had said no other than if he had called God potent, and just, and wise. And thus he came to another conclusion, that the Father is the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is the Father, without any order or distinction. The good doctors of that age, who had the interest of religion at heart, in order to counteract the wickedness of this man, maintained, on the contrary, that they ought really to acknowledge three peculiar properties in one God. And, to defend themselves against his intricate subtleties, by the plain and simple truth, they affirmed, that they truly subsisted in the one God; or, what is the same, that in the unity of God there subsisted a trinity of Persons.

V. If, then, the words have not been rashly invented, we should beware lest we be convicted of fastidious temerity in rejecting them. I could wish them, indeed, to be buried in oblivion, provided this faith were universally received, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are the one God; and that nevertheless the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are distinguished from each other by some peculiar property. I

am not so rigidly precise as to be fond of contending for mere words. For I observe that the ancients, who otherwise speak on these subjects with great piety, are not consistent with each other, nor, in all cases, with themselves. For what forms of expression, adopted by councils, does Hilary excuse! To what extremes does Augustine sometimes proceed! How different are the Greeks from the Latins! But of this variation, let one example suffice: when the Latins would translate the word ὁμοούσιος, they called it *consubstantial*, signifying the *substance* of the Father and the Son to be one, and thus using *substance* for *essence*. Whence also Jerome, writing to Damasus, pronounces it to be sacrilege to say that there are three *substances* in God. Yet, that there are three *substances* in God, you will find asserted in Hilary more than a hundred times. But how perplexed is Jerome on the word *hypostasis*! For he suspects some latent poison in the assertion, that there are three *hypostases* in God. And if any one uses this word in a pious sense, he refrains not from calling it an improper expression; if, indeed, he was sincere in this declaration, and did not rather knowingly and wilfully endeavour to asperse, with a groundless calumny, the bishops of the East, whom he hated. He certainly discovers not much ingenuousness in affirming that, in all the profane schools, οὐσία (essence) is the same as ὑπόστασις, (hypostasis,) which the trite and common use of the words universally contradicts. More modesty and liberality are discovered by Augustine, who, though he asserts that the word *hypostasis*, in this sense, is new

to Latin ears, yet leaves the Greeks their usual phraseology, and even peaceably tolerates the Latins, who had imitated their language; and the account of Socrates, in the sixth book of his Tripartite History, seems to imply, that it was by ignorant men that it had first been improperly applied to this subject. The same Hilary accuses the heretics of a great crime, in constraining him, by their wickedness, to expose to the danger of human language those things which ought to be confined within the religion of the mind; plainly avowing that this is to do things unlawful, to express things inexpressible, to assume things not conceded. A little after, he largely excuses himself for his boldness in bringing forward new terms; for, when he has used the names of nature, Father, Son, and Spirit, he immediately adds, that whatever is sought further, is beyond the signification of language, beyond the reach of our senses, beyond the conception of our understanding. And, in another place, he pronounces that happy were the bishops of Gaul, who had neither composed, nor received, nor even known, any other confession but that ancient and very simple one, which had been received in all the churches from the days of the Apostles. Very similar is the excuse of Augustine, that this word was extorted by necessity, on account of the poverty of human language on so great a subject, not for the sake of expressing what God is, but to avoid passing it over in total silence, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three. This moderation of those holy men should teach us, not to pass such severe censures on those who are unwilling to subscribe

to expressions adopted by us, provided they are not actuated by pride, perverseness, or disingenuous subtlety. But let them also, on the other hand, consider the great necessity which constrains us to use such language, that, by degrees, they may at length be accustomed to a useful phraseology. Let them also learn to beware, since we have to oppose the Arians on one side, and the Sabellians on the other, lest, while they take offence at both these parties being deprived of all opportunity of evasion, they cause some suspicion that they are themselves the disciples either of Arius or of Sabellius. Arius confesses, “that Christ is God;” but maintains also, “that he was created, and had a beginning.” He acknowledges that Christ is “one with the Father;” but secretly whispers in the ears of his disciples, that he is “united to him,” like the rest of the faithful, though by a singular privilege. Say that he is *consubstantial*, you tear off the mask from the hypocrite, and yet you add nothing to the Scriptures. Sabellius asserts, “that the names Father, Son, and Spirit, are expressive of no distinction in the Godhead.” Say that they are three, and he will exclaim, that you are talking of “three gods.” Say, “that in the one essence of God there is a trinity of Persons,” and you will at once express what the Scriptures declare, and will restrain such frivolous loquacity. Now, if any persons are prevented, by such excessive scrupulousness, from admitting these terms, yet not one of them can deny, that, when the Scripture speaks of one God, it should be understood of a unity of substance; and that, when it speaks of three in one essence, it denotes the Persons in

this trinity. When this is honestly confessed, we have no further concern about words. But I have found, by long and frequent experience, that those who pertinaciously contend about words, cherish some latent poison; so that it were better designedly to provoke their resentment, than to use obscure language for the sake of obtaining their favour.

VI. But, leaving the dispute about terms, I shall now enter on the discussion of the subject itself. What I denominate a Person, is a subsistence in the Divine essence, which is related to the others, and yet distinguished from them by an incommunicable property. By the word *subsistence* we mean something different from the word *essence*. For, if the *Word* were simply God, and had no peculiar property, John had been guilty of impropriety in saying that he was always *with God*.¹⁹² When he immediately adds, that *the Word* also *was God*, he reminds us of the unity of the essence. But because he could not be *with God*, without subsisting in the Father, hence arises that subsistence, which, although inseparably connected with the essence, has a peculiar mark, by which it is distinguished from it. Now, I say that each of the three subsistences has a relation to the others, but is distinguished from them by a peculiar property. We particularly use the word *relation*, (or *comparison*,) here, because, when mention is made simply and indefinitely of God, this name pertains no less to the Son and Spirit, than to the Father. But whenever the Father is compared with the

¹⁹² John i. 1.

Son, the property peculiar to each distinguishes him from the other. Thirdly, whatever is proper to each of them, I assert to be incommunicable, because whatever is ascribed to the Father as a character of distinction, cannot be applied or transferred to the Son. Nor, indeed, do I disapprove of the definition of Tertullian, if rightly understood: "That there is in God a certain distribution or economy, which makes no change in the unity of the essence."

VII. But before I proceed any further, I must prove the Deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; after which we shall see how they differ from each other. When the Scripture speaks of *the Word of God*, it certainly were very absurd to imagine it to be only a transient and momentary sound, emitted into the air, and coming forth from God himself; of which nature were the oracles, given to the fathers, and all the prophecies. It is rather to be understood of the eternal wisdom residing in God, whence the oracles, and all the prophecies, proceeded. For, according to the testimony of Peter,¹⁹³ the ancient Prophets spake by the Spirit of Christ no less than the Apostles and all the succeeding ministers of the heavenly doctrine. But, as Christ had not yet been manifested, we must necessarily understand that the Word was begotten of the Father before the world began. And if the Spirit that inspired the Prophets was the Spirit of the Word, we conclude, beyond all doubt, that the Word was truly God. And this is taught by Moses, with sufficient perspicuity, in the creation of the world, in which he represents the Word as acting

¹⁹³ 1 Pet. i. 11.

such a conspicuous part. For why does he relate that God, in the creation of each of his works, said, Let this or that be done, but that the unsearchable glory of God may resplendently appear in his image? Captious and loquacious men would readily evade this argument, by saying, that the *Word* imports an order or command; but the Apostles are better interpreters, who declare, that the worlds were created by the Son, and that he “upholds all things by the word of his power.”¹⁹⁴ For here we see that the *Word* intends the nod or mandate of the Son, who is himself the eternal and essential Son of the Father. Nor, to the wise and sober, is there any obscurity in that passage of Solomon, where he introduces Wisdom as begotten of the Father before time began, and presiding at the creation of the world, and over all the works of God. For, to pretend that this denotes some temporary expression of the will of God, were foolish and frivolous; whereas God then intended to discover his fixed and eternal counsel, and even something more secret. To the same purpose also is that assertion of Christ, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”¹⁹⁵ For, by affirming that, from the beginning of the world, he had continually coöperated with the Father, he makes a more explicit declaration of what had been briefly glanced at by Moses. We conclude, therefore, that God spake thus at the creation, that the Word might have his part in the work, and so that operation be common to both. But John speaks more clearly than all others,

¹⁹⁴ Heb. i. 2, 3.

¹⁹⁵ John v. 17.

when he represents *the Word*, who from the beginning *was God with God*, as in union with the Father, the original cause of all things. For to the Word he both attributes a real and permanent essence, and assigns some peculiar property; and plainly shows how God, by speaking, created the world. Therefore, as all Divine revelations are justly entitled *the word of God*, so we ought chiefly to esteem that substantial Word the source of all revelations, who is liable to no variation, who remains with God perpetually one and the same, and who is God himself.

VIII. Here we are interrupted by some clamorous objectors, who, since they cannot openly rob him of his divinity, secretly steal from him his eternity. For they say, that the Word only began to exist, when God opened his sacred mouth in the creation of the world. But they are too inconsiderate in imagining something new in the substance of God. For, as those names of God, which relate to his external works, began to be ascribed to him after the existence of those works, as when he is called the Creator of heaven and earth, so piety neither acknowledges nor admits any name, signifying that God has found any thing new to happen to himself. For, could any thing, from any quarter, effect a change in him, it would contradict the assertion of James, that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.”¹⁹⁶ Nothing, then, is more intolerable, than to suppose a beginning of that Word, which was always God,

¹⁹⁶ James i. 17.

and afterwards the Creator of the world. But they argue, in their own apprehension most acutely, that Moses, by representing God as having then spoken for the first time, implies also, that there was no Word in him before; than which nothing is more absurd. For it is not to be concluded, because any thing begins to be manifested at a certain time, that it had no prior existence. I form a very different conclusion; that, since, in the very instant when God said, "Let there be light,"¹⁹⁷ the power of the Word was clearly manifested, the Word must have existed long before. But if any one inquires, how long, he will find no beginning. For he limits no certain period of time, when he himself says, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."¹⁹⁸ Nor is this omitted by John; for, before he descends to the creation of the world, he declares that the Word "was in the beginning with God."¹⁹⁹ We therefore conclude again, that the Word, conceived of God before time began, perpetually remained with him, which proves his eternity, his true essence, and his divinity.

IX. Though I advert not yet to the person of the Mediator, but defer it to that part of the work which will relate to redemption, yet, since it ought, without controversy, to be believed by all, that Christ is the very same Word clothed in flesh, any testimonies which assert the Deity of Christ, will be very properly introduced

¹⁹⁷ Gen. i. 3.

¹⁹⁸ John xvii. 5.

¹⁹⁹ John i. 2.

here. When it is said, in the forty-fifth Psalm, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,” the Jews endeavour to evade its force, by pleading that the name Elohim is applicable also to angels, and to men of dignity and power. But there cannot be found in the Scripture a similar passage, which erects an eternal throne for a creature; for he is not merely called God, but is also declared to possess an eternal dominion. Besides, this title is never given to a creature, without some addition, as when it is said that Moses should be “a god to Pharaoh.”²⁰⁰ Some read it in the genitive case, “Thy throne is of God,” which is extremely insipid. I confess, indeed, that what is eminently and singularly excellent, is frequently called Divine; but it sufficiently appears from the context, that such a meaning would be uncouth and forced, and totally inapplicable here. But, if their perverseness refuse to yield this point, there certainly is no obscurity in Isaiah, where he introduces Christ as God, and as crowned with supreme power, which is the prerogative of God alone. “His name,” says he, “shall be called the Mighty God, the Father of eternity,” &c.²⁰¹ Here also the Jews object, and invert the reading of the passage in this manner: “This is the name by which the mighty God, the Father of eternity, shall call him,” &c.; so that they would leave the Son only the title of Prince of peace. But to what purpose would so many epithets be accumulated in this passage on God the Father, when the design of the prophet is to

²⁰⁰ Exod. vii. 1.

²⁰¹ Isaiah ix. 6.

distinguish Christ by such eminent characters as may establish our faith in him? Wherefore, there can be no doubt that he is there denominated the Mighty God, just as, a little before, he is called Immanuel. But nothing can be required plainer than a passage in Jeremiah, that this should be the name whereby the Branch of David shall be called “Jehovah our righteousness.”²⁰² For since the Jews themselves teach, that all other names of God are mere epithets, but that this alone, which they call ineffable, is a proper name expressive of his Essence, we conclude, that the Son is the one eternal God, who declares, in another place, that he “will not give his glory to another.”²⁰³ This also they endeavour to evade, because Moses imposed this name on an altar which he built, and Ezekiel on the city of the new Jerusalem. But who does not perceive, that the altar was erected as a monument of Moses having been exalted by God, and that Jerusalem is honoured with the name of God, only as a testimony of the Divine presence? For thus speaks the prophet: “The name of the city shall be, Jehovah is there.”²⁰⁴ But Moses expresses himself thus: He “built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi,” (my exaltation.)²⁰⁵ But there is more contention about another passage of Jeremiah, where the same title is given to Jerusalem in these words: “This is the name wherewith she shall

²⁰² Jer. xxiii. 6.

²⁰³ Isaiah xlii. 8.

²⁰⁴ Ezek. xlvi. 35.

²⁰⁵ Exod. xvii. 15.

be called, Jehovah our righteousness.”²⁰⁶ But this testimony is so far from opposing the truth which we are defending, that it rather confirms it. For, having before testified that Christ is the true Jehovah, from whom righteousness proceeds, he now pronounces that the church will have such a clear apprehension of it, as to be able to glory in the same name. In the former place, then, is shown the original cause of righteousness, in the latter the effect.

X. Now, if these things do not satisfy the Jews, I see not by what cavils they can evade the accounts of Jehovah having so frequently appeared in the character of an angel. An angel is said to have appeared to the holy fathers. He claims for himself the name of the eternal God. If it be objected, that this is spoken with regard to the character which he sustains, this by no means removes the difficulty. For a servant would never rob God of his honour, by permitting sacrifice to be offered to himself. But the angel, refusing to eat bread, commands a sacrifice to be offered to Jehovah. He afterwards demonstrates that he is really Jehovah himself. Therefore Manoah and his wife conclude, from this evidence, that they have seen, not a mere angel, but God himself. Hence he says, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God.” When his wife replies, “If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received” a sacrifice “at our hands,”²⁰⁷ she clearly acknowledges him to be God, who before is called an angel. Moreover, the reply of the angel himself removes every doubt:

²⁰⁶ Jer. xxxiii. 16.

²⁰⁷ Judges xiii. 22, 23.

“Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is wonderful?” So much the more detestable is the impiety of Servetus, in asserting that God never appeared to Abraham and the other patriarchs, but that they worshipped an angel in his stead. But the orthodox doctors of the church have truly and wisely understood and taught, that the same chief angel was the Word of God, who even then began to perform some services introductory to his execution of the office of Mediator. For though he was not yet incarnate, he descended, as it were, in a mediatorial capacity, that he might approach the faithful with greater familiarity. His familiar intercourse with men gave him the name of an angel; yet he still retained what properly belonged to him, and continued the ineffably glorious God. The same truth is attested by Hosea, who, after relating the wrestling of Jacob with an angel, says, “The Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial.”²⁰⁸ Servetus again cavils, that God employed the person of an angel; as though the prophet did not confirm what had been delivered by Moses, – “Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?” And the confession of the holy patriarch, when he says, “I have seen God face to face,”²⁰⁹ sufficiently declares, that he was not a created angel, but one in whom resided the fulness of Deity. Hence, also, the representation of Paul, that Christ was the conductor of the people in the wilderness; because, though the time of his humiliation was not yet arrived, the eternal Word then

²⁰⁸ Hosea xii. 5.

²⁰⁹ Gen. xxxii. 29, 30.

exhibited a type of the office to which he was appointed. Now, if the second chapter of Zechariah be strictly and coolly examined, the angel who sends another angel is immediately pronounced the God of hosts, and supreme power is ascribed to him. I omit testimonies innumerable on which our faith safely rests, although they have little influence on the Jews. For when it is said in Isaiah, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah;”²¹⁰ all who have eyes may perceive that this is God, who arises for the salvation of his people. And the emphatical repetition of these pointed expressions forbids an application of this passage to any other than to Christ. But still more plain and decisive is a passage of Malachi, where he prophesies, that “the Lord, who was then sought, should come into his temple.”²¹¹ The temple was exclusively consecrated to the one Most High God; yet the prophet claims it as belonging to Christ. Whence it follows, that he is the same God that was always worshipped among the Jews.

XI. The New Testament abounds with innumerable testimonies. We must, therefore, endeavour briefly to select a few, rather than to collect them all. Though the Apostles spake of him after he had appeared in flesh as the Mediator, yet all that I shall adduce will be adapted to prove his eternal Deity. In the first place, it is worthy of particular observation, that the apostle represents those things which were predicted

²¹⁰ Isaiah xxv. 9.

²¹¹ Mal. iii. 1.

concerning the eternal God, as either already exhibited in Christ, or to be accomplished in him at some future period. The prediction of Isaiah, that the Lord of Hosts would be “for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel,”²¹² Paul asserts to have been fulfilled in Christ.²¹³ Therefore he declares, that Christ is the Lord of Hosts. There is a similar instance in another place: “We shall all stand,” says he, “before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”²¹⁴ Since God, in Isaiah,²¹⁵ declares this concerning himself, and Christ actually exhibits it in his own person, it follows, that he is that very God, whose glory cannot be transferred to another. The apostle's quotation from the Psalms also, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, is evidently applicable to none but God: “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive:”²¹⁶ understanding that ascension to have been prefigured by the exertions of the Divine power in the signal victories of David over the heathen nations, he signifies, that the text was more fully accomplished in Christ. Thus John attests that it was the glory of the Son which was revealed in a vision to Isaiah; whereas the prophet himself records that he saw the majesty

²¹² Isaiah viii. 14.

²¹³ Rom ix. 33.

²¹⁴ Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

²¹⁵ Isaiah xlv. 23.

²¹⁶ Eph. iv. 8. Psalm lxviii. 18.

of God.²¹⁷ And those praises which the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ascribes to the Son, beyond all doubt most evidently belong to God: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands,” &c. Again, “Let all the angels of God worship him.”²¹⁸ Nor is it any misapplication of them, when he refers them to Christ; since all that is predicted in those Psalms has been accomplished only by him. For it was He who arose and had mercy upon Zion; it was He who claimed as his own the dominion over all nations and islands. And why should John, after having affirmed, at the commencement of his Gospel,²¹⁹ that the Word was always God, have hesitated to attribute to Christ the majesty of God? And why should Paul have been afraid to place Christ on the tribunal of God,²²⁰ after having so publicly preached his Divinity, when he called him “God blessed for ever?”²²¹ And, to show how consistent he is with himself on this subject, he says, also, that “God was manifest in the flesh.”²²² If he is “God blessed for ever,” he is the same to whom this apostle, in another place, affirms all glory and honour to be due. And he conceals not, but openly proclaims, that, “being in the form of God,” he

²¹⁷ John xii. 41. Isaiah vi. 1.

²¹⁸ Heb. i. 6, 10.

²¹⁹ John i. 1, 14.

²²⁰ 2 Cor. v. 10.

²²¹ Rom ix. 5.

²²² 1 Tim. iii. 16.

“thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.”²²³ And, lest the impious might object, that he is a sort of artificial God, John goes further, and affirms, that “This is the true God, and eternal life;”²²⁴ although we ought to be fully satisfied by his being called God, especially by a witness who expressly avers that there are no more gods than one; I mean Paul, who says, “though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; to us there is but one God, of whom are all things.”²²⁵ When we hear, from the same mouth, that “God was manifested in the flesh,” that “God hath purchased the Church with his own blood,” – why do we imagine a second God, whom he by no means acknowledges? And there is no doubt that all the pious were of the same opinion. Thomas, likewise, by publicly confessing him to be “his Lord and God,” declares him to be the same true God whom he had always worshipped.²²⁶

XII. If we judge of his Divinity from the works which the Scriptures attribute to him, it will thence appear with increasing evidence. For when he said, that he had, from the beginning, continually coöperated with the Father, the Jews, stupid as they were about his other declarations, yet perceived, that he assumed to himself Divine power; and, therefore, as John informs us, they “sought the more to kill him; because he not only had broken the

²²³ Philip. ii. 6.

²²⁴ 1 John v. 20.

²²⁵ 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

²²⁶ John xx. 28.

sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”²²⁷ How great, then, must be our stupidity, if we perceive not this passage to be a plain assertion of his Divinity! To preside over the world by his almighty providence, and to govern all things by the rod of his own power, (which the Apostle attributes to him,) ²²⁸ belongs exclusively to the Creator. And he participates with the Father, not only in the government of the world, but also in all other offices, which cannot be communicated to creatures. The Lord proclaims, by the prophet, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake.”²²⁹ According to this declaration, when the Jews thought that Christ committed an injury against God, by undertaking to forgive sins,²³⁰ he not only asserted in express terms, that this power belonged to him, but proved it by a miracle. We see, therefore, that he hath not the ministry, but the power of remission of sins, which the Lord declares shall never be transferred from himself to another. Is it not the prerogative of God alone to examine and penetrate the secret thoughts of the heart? Yet Christ possessed that power; which is a proof of his Divinity.

XIII. But with what perspicuity of evidence does it appear in his miracles! Though I grant that the Prophets and Apostles

²²⁷ John v. 18.

²²⁸ Heb. i. 3.

²²⁹ Isaiah xliii. 25.

²³⁰ Matt. ix. 6.

performed miracles similar and equal to his, yet there is a considerable difference in this respect, that they, in their ministry, dispensed the favours of God, whereas his miracles were performed by his exertions of his own power. He sometimes, indeed, used prayer, that he might glorify the Father; but, in most instances, we perceive the manifest displays of his own power. And how should not he be the true author of miracles, who, by his own authority, committed the dispensation of them to others? For the Evangelists relate, that he gave his Apostles power to raise the dead, to heal the leprous, to cast out devils, &c.²³¹ And they performed that ministry in such a manner, as plainly to discover, that the power proceeded solely from Christ. “In the name of Jesus Christ,” says Peter, “arise and walk.”²³² It is no wonder, therefore, that Christ should bring forward his miracles,²³³ to convince the incredulity of the Jews, since, being performed by his own power, they afforded most ample evidence of his Divinity. Besides, if out of God there be no salvation, no righteousness, no life, but Christ contains all these things in himself, it certainly demonstrates him to be God. Let it not be objected, that life and salvation are infused into him by God; for he is not said to have received salvation, but to be himself salvation. And if no one be good but God alone,²³⁴ how

²³¹ Matt. x. 8. Mark iii. 15.

²³² Acts iii. 6.

²³³ John v. 36; x. 37.

²³⁴ Matt. xix. 17.

can he be a mere man who is, I will not say good and righteous, but goodness and righteousness itself? Even from the beginning of the creation, according to the testimony of an Evangelist, “in him was life; and the life” then existed as “the light of men.” Supported by such proofs, therefore, we venture to repose our faith and hope on him; whereas we know that it is impious and sacrilegious for any man to place his confidence in creatures. He says, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”²³⁵ And in this sense Paul interprets two passages of Isaiah – “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Again, “There shall be a root of Jesse, that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.”²³⁶ And why should we search for more testimonies from Scripture, when this declaration occurs so frequently, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life”?²³⁷ The invocation, arising from faith, is also directed to him; which, nevertheless, peculiarly belongs, if any thing peculiarly belongs, to the Divine majesty. For a prophet says, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord (Jehovah) shall be delivered.”²³⁸ And Solomon, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”²³⁹ But the name of Christ is invoked for salvation: it follows, therefore, that he is Jehovah. Moreover,

²³⁵ John xiv. 1.

²³⁶ Isaiah xxviii. 16; xi. 10. Rom. x. 11; xv. 12.

²³⁷ John vi. 47.

²³⁸ Joel ii. 32.

²³⁹ Prov. xviii. 10.

we have an example of such invocation in Stephen, when he says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”²⁴⁰ And afterwards in the whole Church, as Ananias testifies in the same book: “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints – that call on thy name.”²⁴¹ And to make it more clearly understood, that “all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily in Christ,” the Apostle confesses that he had introduced among the Corinthians no other doctrine than the knowledge of him, and that this had been the only subject of his preaching.²⁴² What a remarkable and important consideration is it, that the name of the Son only is preached to us, whereas God commands us to glory in the knowledge of himself alone!²⁴³ Who can dare to assert that he is a mere creature, the knowledge of whom is our only glory? It must also be remarked, that the salutations prefixed to the epistles of Paul implore the same blessings from the Son as from the Father; whence we learn, not only that those things, which our heavenly Father bestows, are obtained for us by his intercession, but that the Son, by a communion of power, is himself the author of them. This practical knowledge is unquestionably more certain and solid than any idle speculation. For then the pious mind has the nearest view of the Divine presence, and almost touches it, when it experiences itself to be quickened, illuminated, saved,

²⁴⁰ Acts vii. 59.

²⁴¹ Acts ix. 13, 14.

²⁴² 1 Cor. ii. 2.

²⁴³ Jer. ix. 24.

justified, and sanctified.

XIV. Wherefore the proof of the Deity of the Spirit must be derived principally from the same sources. There is no obscurity in the testimony of Moses, in the history of the creation, that the Spirit of God was expanded on the abyss or chaos;²⁴⁴ for it signifies, not only that the beautiful state of the world which we now behold owes its preservation to the power of the Spirit, but that, previously to its being thus adorned, the Spirit was engaged in brooding over the confused mass. The declaration of Isaiah bids defiance to all cavils: "And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me."²⁴⁵ For the Holy Spirit is united in the exercise of supreme power in the mission of Prophets, which is a proof of his Divine majesty. But the best confirmation, as I have remarked, we shall derive from familiar experience. For what the Scriptures ascribe to him, and what we ourselves learn by the certain experience of piety, is not at all applicable to any creature. For it is he who, being universally diffused, sustains and animates all things in heaven and in earth. And this very thing excludes him from the number of creatures, that he is circumscribed by no limits, but transfuses through all his own vigorous influence, to inspire them with being, life, and motion: this is clearly a work of Deity. Again, if regeneration to an incorruptible life be more important and excellent than any present life, what must we think of him from whose power it proceeds? But the Scripture teaches,

²⁴⁴ Gen. i. 2.

²⁴⁵ Isaiah xlviii. 16.

in various places, that he is the author of regeneration by a power not derived, but properly his own; and not of regeneration only, but likewise of the future immortality. Finally, to him, as well as to the Son, are applied all those offices which are peculiar to Deity. For he “searcheth even the deep things of God,”²⁴⁶ who admits no creature to a share in his councils. He bestows wisdom and the faculty of speech,²⁴⁷ whereas the Lord declares to Moses, that this can only be done by himself.²⁴⁸ So through him we attain to a participation of God, to feel his vivifying energy upon us. Our justification is his work. From him proceed power, sanctification, truth, grace, and every other blessing we can conceive; since there is but one Spirit, from whom every kind of gifts descends. For this passage of Paul is worthy of particular attention: “There are diversities of gifts, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Spirit;”²⁴⁹ because it represents him, not only as the principle and source of them, but also as the author; which is yet more clearly expressed a little after in these words: “All these worketh that only and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” For if he were not a subsistence in the Deity, judgment and voluntary determination would never be ascribed to him. Paul, therefore, very clearly attributes to the Spirit Divine power, and thereby

²⁴⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 10, 16.

²⁴⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 8.

²⁴⁸ Exod. iv. 11.

²⁴⁹ 1 Cor. xii. 4, &c.

demonstrates him to be an hypostasis or subsistence in God.

XV. Nor does the Scripture, when it speaks of him, refrain from giving him the appellation of God. For Paul concludes that we are the temple of God, because his Spirit dwelleth in us.²⁵⁰ This must not be passed over without particular notice, for the frequent promises of God, that he will choose us for a temple for himself, receive no other accomplishment, than by the inhabitation of his Spirit in us. Certainly, as Augustine excellently observes, “If we were commanded to erect to the Spirit a temple of wood and stone, forasmuch as God is the sole object of worship, it would be a clear proof of his Divinity; how much clearer, then, is the proof, now that we are commanded, not to erect one, but to be ourselves his temples!” And the Apostle calls us sometimes the temple of God, and sometimes the temple of the Holy Spirit, both in the same signification. Peter, reprehending Ananias for having “lied to the Holy Ghost,” told him that he had “not lied unto men, but unto God.”²⁵¹ And where Isaiah²⁵² introduces the Lord of hosts as the speaker, Paul²⁵³ informs us that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks. Indeed, while the Prophets invariably declare, that the words which they utter are those of the Lord of hosts, Christ and the Apostles refer them to the Holy Spirit; whence it follows, that he is the true

²⁵⁰ 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16.

²⁵¹ Acts v. 3, 4.

²⁵² Isaiah vi. 9.

²⁵³ Acts xxviii. 25.

Jehovah, who is the primary author of the prophecies. Again, God complains that his anger was provoked by the perverseness of the people; Isaiah, in reference to the same conduct, says, that “they vexed his Holy Spirit.”²⁵⁴ Lastly, if blasphemy against the Spirit be not forgiven, either in this world or in that which is to come,²⁵⁵ whilst a man may obtain pardon who has been guilty of blasphemy against the Son, this is an open declaration of his Divine majesty, to defame or degrade which is an inexpressible crime. I intentionally pass over many testimonies which were used by the fathers. To them there appeared much plausibility in citing this passage from David, “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth;”²⁵⁶ to prove that the creation of the world was the work of the Holy Spirit, as well as of the Son. But since a repetition of the same thing twice is common in the Psalms, and in Isaiah “the spirit of his mouth” means the same as “his word,” this is but a weak argument. Therefore I have determined to confine myself to a sober statement of those evidences on which pious minds may satisfactorily rest.

XVI. As God afforded a clearer manifestation of himself at the advent of Christ, the three Persons also then became better known. Among many testimonies, let us be satisfied with this one: Paul connects together these three, Lord, Faith, and

²⁵⁴ Isaiah lxiii. 10.

²⁵⁵ Matt. xii. 31. Mark iii. 29. Luke xii. 10.

²⁵⁶ Psalm xxxiii. 6.

Baptism,²⁵⁷ in such a manner as to reason from one to another. Since there is but one faith, hence he proves that there is but one Lord; since there is but one baptism, he shows that there is also but one faith. Therefore, if we are initiated by baptism into the faith and religion of one God, we must necessarily suppose him to be the true God, into whose name we are baptized. Nor can it be doubted but that in this solemn commission, “Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” Christ intended to testify, that the perfect light of faith was now exhibited. For this is equivalent to being baptized into the name of the one God, who hath clearly manifested himself in the Father, Son, and Spirit; whence it evidently appears, that in the Divine Essence there exist three Persons, in whom is known the one God. And truly, since faith ought not to be looking about hither and thither, or to be wandering through the varieties of inconstancy, but to direct its views towards the one God, to be fixed on him, and to adhere to him, – it may easily be proved from these premises, that, if there be various kinds of faith, there must also be a plurality of gods. Baptism, being a sacrament of faith, confirms to us the unity of God, because it is but one. Hence, also, we conclude, that it is not lawful to be baptized, except into the name of the one God; because we embrace the faith of him, into whose name we are baptized. What, then, was intended by Christ, when he commanded baptism to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

²⁵⁷ Ephes. iv. 5.

the Holy Spirit, but that one faith ought to be exercised in the Father, Son, and Spirit? and what is that but a clear testimony, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are the one God? Therefore, since it is an undeniable truth, that there is one God, and only one, we conclude the Word and Spirit to be no other than the very Essence of the Deity. The greatest degree of folly was betrayed by the Arians, who confessed the Divinity of the Son, but denied him to possess the substance of God. Nor were the Macedonians free from a similar delusion, who would explain the term “Spirit” to mean only the gifts of grace conferred upon man. For as wisdom, understanding, prudence, fortitude, and the fear of the Lord, proceed from him, so he alone is the Spirit of wisdom, prudence, fortitude, and piety. Nor is he himself divided according to the distribution of his graces; but, as the Apostle declares, how variously soever they are divided, he always remains one and the same.²⁵⁸

XVII. On the other hand, also, we find in the Scriptures a distinction between the Father and the Word, between the Word and the Spirit; in the discussion of which the magnitude of the mystery reminds us that we ought to proceed with the utmost reverence and sobriety. I am exceedingly pleased with this observation of Gregory Nazianzen: “I cannot think of the *one*, but I am immediately surrounded with the splendour of the *three*; nor can I clearly discover the *three*, but I am suddenly carried back to the *one*.” Wherefore let us not imagine such a

²⁵⁸ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

trinity of Persons, as includes an idea of separation, or does not immediately recall us to the unity. The names of Father, Son, and Spirit, certainly imply a real distinction; let no one suppose them to be mere epithets, by which God is variously designated from his works; but it is a distinction, not a division. The passages already cited show, that the Son has a property, by which he is distinguished from the Father; because the Word had not been with God, or had his glory with the Father, unless he had been distinct from him. He likewise distinguishes the Father from himself, when he says, “that there is another that beareth witness of him.”²⁵⁹ And to the same effect is what is declared in another place, that the Father created all things by the Word; which he could not have done, unless he had been in some sense distinct from him. Besides, the Father descended not to the earth, but he who came forth from the Father. The Father neither died nor rose again, but he who was sent by the Father. Nor did this distinction commence at the incarnation, but it is evident, that, before that period, he was the only begotten in the bosom of the Father.²⁶⁰ For who can undertake to assert, that the Son first entered into the bosom of the Father, when he descended from heaven to assume a human nature? He, therefore, was in the bosom of the Father before, and possessed his glory with the Father. The distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Father is announced

²⁵⁹ John v. 32; viii. 16, 18.

²⁶⁰ John i. 18.

by Christ, when he says, that he “proceedeth from the Father.”²⁶¹ But how often does he represent him as another, distinct from himself! as when he promises that “another Comforter”²⁶² should be sent, and in many other places.

XVIII. I doubt the propriety of borrowing similitudes from human things, to express the force of this distinction. The fathers sometimes practise this method; but they likewise confess the great disproportion of all the similitudes which they introduce. Wherefore I greatly dread, in this instance, every degree of presumption; lest the introduction of any thing unseasonable should afford an occasion of calumny to the malicious, or of error to the ignorant. Yet it is not right to be silent on the distinction which we find expressed in the Scriptures; which is this – that to the Father is attributed the principle of action, the fountain and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the arrangement of all operations; and the power and efficacy of the action is assigned to the Spirit. Moreover, though eternity belongs to the Father, and to the Son and Spirit also, since God can never have been destitute of his wisdom or his power, and in eternity we must not inquire after any thing prior or posterior, – yet the observation of order is not vain or superfluous, while the Father is mentioned as first; in the next place the Son, as from him; and then the Spirit, as from both. For the mind of every man naturally inclines to the consideration, first, of God; secondly,

²⁶¹ John xv. 26.

²⁶² John xiv. 16.

of the wisdom emanating from him; and lastly, of the power by which he executes the decrees of his wisdom. For this reason the Son is said to be from the Father, and the Spirit from both the Father and the Son; and that in various places, but nowhere more clearly than in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the same Spirit is indifferently denominated “the Spirit of Christ,” and “the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead,” and that without any impropriety. For Peter also testifies that it was the Spirit of Christ by whom the prophets prophesied;²⁶³ whereas the Scripture so frequently declares that it was the Spirit of God the Father.

XIX. This distinction is so far from opposing the most absolute simplicity and unity of the Divine Being, that it affords a proof that the Son is one God with the Father, because he has the same Spirit with him; and that the Spirit is not a different substance from the Father and the Son, because he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. For the whole nature is in each hypostasis, and each has something peculiar to himself. The Father is entirely in the Son, and the Son entirely in the Father, according to his own declaration, “I am in the Father, and the Father in me;”²⁶⁴ nor do ecclesiastical writers allow that one is divided from the other by any difference of essence. “These distinctive appellations,” says Augustine, “denote their reciprocal relations to each other, and not the substance itself, which is

²⁶³ 1 Pet. i. 11.

²⁶⁴ John xiv. 10, 11.

but one.” This explanation may serve to reconcile the opinions of the fathers, which would otherwise appear totally repugnant to each other. For sometimes they state that the Son originates from the Father, and at other times assert that he has essential Divinity from himself, and so is, together with the Father, the one first cause of all. Augustine, in another place, admirably and perspicuously explains the cause of this diversity, in the following manner: “Christ, considered in himself, is called God; but with relation to the Father, he is called the Son.” And again, “The Father, considered in himself, is called God; but with relation to the Son, he is called the Father. He who, with relation to the Son, is called the Father, is not the Son; he who, with relation to the Father, is called the Son, is not the Father; they who are severally called the Father and the Son, are the same God.” Therefore, when we speak simply of the Son, without reference to the Father, we truly and properly assert him to be self-existent, and therefore call him the sole first cause; but, when we distinctly treat of the relation between him and the Father, we justly represent him as originating from the Father. The first book of Augustine on the Trinity is entirely occupied with the explication of this subject; and it is far more safe to rest satisfied with that relation which he states, than by curiously penetrating into the sublime mystery, to wander through a multitude of vain speculations.

XX. Therefore, let such as love sobriety, and will be contented with the measure of faith, briefly attend to what is useful to

be known; which is, that, when we profess to believe in one God, the word *God* denotes a single and simple essence, in which we comprehend three Persons, or hypostases; and that, therefore, whenever the word *God* is used indefinitely, the Son and Spirit are intended as much as the Father; but when the Son is associated with the Father, that introduces the reciprocal relation of one to the other; and thus we distinguish between the Persons. But, since the peculiar properties of the Persons produce a certain order, so that the original cause is in the Father, whenever the Father and the Son or Spirit are mentioned together, the name of God is peculiarly ascribed to the Father: by this method the unity of the essence is preserved, and the order is retained; which, however, derogates nothing from the Deity of the Son and Spirit. And indeed, as we have already seen that the Apostles assert him to be the Son of God, whom Moses and the Prophets have represented as Jehovah, it is always necessary to recur to the unity of the essence. Wherefore it would be a detestable sacrilege for us to call the Son another God different from the Father; because the simple name of God admits of no relation; nor can God, with respect to himself, be denominated either the one or the other. Now, that the name “Jehovah,” in an indefinite sense, is applicable to Christ, appears even from the words of Paul: “for this thing I besought the Lord thrice;”²⁶⁵ because, after relating the answer of Christ, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” he immediately subjoins, “That the power of Christ may rest

²⁶⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

upon me.” For it is certain that the word “Lord” is there used for “Jehovah;” and to restrict it to the person of the Mediator, would be frivolous and puerile, since it is an absolute declaration, containing no comparison between the Son and the Father. And we know that the Apostles, following the custom of the Greek translators, invariably use the word *Κυριος*, (Lord,) instead of Jehovah. And, not to seek far for an example of this, Paul prayed to the Lord in no other sense than is intended in a passage of Joel, cited by Peter: “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”²⁶⁶ But for the peculiar ascription of this name to the Son, another reason will be given in its proper place; suffice it at present to observe that, when Paul had prayed to God absolutely, he immediately subjoins the name of Christ. Thus also the whole Deity is by Christ himself denominated “a Spirit.” For nothing opposes the spirituality of the whole Divine essence, in which are comprehended the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; which is plain from the Scripture. For as we there find God denominated a Spirit, so we find also the Holy Spirit, forasmuch as he is an hypostasis of the whole essence, represented both as the Spirit of God, and as proceeding from God.

XXI. But since Satan, in order to subvert the very foundations of our faith, has always been exciting great contentions concerning the Divine essence of the Son and Spirit, and the distinction of the Persons; and in almost all ages has instigated impious spirits to vex the orthodox teachers on this account; and

²⁶⁶ Joel ii. 28-32. Acts ii. 16-21.

is also endeavouring, in the present day, with the old embers, to kindle a new flame; it becomes necessary here to refute the perverse and fanciful notions which some persons have imbibed. Hitherto it has been our principal design to instruct the docile, and not to combat the obstinate and contentious: but now, having calmly explained and proved the truth, we must vindicate it from all the cavils of the wicked; although I shall make it my principal study, that those who readily and implicitly attend to the Divine word, may have stable ground on which they may confidently rest. On this, indeed, if on any of the secret mysteries of the Scripture, we ought to philosophize with great sobriety and moderation; and also with extreme caution, lest either our ideas or our language should proceed beyond the limits of the Divine word. For how can the infinite essence of God be defined by the narrow capacity of the human mind, which could never yet certainly determine the nature of the body of the sun, though the object of our daily contemplation? How can the human mind, by its own efforts, penetrate into an examination of the essence of God, when it is totally ignorant of its own? Wherefore let us freely leave to God the knowledge of himself. For “he alone,” as Hilary says, “is a competent witness for himself, being only known by himself.” And we shall certainly leave it to him, if our conceptions of him correspond to the manifestations which he has given us of himself, and our inquiries concerning him are confined to his word. There are extant on this argument five homilies of Chrysostom against the Anomœi; which, however,

were not sufficient to restrain the presumptuous garrulity of those sophists. For they discovered no greater modesty in this instance than in every other. The very unhappy consequences of this temerity should warn us to study this question with more docility than subtlety, and not allow ourselves to investigate God any where but in his sacred word, or to form any ideas of him but such as are agreeable to his word, or to speak any thing concerning him but what is derived from the same word. But if the distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the one Deity, as it is not easy to be comprehended, occasions some understandings more labour and trouble than is desirable, let them remember that the mind of man, when it indulges its curiosity, enters into a labyrinth; and let them submit to be guided by the heavenly oracles, however they may not comprehend the height of this mystery.

XXII. To compose a catalogue of the errors, by which the purity of the faith has been attacked on this point of doctrine, would be too prolix and tedious, without being profitable; and most of the heretics so strenuously exerted themselves to effect the total extinction of the Divine glory by their gross reveries, that they thought it sufficient to unsettle and disturb the inexperienced. From a few men there soon arose numerous sects, of whom some would divide the Divine essence, and others would confound the distinction which subsists between the Persons. But if we maintain, what has already been sufficiently demonstrated from the Scripture, that the essence of the one

God, which pertains to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, is simple and undivided, and, on the other hand, that the Father is, by some property, distinguished from the Son, and likewise the Son from the Spirit, the gate will be shut, not only against Arius and Sabellius, but also against all the other ancient heresiarchs. But since our own times have witnessed some madmen, as Servetus and his followers, who have involved every thing in new subtleties, a brief exposure of their fallacies will not be unuseful. The word *Trinity* was so odious and even detestable to Servetus, that he asserted all Trinitarians, as he called them, to be Atheists. I omit his impertinent and scurrilous language, but this was the substance of his speculations: That it is representing God as consisting of three parts, when three Persons are said to subsist in his essence, and that this triad is merely imaginary, being repugnant to the Divine unity. At the same time, he maintained the Persons to be certain external ideas, which have no real subsistence in the Divine essence, but give us a figurative representation of God, under this or the other form; and that in the beginning there was no distinction in God, because the Word was once the same as the Spirit; but that, after Christ appeared God of God, there emanated from him another God, even the Spirit. Though he sometimes glosses over his impertinencies with allegories, as when he says, that the eternal Word of God was the Spirit of Christ with God, and the reflection of his image, and that the Spirit was a shadow of the Deity, yet he afterwards destroys the Deity of both, asserting that,

according to the mode of dispensation, there is a part of God in both the Son and the Spirit; just as the same Spirit, substantially diffused in us, and even in wood and stones, is a portion of the Deity. What he broached concerning the Person of the Mediator, we shall examine in the proper place. But this monstrous fiction, that a Divine Person is nothing but a visible appearance of the glory of God, will not need a prolix refutation. For when John pronounces that the Word (Λόγος) was God before the creation of the world, he sufficiently discriminates him from an ideal form. But if then also, and from the remotest eternity, that Word (Λόγος) who was God, was with the Father, and possessed his own glory with the Father, he certainly could not be an external or figurative splendour; but it necessarily follows, that he was a real hypostasis, subsisting in God himself. But although no mention is made of the Spirit, but in the history of the creation of the world, yet he is there introduced, not as a shadow, but as the essential power of God, since Moses relates that the chaotic mass was supported by him.²⁶⁷ It then appeared, therefore, that the eternal Spirit had always existed in the Deity, since he cherished and sustained the confused matter of the heaven and earth, till it attained a state of beauty and order. He certainly could not then be an image or representation of God, according to the dreams of Servetus. But in other places he is constrained to make a fuller disclosure of his impiety, saying that God, in his eternal reason, decreeing for himself a visible Son, has visibly exhibited himself

²⁶⁷ Gen. i. 2.

in this manner; for if this be true, there is no other Divinity left to Christ, than as he has been appointed a Son by an eternal decree of God. Besides, he so transforms those phantasms, which he substitutes instead of the hypostases, that he hesitates not to imagine new accidents or properties in God. But the most execrable blasphemy of all is, his promiscuous confusion of the Son of God and the Spirit with all the creatures. For he asserts that in the Divine essence there are parts and divisions, every portion of which is God; and especially that the souls of the faithful are coëternal and consubstantial with God; though in another place he assigns substantial Deity, not only to the human soul, but to all created things.

XXIII. From the same corrupt source has proceeded another heresy, equally monstrous. For some worthless men, to escape the odium and disgrace which attended the impious tenets of Servetus, have confessed, indeed, that there are three Persons, but with this explanation, that the Father, who alone is truly and properly God, hath created the Son and Spirit, and transfused his Deity into them. Nor do they refrain from this dreadful manner of expressing themselves, that the Father is distinguished from the Son and Spirit, as being the sole possessor of the Divine essence. Their first plea in support of this notion is, that Christ is commonly called the Son of God; whence they conclude that no other is properly God but the Father. But they observe not, that although the name of God is common also to the Son, yet that it is sometimes ascribed to the Father (κατ' ἑξοχην) by

way of eminence, because he is the fountain and original of the Deity; and this in order to denote the simple unity of the essence. They object, that if he is truly the Son of God, it is absurd to account him the Son of a Person. I reply, that both are true; that he is the Son of God, because he is the Word begotten of the Father before time began, for we are not yet speaking of the Person of the Mediator; and to be explicit, we must notice the Person, that the name of God may not be understood absolutely, but for the Father; for if we acknowledge no other to be God than the Father, it will be a manifest degradation of the dignity of the Son. Whenever mention is made of the Deity, therefore, there must no opposition be admitted between the Father and the Son, as though the name of the true God belonged exclusively to the Father. For surely the God who appeared to Isaiah, was the only true God;²⁶⁸ whom, nevertheless, John affirms to have been Christ.²⁶⁹ He likewise, who by the mouth of Isaiah declared that he was to be a rock of offence to the Jews, was the only true God;²⁷⁰ whom Paul pronounces to have been Christ.²⁷¹ He who proclaims by Isaiah, “As I live, every knee shall bow to me,”²⁷² is the only true God; but Paul applies the same to Christ.²⁷³ To the

²⁶⁸ Isaiah vi. 1.

²⁶⁹ John xii. 41.

²⁷⁰ Isaiah viii. 14.

²⁷¹ Rom. ix. 33.

²⁷² Isaiah xlv. 23.

²⁷³ Rom. xiv. 11.

same purpose are the testimonies recited by the Apostle – “Thou, Lord, hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens;” and “Let all the angels of God worship him.”²⁷⁴ These ascriptions belong only to the one true God; whereas he contends that they are properly applied to Christ. Nor is there any force in that cavil, that what is proper to God is transferred to Christ, because he is the brightness of his glory. For, since the name Jehovah is used in each of these passages, it follows that in respect of his Deity he is self-existent. For, if he is Jehovah, he cannot be denied to be the same God, who in another place proclaims by Isaiah, “I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”²⁷⁵ That passage in Jeremiah also deserves our attention – “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens;”²⁷⁶ whilst, on the contrary, it must be acknowledged, that the Deity of the Son of God is frequently proved by Isaiah from the creation of the world. But how shall the Creator, who gives existence to all, not be self-existent, but derive his essence from another? For whoever asserts that the Son owes his essence to the Father, denies him to be self-existent. But this is contradicted by the Holy Spirit, who gives him the name of Jehovah. Now, if we admit the whole essence to be solely in the Father, either it will be divisible, or it will be taken away from the Son; and so,

²⁷⁴ Heb. i. 6, 10. Psalm cii. 25; xcvi. 7.

²⁷⁵ Isaiah xlv. 6.

²⁷⁶ Jer. x. 11.

being despoiled of his essence, he will be only a titular god. The Divine essence, according to these triflers, belongs solely to the Father, inasmuch as he alone possesses it, and is the author of the essence of the Son. Thus the Divinity of the Son will be a kind of emanation from the essence of God, or a derivation of a part from the whole. Now, they must of necessity concede, from their own premises, that the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father only; because if he be a derivation from the original essence, which belongs exclusively to the Father, he cannot be accounted the Spirit of the Son; which is refuted by the testimony of Paul, where he makes him common to Christ and the Father. Besides, if the Person of the Father be expunged from the Trinity, wherein will he differ from the Son and Spirit, but in being himself the sole Deity? They confess that Christ is God, and yet differs from the Father. Some distinctive character is necessary, also, to discriminate the Father from the Son. They who place this in the essence, manifestly destroy the true Deity of Christ, which cannot exist independently of the essence, that is, of the entire essence. The Father certainly cannot differ from the Son, unless he have something peculiar to himself, which is not common to the Son. What will they find, by which to distinguish him? If the difference be in the essence, let them tell us whether he has communicated the same to the Son. But this could not be done partially; for it would be an abomination to fabricate a demigod. Besides, this would miserably dismember the Divine essence. The necessary conclusion then is, that it is entirely and

perfectly common to the Father and the Son. And if this be true, there cannot, in respect of the essence, be any difference between them. If it be objected that the Father, notwithstanding this communication of his essence, remains the only God with whom the essence continues, then Christ must be a figurative god, a god in appearance and name only, not in reality; because nothing is more proper to God than to be, according to that declaration, "I AM hath sent me unto you."²⁷⁷

XXIV. We might readily prove from many passages the falsehood of their assumption, that, whenever the name of God is mentioned absolutely in the Scripture, it means only the Father. And in those places which they cite in their own defence, they shamefully betray their ignorance, since the Son is there added; from which it appears, that the name of God is used in a relative sense, and therefore is particularly restricted to the Person of the Father. Their objection, that, unless the Father alone were the true God, he would himself be his own Father, is answered in a word. For there is no absurdity in the name of God, for the sake of dignity and order, being peculiarly given to him, who not only hath begotten of himself his own wisdom, but is also the God of the Mediator, of which I shall treat more at large in its proper place. For since Christ was manifested in the flesh, he is called the Son of God, not only as he was the eternal Word begotten of the Father before time began, but because he assumed the person and office of a Mediator, to unite us to God. And since they so

²⁷⁷ Exod. iii. 14.

presumptuously exclude the Son from Divine honours, I would wish to be informed, when he declares that there is none good but the one God,²⁷⁸ whether he deprives himself of all goodness. I speak not of his human nature, lest they should object, that, whatever goodness it had, it was gratuitously conferred on it. I demand whether the eternal Word of God be good or not. If they answer in the negative, they are sufficiently convicted of impiety; and if in the affirmative, they cut the throat of their own system. But though, at the first glance, Christ seems to deny himself the appellation of good, he furnishes, notwithstanding, a further confirmation of our opinion. For, as that is a title which peculiarly belongs to the one God, forasmuch as he had been saluted as good, merely according to a common custom, by his rejection of false honour, he suggested that the goodness which he possessed was Divine. I demand, also, when Paul affirms that God alone is immortal, wise, and true,²⁷⁹ whether he thereby degrades Christ to the rank of those who are mortal, unwise, and false. Shall not he then be immortal who from the beginning was life itself, and the giver of immortality to angels? Shall not he be wise who is the eternal Wisdom of God? Shall not he be true who is truth itself? I demand further, whether they think that Christ ought to be worshipped. For, if he justly claims this as his right, that every knee should bow before him,²⁸⁰ it follows

²⁷⁸ Matt. xix. 17.

²⁷⁹ 1 Tim. i. 17.

²⁸⁰ Phil. ii. 10.

that he is that God, who, in the law, prohibited the worship of any one but himself. If they will have this passage in Isaiah, “I am, and there is no God besides me,” to be understood solely of the Father, I retort this testimony on themselves; since we see that whatever belongs to God is attributed to Christ. Nor is there any room for their cavil, that Christ was exalted in the humanity in which he had been abased; and that, with regard to his humanity, all power was given to him in heaven and in earth; because, although the regal and judicial majesty extends to the whole Person of the Mediator, yet, had he not been God manifested in the flesh, he could not have been exalted to such an eminence, without God being in opposition to himself. And Paul excellently determines this controversy, by informing us that he was equal with God, before he abased himself under the form of a servant.²⁸¹ Now, how could this equality subsist, unless he had been that God whose name is Jah and Jehovah, who rides on the cherubim, whose kingdom is universal and everlasting? No clamour of theirs can deprive Christ of another declaration of Isaiah: “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him;”²⁸² since in these words he describes the advent of God the Redeemer, not only for the deliverance of the people from exile in Babylon, but also for the complete restoration of the church. Nor do they gain any thing by another cavil, that Christ was God in his Father. For although we confess, in point of

²⁸¹ Phil. ii. 6, 7.

²⁸² Isaiah xxv. 9.

order and degree, that the Father is the fountain of the Deity, yet we pronounce it a detestable figment, that the essence belongs exclusively to the Father, as though he were the author of the Deity of the Son; because, on this supposition, either the essence would be divided, or Christ would be only a titular and imaginary god. If they admit that the Son is God, but inferior to the Father, then in him the essence must be begotten and created, which in the Father is unbegotten and uncreated. I know that some scorners ridicule our concluding a distinction of Persons from the words of Moses, where he introduces God thus speaking: "Let us make man in our image."²⁸³ Yet pious readers perceive how frigidly and foolishly Moses would have introduced this conference, if in one God there had not subsisted a plurality of Persons. Now, it is certain that they whom the Father addressed, were uncreated; but there is nothing uncreated, except the one God himself. Now, therefore, unless they grant that the power to create, and the authority to command, were common to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, it will follow, that God did not speak thus within himself, but directed his conversation to some exterior agents. Lastly, one place will easily remove their two objections at once. For when Christ himself declares, that God is a Spirit, it would be unreasonable to restrict this solely to the Father, as though the Word were not also of a spiritual nature. But if the name of Spirit is equally as applicable to the Son as to the Father, I conclude that the Son is comprehended under

²⁸³ Gen. i. 26.

the indefinite name of God. Yet he immediately subjoins, that none are approved worshippers of the Father, but those who worship him in spirit and in truth.²⁸⁴ Whence follows another consequence, that, because Christ performs the office of a Teacher, in a station of inferiority, he ascribes the name of God to the Father, not to destroy his own Deity, but by degrees to raise us to the knowledge of it.

XXV. But they deceive themselves in dreaming of three separate individuals, each of them possessing a part of the Divine essence. We teach, according to the Scriptures, that there is essentially but one God; and, therefore, that the essence of both the Son and the Spirit is unbegotten. But since the Father is first in order, and hath of himself begotten his wisdom, therefore, as has before been observed, he is justly esteemed the original and fountain of the whole Divinity. Thus God, indefinitely, is unbegotten; and the Father also is unbegotten with regard to his Person. They even foolishly suppose, that our opinion implies a quaternity; whereas they are guilty of falsehood and calumny, in ascribing to us a figment of their own; as though we pretended that the three Persons are as so many streams proceeding from one essence, when it is evident, from our writings, that we separate not the Persons from the essence, but, though they subsist in it, make a distinction between them. If the persons were separated from the essence, there would perhaps be some probability in their argument; but then there would be a trinity

²⁸⁴ John iv. 24.

of Gods, not a trinity of persons contained in one God. This solves their frivolous question, whether the essence concurs to the formation of the Trinity; as though we imagined three Gods to descend from it. Their objection, that then the Trinity would be without God, is equally impertinent. Because, though it concurs not to the distinction as a part or member, yet the Persons are not independent of it, nor separate from it; for the Father, unless he were God, could not be the Father; and the Son is the Son only as he is God. Therefore we say, that the Deity is absolutely self-existent; whence we confess, also, that the Son, as God, independently of the consideration of Person, is self-existent; but as the Son, we say, that he is of the Father. Thus his essence is unoriginated; but the origin of his Person is God himself. And, indeed, the orthodox writers, who have written on the Trinity, have referred this name only to the Persons; since to comprehend the essence in that distinction, were not only an absurd error, but a most gross impiety. For it is evident that those who maintain that the Trinity consists in a union of the Essence, the Son, and the Spirit, annihilate the essence of the Son and of the Spirit; otherwise the parts would be destroyed by being confounded together; which is a fault in every distinction. Finally, if the words *Father* and *God* were synonymous – if the Father were the author of the Deity – nothing would be left in the Son but a mere shadow; nor would the Trinity be any other than a conjunction of the one God with two created things.

XXVI. Their objection, that Christ, if he be properly God, is

not rightly called the Son of God, has already been answered; for when a comparison is made between one Person and another, the word *God* is not used indefinitely, but is restricted to the Father, as being the fountain of the Deity, not with regard to the essence, as fanatics falsely pretend, but in respect of order. This is the sense in which we ought to understand that declaration of Christ to his Father: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."²⁸⁵ For, speaking in the capacity of Mediator, he holds an intermediate station between God and men; yet without any diminution of his majesty. For, although he abased himself, yet he lost not his glory with the Father, which was hidden from the world. Thus the Apostle to the Hebrews,²⁸⁶ though he acknowledges that Christ was made for a short time inferior to the angels, yet, nevertheless, hesitates not to assert, that he is the eternal God, who laid the foundation of the earth. We must remember, therefore, that whenever Christ, in the capacity of Mediator, addresses the Father, he comprehends, under the name of God, the Divinity which belongs also to himself. Thus, when he said to his Apostles, "I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I,"²⁸⁷ he attributes not to himself a secondary Divinity, as if he were inferior to the Father with respect to the eternal essence, but because, having obtained the glory of heaven, he gathers together

²⁸⁵ John xvii. 3.

²⁸⁶ Heb. i. 10; ii. 9.

²⁸⁷ John xiv. 28.

the faithful to a participation of it with him; he represents the Father to be in a station superior to himself, just as the illustrious perfection of the splendour which appears in heaven excels that degree of glory which was visible in him during his incarnate state. For the same reason, Paul says, in another place, that Christ “shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.”²⁸⁸ Nothing would be more absurd than to deny perpetual duration to the Deity of Christ. Now, if he will never cease to be the Son of God, but will remain for ever the same as he has been from the beginning, it follows, that by the name *Father* is intended the one sole Divine essence, which is common to them both. And it is certain that Christ descended to us, in order that, exalting us to the Father, he might at the same time exalt us to himself also, as being one with the Father. It is therefore neither lawful nor right to restrict the name of God exclusively to the Father, and to deny it to the Son. For even on this very account John asserts him to be the true God,²⁸⁹ that no one might suppose, that he possessed only a secondary degree of Deity, inferior to the Father. And I wonder what can be the meaning of these fabricators of new gods, when, after confessing that Christ is the true God, they immediately exclude him from the Deity of the Father; as though there could be any true God but one alone, or as though a transfused Divinity were any thing but a novel fiction.

²⁸⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

²⁸⁹ 1 John v. 20.

XXVII. Their accumulation of numerous passages from Irenæus, where he asserts the Father of Christ to be the only and eternal God of Israel, is a proof either of shameful ignorance, or of consummate wickedness. For they ought to have considered, that that holy man was then engaged in a controversy with some madmen, who denied that the Father of Christ was the same God that has spoken by Moses and the Prophets, but maintained that he was I know not what sort of phantasm, produced from the corruption of the world. His only object, therefore, is to show that no other God is revealed in the Scripture than the Father of Christ, and that it is impious to imagine any other; and therefore we need not wonder at his frequently concluding, that there never was any other God of Israel than he who was preached by Christ and his Apostles. So, now, on the other hand, when a different error is to be opposed, we shall truly assert, that the God who appeared formerly to the patriarchs, was no other than Christ. If it be objected that it was the Father, we are prepared to reply, that, while we contend for the Divinity of the Son, we by no means reject that of the Father. If the reader attends to this design of Irenæus, all contention will cease. Moreover, the whole controversy is easily decided by the sixth chapter of the third book, where the good man insists on this one point: That he who is absolutely and indefinitely called God in the Scripture, is the only true God; but that the name of God is given absolutely to Christ. Let us remember that the point at issue, as appears from the whole treatise, and particularly from the forty-sixth chapter

of the second book, was this: That the appellation of Father is not given in an enigmatical and parabolical sense to one who is not truly God. Besides, in another place he contends, that the Son is called God, as well as the Father, by the Prophets and Apostles. He afterwards states how Christ, who is Lord, and King, and God, and Judge of all, received power from him who is God of all; and that is with relation to the subjection in which he was humbled even to the death of the cross. And a little after he affirms, that the Son is the Creator of heaven and earth, who gave the law by the hand of Moses, and appeared to the patriarchs. Now, if any one pretends that Irenæus acknowledges the Father alone as the God of Israel, I shall reply, as is clearly maintained by the same writer, that Christ is one and the same; as also he applies to him the prophecy of Habakkuk: "God shall come from the south." To the same purpose is what we find in the ninth chapter of the fourth book: "Therefore Christ himself is, with the Father, the God of the living." And in the twelfth chapter of the same book he states, that Abraham believed in God, inasmuch as Christ is the Creator of heaven and earth, and the only God.

XXVIII. Their pretensions to the sanction of Tertullian are equally unfounded, for, notwithstanding the occasional harshness and obscurity of his mode of expression, yet he unequivocally teaches the substance of the doctrine which we are defending; that is, that whereas there is one God, yet by dispensation or economy there is his Word; that there is but one God in the unity of the substance, but that the unity, by a mysterious dispensation,

is disposed into a trinity; that there are three, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in order. He says, indeed, that he maintains the Son to be second to the Father; but he applies this only to the distinction of the Persons. He says somewhere, that the Son is visible; but after having stated arguments on both sides, he concludes that, as the Word, he is invisible. Lastly, his assertion that the Father is designated by his Person, proves him to be at the greatest distance from the notion which we are refuting. And though he acknowledges no other God than the Father, yet the explanations which he gives in the immediate context show that he speaks not to the exclusion of the Son, when he denies the existence of any other God than the Father; and that therefore the unity of Divine government is not violated by the distinction of persons. And from the nature and design of his argument it is easy to gather the meaning of his words. For he contends, in opposition to Praxeas, that although God is distinguished into three Persons, yet neither is there a plurality of gods, nor is the unity divided. And because, according to the erroneous notion of Praxeas, Christ could not be God, without being the Father, therefore Tertullian bestows so much labour upon the distinction. His calling the Word and Spirit a portion of the whole, though a harsh expression, yet is excusable; since it has no reference to the substance, but only denotes the disposition and economy, which belongs solely to the Persons, according to the testimony of Tertullian himself. Hence also that question, “How many Persons suppose you that there

are, O most perverse Praxeas, but as many as there are names?" So, a little after, "that they may believe the Father and the Son, both in their names and Persons." These arguments, I conceive, will suffice to refute the impudence of those who make use of the authority of Tertullian in order to deceive the minds of the simple.

XXIX. And certainly, whoever will diligently compare the writings of the fathers, will find in Irenæus nothing different from what was advanced by others who succeeded him. Justin Martyr is one of the most ancient; and he agrees with us in every point. They may object that the Father of Christ is denominated the one God by him as well as by the rest. The same is asserted also by Hilary, and even in harsher terms: he says, that eternity is in the Father; but does this imply a denial of the Divine essence to the Son? On the contrary, he had no other design than to maintain the same faith which we hold. Nevertheless, they are not ashamed to cull out mutilated passages, in order to induce a belief that he patronized their error. If they wish any authority to be attached to their quotation of Ignatius, let them prove that the Apostles delivered any law concerning Lent, and similar corruptions; for nothing can be more absurd than the impertinencies which have been published under the name of Ignatius. Wherefore their impudence is more intolerable, who disguise themselves under such false colours for the purpose of deception. Moreover, the consent of antiquity manifestly appears from this circumstance, that in the Nicene Council, Arius never

dared to defend himself by the authority of any approved writer; and not one of the Greek or Latin fathers, who were there united against him, excused himself as at all dissenting from his predecessors. With regard to Augustine, who experienced great hostility from these disturbers, his diligent examination of all the writings of the earlier fathers, and his respectful attention to them, need not be mentioned. If he differs from them in the smallest particulars, he assigns the reasons which oblige him to dissent from them. On this argument also, if he finds any thing ambiguous or obscure in others, he never conceals it. Yet he takes it for granted, that the doctrine which those men oppose has been received without controversy from the remotest antiquity; and yet that he was not uninformed of what others had taught before him, appears even from one word in the first book of his Treatise on the Christian Doctrine, where he says, that unity is in the Father. Will they pretend that he had then forgotten himself? But he elsewhere vindicates himself from this calumny, where he calls the Father the fountain of the whole Deity, because he is from no other; wisely considering that the name of God is especially ascribed to the Father, because, unless the original be from him, it is impossible to conceive of the simple unity of the Deity. These observations, I hope, will be approved by the pious reader, as sufficient to refute all the calumnies, with which Satan has hitherto laboured to pervert or obscure the purity of this doctrine. Finally, I trust that the whole substance of this doctrine has been faithfully stated and explained, provided my

readers set bounds to their curiosity, and are not unreasonably fond of tedious and intricate controversies. For I have not the least expectation of giving satisfaction to those who are pleased with an intemperance of speculation. I am sure I have used no artifice in the omission of any thing, from a supposition that it would make against me. But, studying the edification of the Church, I have thought it better not to touch upon many things, which would be unnecessarily burdensome to the reader, without yielding him any profit. For to what purpose is it to dispute, whether the Father be always begetting? For it is foolish to imagine a continual act of generation, since it is evident that three Persons have subsisted in God from all eternity.

Chapter XIV. The True God Clearly Distinguished In The Scripture From All Fictitious Ones By The Creation Of The World

Although Isaiah²⁹⁰ brings a just accusation of stupidity against the worshippers of fictitious deities, for not having learned, from the foundations of the earth, and the circuit of the heavens, who was the true God, yet such is the slowness and dulness of our minds, as to induce a necessity for a more express exhibition of the true God, lest the faithful should decline to the fictions of the heathen. For, since the most tolerable description given by the philosophers, that God is the soul of the world, is utterly vain and worthless, we require a more familiar knowledge of him, to prevent us from wavering in perpetual uncertainty. Therefore he hath been pleased to give us a history of the creation, on which the faith of the Church might rest, without seeking after any other God than him whom Moses has represented as the former and builder of the world. The first thing specified in this history is the time, that by a continued series of years the faithful might arrive at the first original of the human race, and of all things. This knowledge is eminently useful, not only to contradict the

²⁹⁰ Isaiah xl. 21.

monstrous fables formerly received in Egypt and other countries, but also to give us clearer views of the eternity of God, and to fill us with greater admiration of it. Nor ought we to be moved with that profane sneer, that it is marvellous that God did not form the design of creating heaven and earth at an earlier period, but suffered an immeasurable duration to pass away unemployed, since he could have made them many thousands of ages before; whereas the continuance of the world, now advancing to its last end, has not yet reached six thousand years. For the reason why God deferred it so long, it would be neither lawful nor expedient to inquire; because, if the human mind strive to penetrate it, it will fail a hundred times in the attempt; nor, indeed, could there be any utility in the knowledge of that which God himself, in order to prove the modesty of our faith, has purposely concealed. Great shrewdness was discovered by a certain pious old man, who, when some scoffer ludicrously inquired what God had been doing before the creation of the world, replied that he had been making hell for over curious men. This admonition, no less grave than severe, should repress the wantonness which stimulates many, and impels them to perverse and injurious speculations. Lastly, let us remember that God, who is invisible, and whose wisdom, power, and justice, are incomprehensible, has placed before us the history of Moses, as a mirror which exhibits his lively image. For as eyes, either dim through age, or dull through any disease, see nothing distinctly without the assistance of spectacles, so, in our inquiries after God, such is our

imbecility, without the guidance of the Scripture we immediately lose our way. But those who indulge their presumption, since they are now admonished in vain, will perceive too late, by their horrible destruction, how much better it would have been to look up to the secret counsels of God with reverential awe, than to disgorge their blasphemies to darken the heaven. Augustine justly complains, that it is an offence against God, to inquire for any cause of things, higher than his will. He elsewhere prudently cautions us, that it is as absurd to dispute concerning an infinite duration of time, as concerning an infinite extent of place. However extensive the circuit of the heavens, yet certainly it has some dimensions. Now, if any one should expostulate with God, that the vacuity of space is a hundred times larger, would not such arrogance be detested by all pious persons? The same madness is chargeable on those who censure the inaction of God, for not having, according to their wishes, created the world innumerable ages before. To gratify their inordinate curiosity, they desire to pass beyond the limits of the world; as though, in the very ample circumference of heaven and earth, we were not surrounded by numerous objects capable of absorbing all our senses in their inestimable splendour; as though, in the course of six thousand years, God had not given us lessons sufficient to exercise our minds in assiduous meditation on them. Then let us cheerfully remain within these barriers with which God has been pleased to circumscribe us, and as it were to confine our minds, that they might not be wandering in the boundless regions of uncertain

conjecture.

II. To the same purpose is the narration of Moses, that the work of God was completed, not in one moment, but in six days. For by this circumstance also we are called away from all false deities to the only true God, who distributed his work into six days, that it might not be tedious to us to occupy the whole of life in the consideration of it. For though, whithersoever we turn our eyes, they are constrained to behold the works of God, yet we see how transient our attention is, and, if we are touched with any pious reflections, how soon they leave us again. Here, also, human reason murmurs, as though such progressive works were inconsistent with the power of Deity; till, subdued to the obedience of faith, it learns to observe that rest, to which the sanctification of the seventh day invites us. Now, in the order of those things, we must diligently consider the paternal love of God towards the human race, in not creating Adam before he had enriched the earth with an abundant supply of every thing conducive to his happiness. For had he placed him in the earth while it remained barren and vacant, had he given him life before there was any light, he would have appeared not very attentive to his benefit. Now, when he has regulated the motions of the sun and the stars for the service of man, replenished the earth, the air, and the waters, with living creatures, and caused the earth to produce an abundance of all kinds of fruits sufficient for sustenance, he acts the part of a provident and sedulous father of a family, and displays his wonderful goodness towards us. If the

reader will more attentively consider with himself these things, which I only hint at as I proceed, he will be convinced that Moses was an authentic witness and herald of the one God, the Creator of the world. I pass over what I have already stated, that he not only speaks of the mere essence of God, but also exhibits to us his eternal Wisdom and his Spirit, in order that we may not dream of any other God except him who will be known in that express image.

III. But before I begin to enlarge on the nature of man, something must be said concerning angels. Because, though Moses, in the history of the creation, accommodating himself to the ignorance of the common people, mentions no other works of God than such as are visible to our eyes, yet, when he afterwards introduces angels as ministers of God, we may easily conclude, that he is their Creator, whom they obey, and in whose service they are employed. Though Moses, therefore, speaking in a popular manner, does not, in the beginning of his writings, immediately enumerate the angels among the creatures of God, yet nothing forbids our here making a plain and explicit statement of those things which the Scripture teaches in other places; because, if we desire to know God from his works, such an excellent and noble specimen should by no means be omitted. Besides, this point of doctrine is very necessary for the confutation of many errors. The excellence of the angelic nature has so dazzled the minds of many, that they have supposed them to be injured, if they were treated as mere creatures, subject to

the government of one God. Hence they were falsely pretended to possess a kind of divinity. Manichæus has also arisen, with the sect which he founded, who imagined to himself two original principles, God and the devil; and attributed to God the origin of all good things, but referred evil natures to the production of the devil. If our minds were bewildered in this wild and incoherent system, we should not leave God in full possession of his glory in the creation of the world. For, since nothing is more peculiar to God than eternity and self-existence, does not the ascription of this to the devil dignify him with a title of Divinity? Now, where is the omnipotence of God, if such an empire be conceded to the devil, as that he can execute whatever he pleases, notwithstanding the aversion of the Divine will, or opposition of the Divine power? But the only foundation of the system of Manichæus, that it is unlawful to ascribe to a good God the creation of any evil thing, in no respect affects the orthodox faith, which admits not that any thing in the universe is evil in its nature; since neither the depravity and wickedness of men and devils, nor the sins which proceed from that source, are from mere nature, but from a corruption of nature; nor from the beginning has any thing existed, in which God has not given a specimen both of his wisdom and of his justice. To oppose these perverse notions, it is necessary to raise our minds higher than our eyes can reach. And it is very probable that it was with this design, when, in the Nicene creed, God is called the Creator of all things, that particular mention is made of things invisible. Yet it shall be my

study to observe the limit which the rule of piety prescribes, lest, by indulging an unprofitable degree of speculation, I should lead the reader astray from the simplicity of the faith. And certainly, since the Spirit invariably teaches us in a profitable manner, but, with regard to things of little importance to edification, either is wholly silent, or but lightly and cursorily touches on them, – it is also our duty cheerfully to remain in ignorance of what it is not for our advantage to know.

IV. Since angels are ministers of God appointed to execute his commands,²⁹¹ that they are also his creatures, ought to be admitted without controversy. And does it not betray obstinacy rather than diligence, to raise any contention concerning the time or the order in which they were created? Moses narrates, that “the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them:”²⁹² to what purpose is it anxiously to inquire, on what day, besides the stars and the planets, the other more concealed hosts of heaven began to exist? Not to be too prolix, let us remember on this point (as on the whole doctrine of religion) to observe one rule of modesty and sobriety; which is, not to speak, or think, or even desire to know, concerning obscure subjects, any thing beyond the information given us in the Divine word. Another rule to be followed is, in reading the Scripture, continually to direct our attention to investigate and meditate upon things conducive to edification; not to indulge curiosity or the study of things

²⁹¹ Psalm ciii. 20.

²⁹² Gen. ii. 1.

unprofitable. And, since the Lord has been pleased to instruct us, not in frivolous questions, but in solid piety, the fear of his name, true confidence, and the duties of holiness, let us content ourselves with that knowledge. Wherefore, if we wish to be truly wise, we must forsake the vain imaginations propagated by triflers concerning the nature, orders, and multitude of angels. I know that these things are embraced by many persons with greater avidity, and dwelt upon with more pleasure, than such things as are in daily use. But, if it be not irksome to be the disciples of Christ, it should not be irksome to follow that method which he has prescribed. Then the consequence will be, that, content with his discipline, we shall not only leave, but also abhor, those unprofitable speculations from which he calls us away. No man can deny that great subtlety and acuteness is discovered by Dionysius, whoever he was, in many parts of his treatise on the Celestial Hierarchy; but, if any one enters into a critical examination of it, he will find the greatest part of it to be mere babbling. But the duty of a theologian is, not to please the ear with empty sounds, but to confirm the conscience by teaching things which are true, certain, and profitable. A reader of that book would suppose that the author was a man descended from heaven, giving an account of things that he had not learned from the information of others, but had seen with his own eyes. But Paul, who was “caught up to the third heaven,”²⁹³ not only has told us no such things, but has even declared, that it is not lawful

²⁹³ 2 Cor. xii. 1, &c.

for men to utter the secret things which he had seen. Taking our leave, therefore, of this nugatory wisdom, let us consider, from the simple doctrine of the Scripture, what the Lord has been pleased for us to know concerning his angels.

V. We are frequently informed in the Scripture, that angels are celestial spirits, whose ministry and service God uses for the execution of whatever he has decreed; and hence this name is given to them, because God employs them as messengers to manifest himself to men. Other appellations also, by which they are distinguished, are derived from a similar cause. They are called Hosts, because, as life-guards, they surround their prince, aggrandizing his majesty, and rendering it conspicuous; and, like soldiers, are ever attentive to the signal of their leader; and are so prepared for the performance of his commands, that he has no sooner signified his will than they are ready for the work, or rather are actually engaged in it. Such a representation of the throne of God is exhibited in the magnificent descriptions of the Prophets, but particularly of Daniel; where he says, when God had ascended the judgment-seat, that “thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”²⁹⁴ Since by their means the Lord wonderfully exerts and declares the power and strength of his hand, thence they are denominated Powers.²⁹⁵ Because by them he exercises and administers his government in the world,

²⁹⁴ Daniel vii. 10.

²⁹⁵ Ephes. i. 21.

therefore they are called sometimes Principalities, sometimes Powers, sometimes Dominions. Lastly, because the glory of God in some measure resides in them, they have also, for this reason, the appellation of Thrones;²⁹⁶ although on this last name I would affirm nothing, because a different interpretation is equally or even more suitable. But, omitting this name, the Holy Spirit often uses the former ones, to magnify the dignity of the angelic ministry. Nor, indeed, is it right that no honour should be paid to those instruments, by whom God particularly exhibits the presence of his power. Moreover, they are more than once called gods; because in their ministry, as in a mirror, they give us an imperfect representation of Divinity. Though I am pleased with the interpretation of the old writers, on those passages where the Scripture records the appearance of an angel of God to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and others,²⁹⁷ that Christ was that angel, yet frequently, where mention is made of angels in general, this name is given to them. Nor should this surprise us; for, if that honour be given to princes and governors, because, in the performance of their functions, they are vicegerents of God, the supreme King and Judge,²⁹⁸ there is far greater reason for its being paid to angels, in whom the splendour of the Divine glory is far more abundantly displayed.

VI. But the Scripture principally insists on what might

²⁹⁶ Col. i. 16.

²⁹⁷ Gen. xviii. 2; xxxii. 1, 28. Josh. v. 13. Judges vi. 11; xiii. 3, 22.

²⁹⁸ Psalm lxxxii. 6.

conduce most to our consolation, and the confirmation of our faith – that the angels are the dispensers and administrators of the Divine beneficence towards us; and therefore it informs us, that they guard our safety, undertake our defence, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us. The declarations are universal, belonging primarily to Christ the head of the Church, and then to all the faithful: “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”²⁹⁹ Again, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”³⁰⁰ In these passages God shows that he delegates to his angels the protection of those whom he has undertaken to preserve. Accordingly, the angel of the Lord consoles the fugitive Hagar, and commands her to be reconciled to her mistress.³⁰¹ Abraham promises his servant that an angel should be the guide of his journey.³⁰² Jacob, in his benediction of Ephraim and Manasseh, prays that the angel of the Lord, by whom he had been redeemed from all evil, would cause them to prosper.³⁰³ Thus an angel was appointed to protect the camp of the Israelites;³⁰⁴ and whenever it pleased God

²⁹⁹ Psalm xci. 11, 12.

³⁰⁰ Psalm xxxiv. 7.

³⁰¹ Gen. xvi. 9.

³⁰² Gen. xxiv. 7.

³⁰³ Gen. xlviii. 16.

³⁰⁴ Exod. xiv. 19; xxiii. 20.

to deliver them from the hands of their enemies, he raised up avengers by the ministry of angels.³⁰⁵ And finally, to supersede the necessity of adducing more examples, angels ministered to Christ and attended him in all his difficulties; they announced his resurrection to the women, and his glorious advent to the disciples.³⁰⁶ And thus, in the discharge of their office as our protectors, they contend against the devil and all our enemies, and execute the vengeance of God on those who molest us; as we read that an angel of God, to deliver Jerusalem from a siege, slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the camp of the king of Assyria in one night.³⁰⁷

VII. But whether each of the faithful has a particular angel assigned him for his defence, I cannot venture certainly to affirm. When Daniel introduces the angel of the Persians and the angel of the Greeks,³⁰⁸ he clearly signifies that certain angels are appointed to preside over kingdoms and provinces. Christ also, when he says that the angels of children always behold the face of the Father,³⁰⁹ suggests, that there are certain angels who are charged with their safety. But I know not whether this justifies the conclusion, that every one of them has his particular guardian angel. Of this, indeed, we may be certain, that not one angel only

³⁰⁵ Judges ii. 1; vi. 11; xiii. 3, &c.

³⁰⁶ Matt. iv. 11. Luke xxii. 43. Matt. xxviii. 5. Luke xxiv. 4, 5. Acts i. 10.

³⁰⁷ 2 Kings xix. 35. Isaiah xxxvii. 36.

³⁰⁸ Daniel x. 13, 20; xii. 1.

³⁰⁹ Matt. xviii. 10.

has the care of every one of us, but that they all with one consent watch for our salvation. For it is said of all the angels together, that they rejoice more over one sinner turned to repentance, than over ninety and nine just persons who have persevered in their righteousness.³¹⁰ Of more than one angel it is said, that they carried the soul of Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham.³¹¹ Nor is it in vain that Elisha shows his servant so many fiery chariots, which were peculiarly assigned to him for his protection.³¹² There is one place which seems clearer than the rest in confirmation of this point. For when Peter, on his liberation from prison, knocked at the door of the house in which the brethren were assembled, as they could not suppose it to be Peter himself, they said it was his angel.³¹³ This conclusion seems to have arisen in their minds from the common opinion that each of the faithful has his guardian angel assigned him. But here it may also be replied, that nothing prevents this being understood of any one of the angels, to whom the Lord might have committed the care of Peter on that occasion, and who yet might not be his perpetual guardian; as it is vulgarly imagined that every person has two angels, a good one and a bad one, according to the heathen notion of different genii. But it is not worth while anxiously to investigate what it little concerns us to know. For if any one be not satisfied with this,

³¹⁰ Luke xv. 7.

³¹¹ Luke xvi. 22.

³¹² 2 Kings vi. 17.

³¹³ Acts xii. 15.

that all the orders of the celestial army watch for his safety, I see not what advantage he can derive from knowing that he has one particular angel given him for his guardian. But those who restrict to one angel the care which God exercises over every one of us, do a great injury to themselves, and to all the members of the Church; as though those auxiliaries had been promised in vain, who, by surrounding and defending us on all sides, contribute to increase our courage in the conflict.

VIII. Let those, who venture to determine concerning the multitude and orders of the angels, examine on what foundation their opinions rest. Michael, I confess, is called in Daniel “the great prince,” and in Jude “the archangel.”³¹⁴ And Paul informs us that it will be an archangel, who, with the sound of a trumpet, shall summon men to judgment.³¹⁵ But who, from these passages, can determine the degrees of honour among the angels, distinguish the individuals by their respective titles, and assign to every one his place and station? For the two names which are found in the Scripture, Michael and Gabriel, and the third, if you wish to add it from the history of Tobias,³¹⁶ may appear, from their significations, to be given to angels on account of our infirmity; though I would rather leave this undetermined. With respect to their numbers, we hear, from the mouth of Christ, of

³¹⁴ Daniel xii. 1. Jude, ver. 9.

³¹⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

³¹⁶ Daniel x. 13, 21; viii. 16; ix. 21. Luke i. 19, 26. Tob. iii. 17; v. 5.

many legions;³¹⁷ from Daniel, of many myriads:³¹⁸ the servant of Elisha saw many chariots; and their being said to encamp round about them that fear God,³¹⁹ is expressive of a great multitude. It is certain that spirits have no form; and yet the Scripture, on account of the slender capacity of our minds, under the names of cherubim and seraphim, represents angels to us as having wings, to prevent our doubting that they will always attend, with incredible celerity, to afford us assistance as soon as our cases require it; as though the lightning darted from heaven were to fly to us with its accustomed velocity. All further inquiries on both these points, we should consider as belonging to that class of mysteries, the full revelation of which is deferred to the last day. Wherefore let us remember that we ought to avoid too much curiosity of research, and presumption of language.

IX. But this, which is called in question by some restless men, must be received as a certain truth, that angels are ministering spirits, whose service God uses for the protection of his people, and by whom he dispenses his benefits among mankind, and executes his other works. It was the opinion of the ancient Sadducees, indeed, that the term *angels* signified nothing but the motions which God inspires into men, or those specimens which he gives of his power. But this foolish notion is repugnant to so many testimonies of Scripture, that it is surprising how such

³¹⁷ Matt. xxvi. 53.

³¹⁸ Daniel vii. 10.

³¹⁹ Psalm xxxiv. 7.

gross ignorance could have been tolerated among that people. For, to omit the places before cited, where mention is made of thousands and legions of angels; where joy is attributed to them; where they are said to sustain the faithful in their hands, to carry their souls into rest, to behold the face of the Father,³²⁰ and the like, – there are others which most clearly evince, that they are spirits possessing an actual existence and their own peculiar nature. For the declarations of Stephen and Paul, – that the law was given by the hand of angels,³²¹ and of Christ, that the elect, after the resurrection, shall be like angels; that the day of judgment is not known even to the angels; that he then will come with his holy angels,³²² – however tortured, must necessarily be thus understood. Likewise, when Paul charges Timothy, before Christ and the elect angels, to keep his precepts,³²³ he intends, not unsubstantial qualities or inspirations, but real spirits. Nor otherwise is there any meaning in what we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ is made more excellent than the angels, that the world is not subject to them, that Christ assumed not their nature, but the nature of man,³²⁴ unless we understand that there are happy spirits, to whom these comparisons may apply. And the author of the same epistle explains himself, where he

³²⁰ Luke xv. 10; iv. 10; xvi. 22. Psalm xci. 12. Matt. iv. 6; xviii. 10.

³²¹ Acts vii. 53. Gal. iii. 19.

³²² Matt. xxii. 30; xxiv. 36; xxv. 31. Luke ix. 26.

³²³ 1 Tim. v. 21.

³²⁴ Heb. i. 4; ii. 16.

places angels and the souls of the faithful together in the kingdom of God.³²⁵ Besides, we have already quoted, that the angels of children always behold the face of God; that we are always defended by their protection; that they rejoice for our safety; that they admire the manifold grace of God in the church;³²⁶ and are subject to Christ as their head.³²⁷ The same truth is proved by their having so often appeared to the patriarchs in the form of men, conversed with them, and been entertained by them. And Christ himself, on account of the preëminence which he obtains in the capacity of Mediator, is called an angel.³²⁸ I have thought proper cursorily to touch on this point, in order to fortify the simple against those foolish and absurd notions, which were disseminated by Satan many ages ago, and are frequently springing up afresh.

X. It remains for us to encounter the superstition, which generally insinuates itself into men's minds when angels are said to be the ministers and dispensers of all our blessings. For human reason soon falls into an opinion, that there is no honour that ought not to be paid to them. Thus it happens that what belongs solely to God and Christ, is transferred to them. Thus we see, that for some ages past the glory of Christ has in many ways been obscured; while angels have been loaded with extravagant

³²⁵ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

³²⁶ 1 Peter i. 12.

³²⁷ Heb. i. 6.

³²⁸ Mal. iii. 1.

honours without the authority of the word of God. And among the errors which we combat in the present day, there is scarcely one more ancient than this. For even Paul appears to have had a great controversy with some, who exalted angels in such a manner as almost to degrade Christ to an inferior station. Hence the solicitude with which he maintains, in the Epistle to the Colossians, not only that Christ is to be esteemed above angels, but also that he is the author of all blessings to them,³²⁹ in order that we may not forsake him and turn to them, who are not even sufficient for themselves, but draw from the same fountain as we do. Since the splendour of the Divine majesty, therefore, is eminently displayed in them, there is nothing more natural than for us to fall down with astonishment in adoration of them, and to attribute every thing to them which exclusively belongs to God. Even John, in the Revelation, confesses this to have happened to himself; but adds at the same time, that he was thus answered: “See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant: worship God.”³³⁰

XI. But this danger we shall happily avoid, if we consider why God is accustomed to provide for the safety of the faithful, and to communicate the gifts of his beneficence by means of angels, rather than by himself to manifest his own power without their intervention. He certainly does this not from necessity, as though he were unable to do without them; for whenever he pleases he passes them by, and performs his work with a mere nod of his

³²⁹ Col. i. 16, 20.

³³⁰ Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9.

power; so far is he from being indebted to their assistance for relieving him in any difficulty. This, therefore, conduces to the consolation of our imbecility, that we may want nothing that can either raise our minds to a good hope, or confirm them in security. This one thing, indeed, ought to be more than sufficient for us, that the Lord declares himself to be our Protector. But while we see ourselves encompassed with so many dangers, so many annoyances, such various kinds of enemies, – such is our weakness and frailty, that we may sometimes be filled with terror, or fall into despair, unless the Lord enables us, according to our capacity, to discover the presence of his grace. For this reason he promises, not only that he will take care of us himself, but also that we shall have innumerable life-guards, to whom he has committed the charge of our safety; and that, as long as we are surrounded by their superintendence and protection, whatever danger may threaten, we are placed beyond the utmost reach of evil. I confess, indeed, that it is wrong for us, after that simple promise of the protection of God alone, still to be looking around to see from what quarter our aid may come. But since the Lord, from his infinite clemency and goodness, is pleased to assist this our weakness, there is no reason why we should neglect this great favour which he shows us. We have an example of this in the servant of Elisha, who, when he saw that the mountain was besieged by an army of Syrians,³³¹ and that no way of escape was left, was filled with consternation, as though himself and his

³³¹ 2 Kings vi. 15, 16, 17.

master had been ruined. Then Elisha prayed that God would open his eyes, and he immediately saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire; that is, of a multitude of angels who were to guard him and the Prophet. Encouraged by this vision, he came to himself again, and was able to look down with intrepidity on the enemies, the sight of whom before had almost deprived him of life.

XII. Therefore, whatever is said concerning the ministry of angels, let us direct it to this end, that, overcoming all diffidence, our hope in God may be more firmly established. For the Lord has provided these guards for us, that we may not be terrified by a multitude of enemies, as though they could prevail in opposition to his assistance, but may have recourse to the sentiment expressed by Elisha, "There are more for us than against us." How preposterous is it, then, that we should be alienated from God by angels, who are appointed for this very purpose, to testify that his aid is more especially present with us! But they do alienate us from him, unless they lead us directly to him, to regard him, call on him, and celebrate him as our only helper; unless they are considered by us as his hands, which apply themselves to do nothing without his direction; unless they attach us to Christ, the only Mediator, to depend entirely on him, to lean upon him, to aspire to him, and to rest satisfied in him. For what is described in the vision of Jacob³³² ought to be firmly fixed in our minds, that the angels descend to the earth to men, and

³³² Gen. xxviii. 12.

ascend from earth to heaven, by a ladder above which stands the Lord of hosts. This implies, that it is only through the intercession of Christ, that we are favoured with the ministry of angels, as he himself affirms: “Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels descending upon the Son of man.”³³³ Therefore the servant of Abraham, having been commended to the care of an angel,³³⁴ does not therefore invoke him for his aid, but, trusting to that committal, pours out his prayers before the Lord, and entreats him to display his mercy towards Abraham. For as God does not make them the ministers of his power and goodness, in order to divide his glory with them, so neither does he promise his assistance in their ministry, that we may divide our confidence between them and him. Let us take our leave, therefore, of that Platonic philosophy, which seeks access to God by means of angels, and worships them in order to render him more propitious to us; which superstitious and curious men have endeavoured from the beginning, and even to this day persevere in attempting, to introduce into our religion.

XIII. The design of almost every thing that the Scripture teaches concerning devils, is that we may be careful to guard against their insidious machinations, and may provide ourselves with such weapons as are sufficiently firm and strong to repel the most powerful enemies. For when Satan is called the god

³³³ John i. 51.

³³⁴ Gen. xxiv. 7, 12, 27, 52.

and prince of this world,³³⁵ the strong man armed,³³⁶ the prince of the power of the air,³³⁷ a roaring lion,³³⁸ these descriptions only tend to make us more cautious and vigilant, and better prepared to encounter him. This is sometimes signified in express words. For Peter, after having said that “the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour,” immediately subjoins an exhortation to “resist him, steadfast in the faith.” And Paul, having suggested that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness,”³³⁹ immediately commands us to put on suitable armour for so great and so perilous a conflict. Wherefore, having been previously warned that we are perpetually threatened by an enemy, and an enemy desperately bold and extremely strong, skilled in every artifice, indefatigable in diligence and celerity, abundantly provided with all kinds of weapons, and most expert in the science of war, let us make it the grand object of our attention, that we suffer not ourselves to be oppressed with slothfulness and inactivity, but, on the contrary, arousing and collecting all our courage, be ready for a vigorous resistance; and as this warfare is terminated only by death, let us encourage

³³⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 4. John xii. 31.

³³⁶ Matt. xii. 29. Luke xi. 21.

³³⁷ Ephes. ii. 2.

³³⁸ 1 Peter v. 8, 9.

³³⁹ Ephes. vi. 12, &c.

ourselves to perseverance. But, above all, conscious of weakness and ignorance, let us implore the assistance of God, nor attempt any thing but in reliance on him; since he alone can supply us with wisdom, and strength, and courage, and armour.

XIV. But, the more to excite and urge us to such conduct, the Scripture announces that there are not one, or two, or a few enemies, but great armies who wage war against us. For even Mary Magdalene is said to have been delivered from seven demons, by whom she was possessed;³⁴⁰ and Christ declares it to be a common case, that, if you leave the place open for the re-entrance of a demon who has once been ejected, he associates with himself seven spirits more wicked still, and returns to his vacant possession.³⁴¹ Indeed, one man is said to have been possessed by a whole legion.³⁴² By these passages, therefore, we are taught, that we have to contend with an infinite multitude of enemies; lest, despising their paucity, we should be more remiss to encounter them, or, expecting sometimes an intermission of hostility, should indulge ourselves in idleness. But when one Satan or devil is frequently mentioned in the singular number, it denotes that principality of wickedness which opposes the kingdom of righteousness. For as the Church and society of saints have Christ as their head, so the faction of the impious, and impiety itself, are represented to us with their

³⁴⁰ Mark xvi. 9.

³⁴¹ Matt. xii. 43-45.

³⁴² Luke viii. 30.

prince, who exercises the supreme power among them; which is the meaning of that sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."³⁴³

XV. It also ought to stimulate us to a perpetual war with the devil, that he is every where called God's adversary and ours. For, if we feel the concern which we ought to feel for the glory of God, we shall exert all our power against him who attempts the extinction of it. If we are animated by a becoming zeal for defending the kingdom of Christ, we must necessarily have an irreconcilable war with him who conspires its ruin. On the other hand, if we are solicitous for our salvation, we ought to make neither peace nor truce with him who assiduously plots its destruction. Now, such is the description given of him in the third chapter of Genesis, where he seduces man from the obedience owed by him to God, so that he at once robs God of his just honour, and precipitates man into ruin. Such, also, is he described in the Evangelists, where he is called an enemy, and said to sow tares in order to corrupt the seed of eternal life.³⁴⁴ In short, the testimony of Christ concerning him, that he was a murderer and a liar from the beginning,³⁴⁵ we find verified in all his actions. For he opposes Divine truth with lies; obscures the light with shades of darkness; involves the minds of men in errors; stirs up animosities, and kindles contentions and wars; –

³⁴³ Matt. xxv. 41.

³⁴⁴ Matt. xiii. 25, 28.

³⁴⁵ John viii. 44.

and all for the purpose of subverting the kingdom of God, and plunging mankind with himself into eternal destruction. Whence it is evident, that he is naturally depraved, vicious, malignant, and mischievous. For there must be extreme depravity in that mind which is bent on opposing the glory of God and the salvation of men. And this is suggested by John in his Epistle, when he says, that “he sinneth from the beginning.” For he intends, that he is the author, conductor, and principal contriver of all wickedness and iniquity.

XVI. But since the devil was created by God, we must remark, that this wickedness which we attribute to his nature is not from creation, but from corruption. For whatever evil quality he has, he has acquired by his defection and fall. And of this the Scripture apprizes us; lest, believing him to have come from God, just as he now is, we should ascribe to God himself that which is in direct opposition to him. For this reason Christ declares, that Satan, “when he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own;”³⁴⁶ and adds the reason – “because he abode not in the truth.” When he says that he abode not in the truth, he certainly implies that he had once been in it; and when he calls him the father of a lie, he precludes his imputing to God the depravity of his nature, which originated wholly from himself. Though these things are delivered in a brief and rather obscure manner, yet they are abundantly sufficient to vindicate the majesty of God from every calumny. And what does it concern us to know, respecting devils,

³⁴⁶ John viii. 44.

either more particulars, or for any other purpose? Some persons are displeased that the Scripture does not give us, in various places, a distinct and detailed account of their fall, with its cause, manner, time, and nature. But, these things being nothing to us, it was better for them, if not to be passed over in total silence, yet certainly to be touched on but lightly; because it would ill comport with the dignity of the Holy Spirit to feed curiosity with vain and unprofitable histories; and we perceive it to have been the design of the Lord, to deliver nothing in his sacred oracles, which we might not learn to our edification. That we ourselves, therefore, may not dwell upon unprofitable subjects, let us be content with this concise information respecting the nature of devils; that at their creation they were originally angels of God, but by degenerating have ruined themselves, and become the instruments of perdition to others. This being useful to be known, it is clearly stated by Peter and Jude. “God,” say they, “spared not the angels that sinned, and kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.”³⁴⁷ And Paul, mentioning the elect angels,³⁴⁸ without doubt tacitly implies that there are reprobate ones.

XVII. The discord and contention, which we say Satan maintains against God, ought to be understood in a manner consistent with a firm persuasion, that he can do nothing without God's will and consent. For we read in the history of Job, that he presented himself before God to receive his commands, and

³⁴⁷ 2 Peter ii. 4. Jude, ver. 6.

³⁴⁸ 1 Tim. v. 21.

dared not to undertake any enterprise without having obtained his permission.³⁴⁹ Thus, also, when Ahab was to be deceived, he undertook to be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets; and, being commissioned by God, he performed it.³⁵⁰ For this reason he is also called the “evil spirit from the Lord,” who tormented Saul,³⁵¹ because he was employed as a scourge to punish the sins of that impious monarch. And elsewhere it is recorded, that the plagues were inflicted on the Egyptians by the “evil angels.”³⁵² According to these particular examples, Paul declares generally, that the blinding of unbelievers is the work of God,³⁵³ whereas he had before called it the operation of Satan. It appears, then, that Satan is subject to the power of God, and so governed by his control, that he is compelled to render obedience to him. Now, when we say that Satan resists God, and that his works are contrary to the works of God, we at the same time assert that this repugnance and contention depend on the Divine permission. I speak now, not of the will or the endeavour, but only of the effect. For the devil, being naturally wicked, has not the least inclination towards obedience to the Divine will, but is wholly bent on insolence and rebellion. It therefore arises from himself and his wickedness, that he opposes

³⁴⁹ Job i. 6; ii. 1.

³⁵⁰ 1 Kings xxii. 20, &c.

³⁵¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 14; xviii. 10.

³⁵² Psalm lxxviii. 49.

³⁵³ 2 Thess. ii. 9, 11.

God with all his desires and purposes. This depravity stimulates him to attempt those things which he thinks the most opposed to God. But since God holds him tied and bound with the bridle of his power, he executes only those things which are divinely permitted; and thus, whether he will or not, he obeys his Creator, being constrained to fulfil any service to which he impels him.

XVIII. While God directs the courses of unclean spirits hither and thither at his pleasure, he regulates this government in such a manner, that they exercise the faithful with fighting, attack them in ambuscades, harass them with incursions, push them in battles, and frequently fatigue them, throw them into confusion, terrify them, and sometimes wound them, yet never conquer or overwhelm them; but subdue and lead captive the impious, tyrannize over their souls and bodies, and abuse them like slaves by employing them in the perpetration of every enormity. The faithful, in consequence of being harassed by such enemies, are addressed with the following, and other similar exhortations: “Give not place to the devil.”³⁵⁴ “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.”³⁵⁵ Paul confesses that he himself was not free from this kind of warfare, when he declares that, as a remedy to subdue pride, “the messenger of Satan was given to him to buffet him.”³⁵⁶ This exercise, then, is common

³⁵⁴ Ephes. iv. 27.

³⁵⁵ 1 Peter v. 8.

³⁵⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 7.

to all the children of God. But, as the promise respecting the breaking of the head of Satan³⁵⁷ belongs to Christ and all his members in common, I therefore deny that the faithful can ever be conquered or overwhelmed by him. They are frequently filled with consternation, but recover themselves again; they fall by the violence of his blows, but are raised up again; they are wounded, but not mortally; finally, they labour through their whole lives in such a manner, as at last to obtain the victory. This, however, is not to be restricted to each single action. For we know that, by the righteous vengeance of God, David was for a time delivered to Satan, that by his instigation he might number the people;³⁵⁸ nor is it without reason that Paul admits a hope of pardon even for those who may have been entangled in the snares of the devil.³⁵⁹ Therefore the same Apostle shows, in another place, that the promise before cited is begun in this life, where we must engage in the conflict; and that after the termination of the conflict it will be completed. “And the God of peace,” he says, “shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”³⁶⁰ In our Head this victory, indeed, has always been complete, because the prince of this world had nothing in him;³⁶¹ in us, who are his members, it yet appears only in part, but will be completed when we shall have

³⁵⁷ Gen. iii. 15.

³⁵⁸ 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

³⁵⁹ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

³⁶⁰ Rom. xvi. 20.

³⁶¹ John xiv. 30.

put off our flesh, which makes us still subject to infirmities, and shall be full of the power of the Holy Spirit. In this manner, when the kingdom of Christ is erected, Satan and his power must fall; as the Lord himself says, “I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven.”³⁶² For by this answer he confirms what the Apostles had reported concerning the power of his preaching. Again: “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him,” &c.³⁶³ And to this end Christ by his death overcame Satan, who had the power of death, and triumphed over all his forces, that they might not be able to hurt the Church; for otherwise it would be in hourly danger of destruction. For such is our imbecility, and such the strength of his fury, how could we stand even for a moment against his various and unceasing attacks, without being supported by the victory of our Captain? Therefore God permits not Satan to exercise any power over the souls of the faithful, but abandons to his government only the impious and unbelieving, whom he designs not to number among his own flock. For he is said to have the undisturbed possession of this world, till he is expelled by Christ.³⁶⁴ He is said also to blind all who believe not the Gospel,³⁶⁵ and to work in the children of

³⁶² Luke x. 18.

³⁶³ Luke xi. 21.

³⁶⁴ John xii. 31.

³⁶⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

disobedience;³⁶⁶ and this justly, for all the impious are vessels of wrath.³⁶⁷ To whom, therefore, should they be subjected, but to the minister of the Divine vengeance? Finally, they are said to be of their father the devil;³⁶⁸ because, as the faithful are known to be the children of God from their bearing his image,³⁶⁹ so the impious, from the image of Satan into which they have degenerated, are properly considered as his children.

XIX. But as we have already confuted that nugatory philosophy concerning the holy angels, which teaches that they are nothing but inspirations, or good motions, excited by God in the minds of men, so in this place we must refute those who pretend that devils are nothing but evil affections or perturbations, which our flesh obtrudes on our minds. But this may be easily done, and that because the testimonies of Scripture on this subject are numerous and clear. First, when they are called unclean spirits and apostate angels,³⁷⁰ who have degenerated from their original condition, the very names sufficiently express, not mental emotions or affections, but rather in reality what are called minds, or spirits endued with perception and intelligence. Likewise, when the children of God are compared with the

³⁶⁶ Eph. ii. 2.

³⁶⁷ Rom. ix. 22.

³⁶⁸ John viii. 44.

³⁶⁹ 1 John iii. 10.

³⁷⁰ Matt. xii. 43. Jude 6.

children of the devil, both by Christ and by John,³⁷¹ would not the comparison be absurd, if nothing were intended by the word *devil* but evil inspirations? And John adds something still plainer, that the devil sins from the beginning. Likewise, when Jude introduces Michael the archangel contending with the devil,³⁷² he certainly opposes to the good angel an evil and rebellious one; to which agrees what is recorded in the history of Job, that Satan appeared with the holy angels before God.³⁷³ But the clearest of all are those passages, which mention the punishment which they begin to feel from the judgment of God, and are to feel much more at the resurrection: “Thou Son of God, art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”³⁷⁴ Also, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”³⁷⁵ Again, “If God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” &c.³⁷⁶ How unmeaning were these expressions, that the devils are appointed to eternal judgment; that fire is prepared for them; that they are now tormented and vexed by the glory of Christ, if there were no devils at all! But since this point is not a subject of dispute with those who give credit to

³⁷¹ John viii. 44. 1 John iii. 10.

³⁷² Jude 9.

³⁷³ Job i. 6; ii. 1.

³⁷⁴ Matt. viii. 29.

³⁷⁵ Matt. xxv. 41.

³⁷⁶ 2 Peter ii. 4.

the word of the Lord, but with those vain speculators who are pleased with nothing but novelty, little good can be effected by testimonies of Scripture. I consider myself as having done what I intended, which was to fortify the pious mind against such a species of errors, with which restless men disturb themselves and others that are more simple. But it was requisite to touch on it, lest any persons involved in that error, under a supposition that they have no adversary, should become more slothful and incautious to resist him.

XX. Yet let us not disdain to receive a pious delight from the works of God, which every where present themselves to view in this very beautiful theatre of the world. For this, as I have elsewhere observed, though not the principal, is yet, in the order of nature, the first lesson of faith, to remember that, whithersoever we turn our eyes, all the things which we behold are the works of God; and at the same time to consider, with pious meditation, for what end God created them. Therefore to apprehend, by a true faith, what it is for our benefit to know concerning God, we must first of all understand the history of the creation of the world, as it is briefly related by Moses, and afterwards more copiously illustrated by holy men, particularly by Basil and Ambrose. Thence we shall learn that God, by the power of his Word and Spirit, created out of nothing the heaven and the earth; that from them he produced all things, animate and inanimate; distinguished by an admirable gradation the innumerable variety of things; to every species gave its proper

nature, assigned its offices, and appointed its places and stations; and since all things are subject to corruption, has, nevertheless, provided for the preservation of every species till the last day; that he therefore nourishes some by methods concealed from us, from time to time infusing, as it were, new vigour into them, that on some he has conferred the power of propagation, in order that the whole species may not be extinct at their death; that he has thus wonderfully adorned heaven and earth with the utmost possible abundance, variety, and beauty, like a large and splendid mansion, most exquisitely and copiously furnished; lastly, that, by creating man, and distinguishing him with such splendid beauty, and with such numerous and great privileges, he has exhibited in him a most excellent specimen of all his works. But since it is not my design to treat at large of the creation of the world, let it suffice to have again dropped these few hints by the way. For it is better, as I have just advised the reader, to seek for fuller information on this subject from Moses, and others who have faithfully and diligently recorded the history of the world.

XXI. It is useless to enter into a prolix disputation respecting the right tendency and legitimate design of a consideration of the works of God, since this question has been, in a great measure, determined in another place, and, as much as concerns our present purpose, may be despatched in few words. Indeed, if we wished to explain how the inestimable wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, of God are manifested in the formation of the world, no splendour or ornament of diction will equal

the magnitude of so great a subject. And it is undoubtedly the will of the Lord, that we should be continually employed in this holy meditation; that, while we contemplate in all the creatures, as in so many mirrors, the infinite riches of his wisdom, justice, goodness, and power, we might not only take a transient and cursory view of them, but might long dwell on the idea, seriously and faithfully revolve it in our minds, and frequently recall it to our memory. But, this being a didactic treatise, we must omit those topics which require long declamations. To be brief, therefore, let the readers know, that they have then truly apprehended by faith what is meant by God being the Creator of heaven and earth, if they, in the first place, follow this universal rule, not to pass over, with ungrateful inattention or oblivion, those glorious perfections which God manifests in his creatures; and, secondly, learn to make such an application to themselves as thoroughly to affect their hearts. The first point is exemplified, when we consider how great must have been the Artist who disposed that multitude of stars, which adorn the heaven, in such a regular order, that it is impossible to imagine any thing more beautiful to behold; who fixed some in their stations, so that they cannot be moved; who granted to others a freer course, but so that they never travel beyond their appointed limits; who so regulates the motions of all, that they measure days and nights, months, years, and seasons of the year; and also reduces the inequality of days, which we constantly witness, to such a medium that it occasions no confusion. So, also, when

we observe his power in sustaining so great a mass, in governing the rapid revolutions of the celestial machine, and the like. For these few examples sufficiently declare, what it is to recognize the perfections of God in the creation of the world. Otherwise, were I desirous of pursuing the subject to its full extent, there would be no end; since there are as many miracles of Divine power, as many monuments of Divine goodness, as many proofs of Divine wisdom, as there are species of things in the world, and even as there are individual things, either great or small.

XXII. There remains the other point, which approaches more nearly to faith; that, while we observe how God has appointed all things for our benefit and safety, and at the same time perceive his power and grace in ourselves, and the great benefits which he has conferred on us, we may thence excite ourselves to confide in him, to invoke him, to praise him, and to love him. Now, as I have just before suggested, God himself has demonstrated, by the very order of creation, that he made all things for the sake of man. For it was not without reason that he distributed the making of the world into six days; though it would have been no more difficult for him to complete the whole work, in all its parts, at once, in a single moment, than to arrive at its completion by such progressive advances. But in this he has been pleased to display his providence and paternal solicitude towards us, since, before he would make man, he prepared every thing which he foresaw would be useful or beneficial to him. How great would be, now, the ingratitude to doubt whether we are regarded by

this best of fathers, whom we perceive to have been solicitous on our account before we existed! How impious would it be to tremble with diffidence, lest at any time his benignity should desert us in our necessities, which we see was displayed in the greatest affluence of all blessings provided for us while we were yet unborn! Besides, we are told by Moses,³⁷⁷ that his liberality has subjected to us all that is contained in the whole world. He certainly has not made this declaration in order to tantalize us with the empty name of such a donation. Therefore we never shall be destitute of any thing which will conduce to our welfare. Finally, to conclude, whenever we call God the Creator of heaven and earth, let us at the same time reflect, that the dispensation of all those things which he has made is in his own power, and that we are his children, whom he has received into his charge and custody, to be supported and educated; so that we may expect every blessing from him alone, and cherish a certain hope that he will never suffer us to want those things which are necessary to our well-being, that our hope may depend on no other; that, whatever we need or desire, our prayers may be directed to him, and that, from whatever quarter we receive any advantage, we may acknowledge it to be his benefit, and confess it with thanksgiving; that, being allured with such great sweetness of goodness and beneficence, we may study to love and worship him with all our hearts.

³⁷⁷ Gen. i. 28; ix. 2.

Chapter XV. The State Of Man At His Creation, The Faculties Of The Soul, The Divine Image, Free Will, And The Original Purity Of His Nature

We must now treat of the creation of man, not only because he exhibits the most noble and remarkable specimen of the Divine justice, wisdom, and goodness, among all the works of God, but because, as we observed in the beginning, we cannot attain to a clear and solid knowledge of God, without a mutual acquaintance with ourselves. But though this is twofold, – the knowledge of the condition in which we were originally created, and of that into which we entered after the fall of Adam, (for indeed we should derive but little advantage from a knowledge of our creation, unless in the lamentable ruin which has befallen us we discovered the corruption and deformity of our nature,) – yet we shall content ourselves at present with a description of human nature in its primitive integrity. And, indeed, before we proceed to the miserable condition in which man is now involved, it is necessary to understand the state in which he was first created. For we must beware lest, in precisely pointing out the natural evils of man, we seem to refer them to the Author of nature; since impious men suppose that this pretext affords them a sufficient defence, if they can plead that whatever defect or fault they have, proceeds

in some measure from God; nor do they hesitate, if reproved, to litigate with God himself, and transfer to him the crime of which they are justly accused. And those who would be thought to speak with more reverence concerning the Deity, yet readily endeavour to excuse their depravity from nature, not considering that they also, though in a more obscure manner, are guilty of defaming the character of God; to whose dishonour it would redound, if nature could be proved to have had any innate depravity at its formation. Since we see the flesh, therefore, eagerly catching at every subterfuge, by which it supposes that the blame of its evils may by any means be transferred from itself to any other, we must diligently oppose this perverseness. The calamity of mankind must be treated in such a manner as to preclude all tergiversation, and to vindicate the Divine justice from every accusation. We shall afterwards, in the proper place, see how far men are fallen from that purity which was bestowed upon Adam. And first let it be understood, that, by his being made of earth and clay, a restraint was laid upon pride; since nothing is more absurd than for creatures to glory in their excellence, who not only inhabit a cottage of clay, but who are themselves composed partly of dust and ashes.³⁷⁸ But as God not only deigned to animate the earthen vessel, but chose to make it the residence of an immortal spirit, Adam might justly glory in so great an instance of the liberality of his Maker.

II. That man consists of soul and body, ought not to be

³⁷⁸ Gen. ii. 7; iii. 19, 23.

controverted. By the “soul” I understand an immortal, yet created essence, which is the nobler part of him. Sometimes it is called a “spirit;” for though, when these names are connected, they have a different signification, yet when “spirit” is used separately, it means the same as “soul;” as when Solomon, speaking of death, says that “then the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.”³⁷⁹ And Christ commending his spirit to the Father,³⁸⁰ and Stephen his to Christ,³⁸¹ intend no other than that, when the soul is liberated from the prison of the flesh, God is its perpetual keeper. Those who imagine that the soul is called a spirit, because it is a breath or faculty divinely infused into the body, but destitute of any essence, are proved to be in a gross error by the thing itself, and by the whole tenor of Scripture. It is true, indeed, that, while men are immoderately attached to the earth, they become stupid, and, being alienated from the Father of lights, are immersed in darkness, so that they consider not that they shall survive after death; yet in the mean time, the light is not so entirely extinguished by the darkness, but that they are affected with some sense of their immortality. Surely the conscience, which, discerning between good and evil, answers to the judgment of God, is an indubitable proof of an immortal spirit. For how could an affection or emotion, without any essence, penetrate to the tribunal of God, and inspire itself

³⁷⁹ Eccles. xii. 7.

³⁸⁰ Luke xxiii. 46.

³⁸¹ Acts vii. 59.

with terror on account of its guilt? For the body is not affected by a fear of spiritual punishment; that falls only on the soul; whence it follows, that it is possessed of an essence. Now, the very knowledge of God sufficiently proves the immortality of the soul, which rises above the world, since an evanescent breath or inspiration could not arrive at the fountain of life. Lastly, the many noble faculties with which the human mind is adorned, and which loudly proclaim that something Divine is inscribed on it, are so many testimonies of its immortal essence. For the sense which the brutes have, extends not beyond the body, or at most not beyond the objects near it. But the agility of the human mind, looking through heaven and earth, and the secrets of nature, and comprehending in its intellect and memory all ages, digesting every thing in proper order, and concluding future events from those which are past, clearly demonstrates that there is concealed within man something distinct from the body. In our minds we form conceptions of the invisible God and of angels, to which the body is not at all competent. We apprehend what is right, just, and honest, which is concealed from the corporeal senses. The spirit, therefore, must be the seat of this intelligence. Even sleep itself, which, stupefying man, seems to divest him even of life, is no obscure proof of immortality; since it not only suggests to us ideas of things which never happened, but also presages of future events. I briefly touch those things which even profane writers magnificently extol in a more splendid and ornamented diction; but with the pious reader the simple mention of them will

be sufficient. Now, unless the soul were something essentially distinct from the body, the Scripture would not inform us that we dwell in houses of clay,³⁸² and at death quit the tabernacle of the flesh;³⁸³ that we put off the corruptible,³⁸⁴ to receive a reward at the last day, according to the respective conduct of each individual in the body.³⁸⁵ For certainly these and similar passages, which often occur, not only manifestly distinguish the soul from the body, but, by transferring to it the name of “man,” indicate that it is the principal part of our nature. When Paul exhorts the faithful to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,³⁸⁶ he points out two parts in which the defilement of sin resides. Peter also, when he called Christ the Shepherd and Bishop of souls,³⁸⁷ would have spoken improperly, if there were no souls over whom he could exercise that office. Nor would there be any consistency in what he says concerning the eternal salvation of souls, or in his injunction to purify the souls, or in his assertion that fleshly lusts war against the soul,³⁸⁸ or in what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, that

³⁸² Job iv. 19.

³⁸³ 2 Cor. v. 4.

³⁸⁴ 2 Peter i. 13, 14.

³⁸⁵ 2 Cor. v. 10.

³⁸⁶ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

³⁸⁷ 1 Peter ii. 25.

³⁸⁸ 1 Peter i. 9, 22; ii. 11.

pastors watch to give an account of our souls,³⁸⁹ unless souls had a proper essence. To the same purpose is the place where Paul “calls God for a record upon his soul,”³⁹⁰ because it could not be amenable to God, if it were not capable of punishment; which is also more clearly expressed in the words of Christ, where he commands us to fear him, who, after having killed the body, is able to cast the soul into hell.³⁹¹ Where the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews distinguishes between the fathers of our flesh, and God, who is the only Father of spirits,³⁹² he could not assert the essence or existence of the soul in more express terms. Besides, unless the soul survived after its liberation from the prison of the body, it was absurd for Christ to represent the soul of Lazarus as enjoying happiness in the bosom of Abraham, and the soul of the rich man as condemned to dreadful torments.³⁹³ Paul confirms the same point, by informing us that we are absent from God as long as we dwell in the body, but that when absent from the body we are present with the Lord.³⁹⁴ Not to be too prolix on a subject of so little obscurity, I shall only add this from Luke, that it is reckoned among the errors of the Sadducees, that they believed

³⁸⁹ Heb. xiii. 17.

³⁹⁰ 2 Cor. i. 23.

³⁹¹ Matt. x. 28. Luke xii. 4, 5.

³⁹² Heb. xii. 9.

³⁹³ Luke xvi. 22.

³⁹⁴ 2 Cor. v. 6, 8.

not the existence of angels or of spirits.³⁹⁵

III. A solid proof of this point may also be gathered from man being said to be created in the image of God.³⁹⁶ For though the glory of God is displayed in his external form, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul. I admit that external form, as it distinguishes us from brutes, also exalts us more nearly to God; nor will I too vehemently contend with any one who would understand, by the image of God, that

“ – while the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies.”³⁹⁷

Only let it be decided that the image of God, which appears or sparkles in these external characters, is spiritual. For Osiander, whose perverse ingenuity in futile notions is proved by his writings, extending the image of God promiscuously to the body as well as to the soul, confounds heaven and earth together. He says, that the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, fixed their image in man, because, even if Adam had remained in his integrity, Christ would, nevertheless, have become man. Thus, according to him, the body which had been destined for Christ was the exemplar and type of that corporeal figure which was then

³⁹⁵ Acts xxiii. 8.

³⁹⁶ Gen. i. 27.

³⁹⁷ Ovid's Metam. lib. 1. Dryden's Translation.

formed. But where will he find that Christ is the image of the Spirit? I grant, indeed, that the glory of the whole Deity shines in the person of the Mediator; but how shall the eternal Word be called the image of the Spirit, whom he precedes in order? Lastly, it subverts the distinction between the Son and Spirit, if the former be denominated the image of the latter. Besides, I could wish to be informed by him, how Christ, in the body which he has assumed, resembles the Spirit, and by what characters or lineaments his similitude is expressed. And since that speech, “Let us make man in our own image,”³⁹⁸ belongs also to the person of the Son, it follows that he is the image of himself; which is altogether repugnant to reason. Moreover, if the notion of Osiander be received, man was formed only to the type or exemplar of the humanity of Christ; and the idea from which Adam was taken was Christ, as about to be clothed in flesh; whereas the Scripture teaches, in a very different sense, that man was “created in the image of God.” There is more plausibility in the subtlety of those who maintain that Adam was created in the image of God, because he was conformed to Christ, who is the only image of God. But this also is destitute of solidity. There is no small controversy concerning “image” and “likeness” among expositors who seek for a difference, whereas in reality there is none, between the two words; “likeness” being only added by way of explanation. In the first place, we know that it is the custom of the Hebrews to use repetitions, in which they express one thing

³⁹⁸ Gen. i. 26.

twice. In the next place, as to the thing itself, there is no doubt but man is called the image of God, on account of his likeness to God. Hence it appears that those persons make themselves ridiculous who display more subtlety in criticising on these terms, whether they confine *zelem*, that is, “image,” to the substance of the soul, and *demuth*, that is, “likeness,” to its qualities, or whether they bring forward any different interpretation. Because, when God determined to create man in his own image, that expression being rather obscure, he repeats the same idea in this explanatory phrase, “after our likeness;” as though he had said that he was about to make man, in whom, as in an image, he would give a representation of himself by the characters of resemblance which he would impress upon him. Therefore Moses, a little after, reciting the same thing, introduces the image of God, but makes no mention of his likeness. The objection of Osiander is quite frivolous, that it is not a part of man, or the soul with its faculties, that is called the image of God, but the whole Adam, who received his name from the earth whence he was taken; it will be deemed frivolous, I say, by every rational reader. For when the whole man is called mortal, the soul is not therefore made subject to death; nor, on the other hand, when man is called a rational animal, does reason or intelligence therefore belong to the body. Though the soul, therefore, is not the whole man, yet there is no absurdity in calling him the image of God with relation to the soul; although I retain the principle which I have just laid down, that the image of God includes all the excellence

in which the nature of man surpasses all the other species of animals. This term, therefore, denotes the integrity which Adam possessed, when he was endued with a right understanding, when he had affections regulated by reason, and all his senses governed in proper order, and when, in the excellency of his nature, he truly resembled the excellence of his Creator. And though the principal seat of the Divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its faculties, yet there was no part of man, not even the body, which was not adorned with some rays of its glory. It is certain that the lineaments of the Divine glory are conspicuous in every part of the world; whence it may be concluded, that where the image of God is said to be in man, there is implied a tacit antithesis, which exalts man above all the other creatures, and as it were separates him from the vulgar herd. It is not to be denied that angels were created in the similitude of God, since our highest perfection will consist, according to the declaration of Christ, in being like them.³⁹⁹ But it is not in vain that Moses celebrates the favour of God towards us by this peculiar title; especially as he compares man only to visible creatures.

IV. No complete definition of this image, however, appears yet to be given, unless it be more clearly specified in what faculties man excels, and in what respects he ought to be accounted a mirror of the Divine glory. But that cannot be better known from any thing, than from the reparation of his corrupted nature. There is no doubt that Adam, when he fell

³⁹⁹ Matt. xxii. 30.

from his dignity, was by this defection alienated from God. Wherefore, although we allow that the Divine image was not utterly annihilated and effaced in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is but horrible deformity. And therefore the beginning of our recovery and salvation is the restoration which we obtain through Christ, who on this account is called the second Adam; because he restores us to true and perfect integrity. For although Paul, opposing the quickening Spirit received by the faithful from Christ, to the living soul in which Adam was created,⁴⁰⁰ celebrates the degree of grace displayed in regeneration as superior to that manifested in creation, yet he contradicts not that other capital point, that this is the end of regeneration, that Christ may form us anew in the image of God. Therefore he elsewhere informs us, that “the new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”⁴⁰¹ With which corresponds the following exhortation – “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”⁴⁰² Now, we may see what Paul comprehends in this renovation. In the first place, he mentions knowledge, and in the next place, sincere righteousness and holiness; whence we infer, that in the beginning the image of God was conspicuous in the light of the mind, in the rectitude of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts of our nature. For though I grant

⁴⁰⁰ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

⁴⁰¹ Col. iii. 10.

⁴⁰² Eph. iv. 24.

that the forms of expression are synecdochical, signifying the whole by a part, yet this is an axiom which cannot be overturned, that what holds the principal place in the renovation of the Divine image, must also have held the same place in the creation of it at first. To the same purpose is another passage of the Apostle, that “we, with open face beholding the glory of Christ, are changed into the same image.”⁴⁰³ We see, now, how Christ is the most perfect image of God, to which being conformed, we are so restored that we bear the Divine image in true piety, righteousness, purity, and understanding. This position being established, the imagination of Osiander, about the figure of the body, immediately vanishes of itself. The passage where Paul calls the man “the image and glory of God,”⁴⁰⁴ to the exclusion of the woman from that degree of honour, appears from the context to be confined to political subordination. But that the image which has been mentioned comprehended whatever relates to spiritual and eternal life, has now, I think, been sufficiently proved. John confirms the same in other words, by asserting that “the life” which was from the beginning in the eternal Word of God, “was the light of men.”⁴⁰⁵ For as he intended to praise the singular favour of God which exalts man above all the other animals; to separate him from the common number, because he has attained no vulgar life, but a life connected with the light of

⁴⁰³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

⁴⁰⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 7.

⁴⁰⁵ John i. 4.

intelligence and reason, – he at the same time shows how he was made after the image of God. Therefore, since the image of God is the uncorrupted excellence of human nature, which shone in Adam before his defection, but was afterwards so corrupted, and almost obliterated, that nothing remains from the ruin but what is confused, mutilated, and defiled, – it is now partly visible in the elect, inasmuch as they are regenerated by the Spirit, but it will obtain its full glory in heaven. But that we may know the parts of which it consists, it is necessary to treat of the faculties of the soul. For that speculation of Augustine is far from being solid, that the soul is a mirror of the Trinity, because it contains understanding, will, and memory. Nor is there any probability in the opinion which places the similitude of God in the dominion committed to man; as though he resembled God only in this character, that he was constituted heir and possessor of all things, whereas it must properly be sought *in* him, not *without* him; it is an internal excellence of the soul.

V. But, before I proceed any further, it is necessary to combat the Manichæan error, which Servetus has attempted to revive and propagate in the present age. Because God is said to have breathed into man the breath of life,⁴⁰⁶ they supposed that the soul was an emanation from the substance of God; as though some portion of the infinite Deity had been conveyed into man. But it may be easily and briefly shown how many shameful and gross absurdities are the necessary consequences of this

⁴⁰⁶ Gen. ii. 7.

diabolical error. For if the soul of man be an emanation from the essence of God, it will follow that the Divine nature is not only mutable and subject to passions, but also to ignorance, desires, and vices of every kind. Nothing is more inconstant than man, because his soul is agitated and variously distracted by contrary motions; he frequently mistakes through ignorance; he is vanquished by some of the smallest temptations; we know that the soul is the receptacle of every kind of impurity; – all which we must ascribe to the Divine nature, if we believe the soul to be part of the essence of God, or a secret influx of the Deity. Who would not dread such a monstrous tenet? It is a certain truth, quoted by Paul from Aratus, that “we are the offspring of God,” but in quality, not in substance; forasmuch as he has adorned us with Divine endowments.⁴⁰⁷ But to divide the essence of the Creator, that every creature may possess a part of it, indicates extreme madness. It must therefore be concluded beyond all doubt, notwithstanding the Divine image is impressed on the souls of men, that they were no less created than the angels. And creation is not a transfusion, but an origination of existence from nothing. Nor, because the spirit is given by God, and returns to him on its departure from the body, is it immediately to be asserted, that it was plucked off like a branch from his essence. And on this point also Osiander, while he is elated with his own illusions, has involved himself in an impious error, not acknowledging the image of God in man without his essential

⁴⁰⁷ Acts xviii. 28.

righteousness, as though God could not, by the inconceivable power of his Spirit, render us conformable to himself, unless Christ were to transfuse himself substantially into us. However some persons may attempt to gloss over these delusions, they will never so far blind the eyes of sensible readers, as to prevent their perceiving that they savour of the error of the Manichæans. And where Paul treats of the restoration of this image, we may readily conclude from his words, that man was conformed to God not by an influx of his substance, but by the grace and power of his Spirit. For he says that, by beholding the glory of Christ, we are transformed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord;⁴⁰⁸ who certainly operates in us not in such a manner as to render us consubstantial with God.

VI. It would be folly to seek for a definition of the soul from the heathen philosophers, of whom Plato is almost the only one who has plainly asserted it to be an immortal substance. Others indeed, the disciples of Socrates, hint at it, but with great doubts; no one clearly teaches that of which he was not persuaded himself. The sentiment of Plato, therefore, is more correct, because he considers the image of God as being in the soul. The other sects so confine its powers and faculties to the present life, that they leave it nothing beyond the body. But we have before stated from the Scripture, that it is an incorporeal substance; now we shall add, that although it is not properly contained in any place, yet, being put into the body, it inhabits

⁴⁰⁸ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

it as its dwelling, not only to animate all its parts, and render the organs fit and useful for their respective operations, but also to hold the supremacy in the government of human life; and that not only in the concerns of the terrestrial life, but likewise to excite to the worship of God. Though this last point is not so evident in the state of corruption, yet there remain some relics of it impressed even on our very vices. For whence proceeds the great concern of men about their reputation, but from shame? but whence proceeds shame, unless from a respect for virtue? The principle and cause of which is, that they understand themselves to have been born for the cultivation of righteousness; and in which are included the seeds of religion. But as, without controversy, man was created to aspire to a heavenly life, so it is certain that the knowledge of it was impressed on his soul. And, indeed, man would be deprived of the principal use of his understanding, if he were ignorant of his felicity, the perfection of which consists in being united to God. Thus the chief operation of the soul is to aspire after it; and, therefore, the more a man studies to approach to God, the more he proves himself a rational creature. Some maintain that in man there are more souls than one, a sensitive and a rational one; but notwithstanding some appearance of probability in what they adduce, yet, as there is nothing solid in their arguments, we must reject them, unless we are fond of tormenting ourselves with frivolous and useless things. They say that there is a great repugnancy between the organic motions and the rational part of the soul; as though

reason were not also at variance with itself, and some of its counsels were not in opposition to others, like hostile armies. But as this confusion proceeds from the depravity of nature, it affords no ground for concluding that there are two souls, because the faculties are not sufficiently harmonious with each other. But all curious discussion respecting the faculties themselves I leave to the philosophers; a simple definition will suffice us for the edification of piety. I confess, indeed, that the things which they teach are true, and not only entertaining to be known, but useful and well digested by them; nor do I prohibit those who are desirous of learning from the study of them. I admit, then, in the first place, that there are five senses, which Plato would rather call organs, by which all objects are conveyed into a common sensory, as into a general repository; that next follows the fancy or imagination, which discerns the objects apprehended by the common sensory; next reason, to which belongs universal judgment; lastly, the understanding, which steadily and quietly contemplates the objects revolved and considered by reason. And thus to the understanding, reason, and imagination, the three intellectual faculties of the soul, correspond also the three appetitive ones – the will, whose place it is to choose those things which the understanding and reason propose to it; the irascible faculty, which embraces the things offered to it by reason and imagination; and the concupiscible faculty, which apprehends the objects presented by the imagination and sensation. Though these things are true, or at least probable, yet, since I fear that

they will involve us in their obscurity rather than assist us, I think they ought to be omitted. If any one chooses to make a different distribution of the powers of the soul, so as to call one appetitive, which, though void of reason in itself, obeys reason, if it be under the guidance of any other faculty; and to call another intellective, which is itself a partaker of reason; I shall not much oppose it. Nor have I any wish to combat the sentiment of Aristotle, that there are three principles of action – sense, intellect, and appetite. But let us rather choose a division placed within the comprehension of all, and which certainly cannot be sought in the philosophers. For when they wish to speak with the greatest simplicity, they divide the soul into appetite and intellect, and make both these twofold. The latter, they say, is sometimes contemplative, being content merely with knowledge, and having no tendency to action, – which Cicero thinks is designated by the word *ingenium*, – and sometimes practical, variously influencing the will with the apprehension of good or evil. This division comprehends the science of living in a just and virtuous manner. The latter, that is, appetite, they divide into will and concupiscence; they call it “will,” whenever appetite obeys reason; but when, shaking off the yoke of reason, it runs into intemperance, they give it the name of “concupiscence.” Thus they imagine that man is always possessed of reason sufficient for the proper government of himself.

VII. We are constrained to depart a little from this mode of instruction, because the philosophers, being ignorant of the

corruption of nature proceeding from the punishment of the fall, improperly confound two very different states of mankind. Let us, therefore, submit the following division – that the human soul has two faculties which relate to our present design, the understanding and the will. Now, let it be the office of the understanding to discriminate between objects, as they shall respectively appear deserving of approbation or disapprobation; but of the will, to choose and follow what the understanding shall have pronounced to be good; to abhor and avoid what it shall have condemned. Here let us not stay to discuss those subtleties of Aristotle, that the mind has no motion of itself, but that it is moved by the choice, which he also calls the appetitive intellect. Without perplexing ourselves with unnecessary questions, it should be sufficient for us to know that the understanding is, as it were, the guide and governor of the soul; that the will always respects its authority, and waits for its judgment in its desires. For which reason Aristotle himself truly observed, that avoidance and pursuit in the appetite, bear a resemblance to affirmation and negation in the mind. How certain the government of the understanding is in the direction of the will, we shall see in another part of this work. Here we only intend to show that no power can be found in the soul, which may not properly be referred to one or the other of those two members. But in this manner we comprehend the sense in the understanding, which some distinguish thus: sense, they say, inclines to pleasure, whereas the understanding follows what is good; that thence it

happens that the appetite of sense becomes concupiscence and lust, and the affection of the understanding becomes will. But instead of the word “appetite,” which they prefer, I use the word “will,” which is more common.

VIII. God has furnished the soul of man, therefore, with a mind capable of discerning good from evil, and just from unjust; and of discovering, by the light of reason, what ought to be pursued or avoided; whence the philosophers called this directing faculty το ἡγεμονικόν, the principal or governing part. To this he has annexed the will, on which depends the choice. The primitive condition of man was ennobled with those eminent faculties; he possessed reason, understanding, prudence, and judgment, not only for the government of his life on earth, but to enable him to ascend even to God and eternal felicity. To these was added choice, to direct the appetites, and regulate all the organic motions; so that the will should be entirely conformed to the government of reason. In this integrity man was endued with free will, by which, if he had chosen, he might have obtained eternal life. For here it would be unreasonable to introduce the question respecting the secret predestination of God, because we are not discussing what might possibly have happened or not, but what was the real nature of man. Adam, therefore, could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will; but because his will was flexible to either side, and he was not endued with constancy to persevere, therefore he so easily fell. Yet his choice of good and evil was free; and not only so, but his mind and

will were possessed of consummate rectitude, and all his organic parts were rightly disposed to obedience, till, destroying himself, he corrupted all his excellencies. Hence proceeded the darkness which overspread the minds of the philosophers, because they sought for a complete edifice among ruins, and for beautiful order in the midst of confusion. They held this principle, that man would not be a rational animal, unless he were endued with a free choice of good or evil; they conceived also that otherwise all difference between virtue and vice would be destroyed, unless man regulated his life according to his own inclination. Thus far it had been well, if there had been no change in man, of which as they were ignorant, it is not to be wondered at if they confound heaven and earth together. But those who profess themselves to be disciples of Christ, and yet seek for free will in man, now lost and overwhelmed in spiritual ruin, in striking out a middle path between the opinions of the philosophers and the doctrine of heaven, are evidently deceived, so that they touch neither heaven nor earth. But these things will be better introduced in the proper place. At present be it only remembered, that man, at his first creation, was very different from all his posterity, who, deriving their original from him in his corrupted state, have contracted an hereditary defilement. For all the parts of his soul were formed with the utmost rectitude; he enjoyed soundness of mind, and a will free to the choice of good. If any object, that he was placed in a dangerous situation on account of the imbecility of this faculty, I reply, that the station in which he was placed was

sufficient to deprive him of all excuse. For it would have been unreasonable that God should be confined to this condition, to make man so as to be altogether incapable either of choosing or of committing any sin. It is true that such a nature would have been more excellent; but to expostulate with God as though he had been under any obligation to bestow this upon man, were unreasonable and unjust in the extreme; since it was at his choice to bestow as little as he pleased. But why he did not sustain him with the power of perseverance, remains concealed in his mind; but it is our duty to restrain our investigations within the limits of sobriety. He had received the power, indeed, if he chose to exert it; but he had not the will to use that power; for the consequence of this will would have been perseverance. Yet there is no excuse for him; he received so much, that he was the voluntary procurer of his own destruction; but God was under no necessity to give him any other than an indifferent and mutable will, that from his fall he might educe matter for his own glory.

Chapter XVI. God's Preservation And Support Of The World By His Power, And His Government Of Every Part Of It By His Providence

To represent God as a Creator only for a moment, who entirely finished all his work at once, were frigid and jejune; and in this it behoves us especially to differ from the heathen, that the presence of the Divine power may appear to us no less in the perpetual state of the world than in its first origin. For although the minds even of impious men, by the mere contemplation of earth and heaven, are constrained to rise to the Creator, yet faith has a way peculiar to itself to assign to God the whole praise of creation. To which purpose is that assertion of an Apostle before cited, that it is only “through faith that we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God;”⁴⁰⁹ because, unless we proceed to his providence, we have no correct conception of the meaning of this article, “that God is the Creator;” however we may appear to comprehend it in our minds, and to confess it with our tongues. The carnal sense, when it has once viewed the power of God in the creation, stops there; and when it proceeds the furthest, it only examines and considers the wisdom, and power,

⁴⁰⁹ Hebrews xi. 3.

and goodness, of the Author in producing such a work, which spontaneously present themselves to the view even of those who are unwilling to observe them. In the next place, it conceives of some general operation of God in preserving and governing it, on which the power of motion depends. Lastly, it supposes that the vigour originally infused by God into all things is sufficient for their sustentation. But faith ought to penetrate further. When it has learned that he is the Creator of all things, it should immediately conclude that he is also their perpetual governor and preserver; and that not by a certain universal motion, actuating the whole machine of the world, and all its respective parts, but by a particular providence sustaining, nourishing, and providing for every thing which he has made.⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Matt. vi. 26; x. 29.

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