

thunder, from the time they did nothing but fish with their father.

Yet, if the interpretation of our opponents were just, the high encomium here given of Jesus Christ would be, in various particulars, applicable to Moses. As, for example, "In the beginning was the Word." Moses was from the beginning that God manifested his design of bringing the posterity of Abraham out of the land of Egypt. And he may be called "the Word," both by a metaphor, and by metonymy. By a *metaphor*; because as a word serves to express the thoughts of a man, so he was the chosen instrument of making known the counsel of God. By a *metonymy*; because he was the minister of the word; he brought it from the mount, committed it to writing, and made it known to the Levites, who were appointed to instruct the people; and because he may bear the name of that word, of which he was the chief publisher. Moses was "with God," from the beginning. For, though he was unknown to men and despised by them, he was known of God, and honoured with a Divine revelation. He "was God;" for he was appointed to represent God, according to those words, which are so often quoted by our adversaries, "Thou shalt be to him instead of God." Yes, he was God in all those three senses, which are mentioned by our opposers. His ministry was *heavenly* and *divine*, in comparison of theirs who went before him. For there was no prophet raised up in Israel equal to him, who beheld God face to face, and talked with him as a man talketh to his friend. He may also be so called, because, as just observed, he *represented* God, was invested with his power, was his ambassador, and spake to Pharaoh on his behalf. Again: He was God, because he was *ap-*

pointed to a glory and to the *exercise of a power* truly Divine; for he was to perform most astonishing miracles in all the parts of nature.

“All things were made by him;” that is, all things relating to the deliverance of the Israelites, and the establishment of the law. This conformity will appear the greater, if it be considered, that as Jesus Christ, on the principles of our opponents, acted only by the power of his Father, in working miracles; so Moses, in the performance of his wonderful works, acted only by the power of God. And as all the miracles, which signalized the gospel, were not wrought by the ministry of Christ; for he neither sent the angels with the tidings of his birth, nor kindled the star which appeared to the wise men: so all the astonishing works, attending the deliverance of the chosen tribes, were not performed by the ministry of Moses, but the far greater number of them certainly were. Now, so many, so great, and amazingly diversified miracles being performed by his ministry, may it not be said, “Without him was not anything made that was made?”

Once more: This Old Testament word “was made flesh;” that is, he was flesh. For Moses was a man, though he acted as God. There can be little doubt, therefore, that this expression belongs to him, as well as the rest. Here our adversaries are greatly embarrassed; for if they allow that such language might be used concerning Moses, they must confess that he was qualified to fill the highest encomium that is given by the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ; it being certain, that the Scripture never speaks more honourably of him, than in the beginning of the gospel according to John. But if they deny that such language is applicable to Moses, they must necessarily own, that the words of

the evangelist contain a much higher and nobler sense than that which they affix to them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAME ARGUMENT CONTINUED.

STILL further to evince the truth for which we plead from this important paragraph, I shall now proceed to show, That there is not one of those remarkable expressions, which we have under consideration, that will admit the sense affixed to it by our opponents.

This phrase, “the beginning,” or, “in the beginning,” when used so generally, always signifies the beginning of the world. For instance, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; He which made man at the beginning; From the beginning it was not so; Ye know Him that is from the beginning; The devil sinneth from the beginning,” Gen. i. 1; Prov. viii. 22; Heb. i. 10; Matt. xix. 4, 8; 1 John ii. 13; iii. 8. These, I say, and similar expressions, must be understood, either absolutely of the beginning of all things; or, at least, with a particular reference to that beginning. Had they a different meaning, they would be unintelligible; this being the obvious and natural signification of the terms

“THE WORD,” understood simply of one who reveals the counsels of God, is without any example in Scripture. Neither the Old or New Testament is acquainted with it. The prophets made known the counsel of God; Moses, more fully than any

of the prophets; and the apostles, more clearly and delightfully than Moses; yet neither Moses, nor prophet, nor apostle, is ever called **THE WORD**. The only expression our adversaries can produce, which bears any resemblance to this, is that of Isaiah, who, speaking of John the Baptist, says, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," Isa. xl. 3. But to suppose that the Messiah's harbinger is here called *the voice* of Jesus Christ, is an egregious mistake. The sacred oracle says no such thing, nor suggests any such idea. In the interpretation of this text, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" the verb *is*, or *is heard*, must be supplied, the sense of the text evidently requiring it. He that *is* in the wilderness, he that *preaches* in the wilderness, and he that *prepares* the way of the Lord, by exhortations to repentance, is John the Baptist. The voice mentioned in the text is the voice of him that crieth, or preacheth in the wilderness, and says, "Make straight in the desert a high-way for our God." It must, therefore, be the voice of John the Baptist. This voice, then, must be understood, either of the *preaching*, or of the *person* of John the Baptist. If the *former*, the text is impertinently cited by our opposers. If the *latter*, we attribute nonsense and absurdity to the Holy Spirit; for the text will read thus: "The person of John, is, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord.*"

The following expression, "He was with God," as understood by the Socinians, is entirely without example. Where shall we find an instance of these, or similar terms, signifying, He was known of God only? They, indeed, refer us to those words, "The Life was with the Father," supposing them to mean, that it was known of the Father. But how jejune

the sense ! how absurd the interpretation ! For is it credible that the apostle should say nothing more of that **LIFE**, than might be said of death and the devil, of sin and damnation ? for all these were known of God from eternity. Besides, there is a material difference between speaking thus of a *quality*, and using the same language of a *person*. If we should say, for instance, The law was with God ; and, Moses was with God ; the two propositions must be understood in a very different sense.

“ The Word was God,” is, if you will believe our adversaries, another figurative phrase ; but you will not be able to find an example of it in Scripture. They pretend, that Jesus is called **GOD**, because he is Jehovah’s representative. But though various eminent persons have, in some respects, represented the eternal Sovereign ; yet we do not find that any of them was ever called **GOD**, absolutely ; or without some intimation, that he was so denominated only in a figurative sense. It is, indeed, said, “ Ye are gods,” in the plural, Psa. lxxxii. 6 ; but it was never said of any particular person, “ He was God.” They will have it that our gracious Redeemer is called **GOD**, because his ministry was entirely Divine. But so was that of the apostles : they revealed a blessed immortality, and wrought very wonderful works, as well as their Lord, so that, on this principle, they might have claimed the glory of that Divine character as well as he. Yet we do not read that any of the apostles were so called ; but we find, on the contrary, that they detested the conduct of the people at Lystra, who gave them that name.

“ But there is a very material difference between Jesus and his apostles. He was the Master, they were the servants.”—True : but though the apostles were

servants, in respect of Christ; yet, our adversaries must allow, that Christ is equally a servant, in regard to God. If, then, an apostle could not lawfully call himself LORD, out of reverence for Jesus Christ, that name being consecrated to him; neither could Jesus assume the name GOD, because that sacred appellation had been long appropriated to the Supreme Being.

Nor can they, by any example, justify that restriction with which they understand the following words; "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made," John i. 3. For the sacred writer appears to have intended to express himself as *generally* as he possibly could. He, therefore, is not satisfied with saying, "All things were made by him;" but he repeats the important truth, in a still more forcible manner, by adding, "without him was not anything made that was made."—"The matter in hand," say they, "limits the expressions." But this assertion is groundless. Both the foregoing and the following words suggest the contrary, unless we renounce the natural impression of the terms. In the preceding context he says, "In the beginning was the Word;" which is a general way of speaking, and leads us to consider the words, "All things were made," in a sense equally general. In a subsequent verse he says, "The world was made by him;" where he again speaks in a general way, and teaches us to conclude, that "all things," are to be understood of all things entirely; all, without exception.

Their interpretation of this clause, "The world was made by him," is equally void of truth. For whether by the term *world*, they understand the world to come; or whether they suppose the meaning to be, that the world was made *ours* by Jesus Christ;

in either case they are utterly at a loss for a similar instance in the Holy Scripture. They, indeed, produce passages to show, that *the world* sometimes signifies *the world to come*; but the examples alleged are not to the purpose, They pretend that in this passage, "When he bringeth his First-begotten into the world," that the term *world* signifies eternal life. But the original phrase ought not to be rendered, *the world*; but *the earth*, or the habitable part of the world; for it is τὴν ὀκουμένην, not τὸν κόσμον. Besides, by what arguments will they prove that this habitable earth means heaven, or a state of bliss to come? Nor is the other passage, adduced by them, Heb. ii. 5, where mention is made of "the world to come," sufficient for their purpose. For, whatever be the meaning of it, there is a manifest difference between those expressions, and this general phrase, *the world*; the latter being in question, and not the former. The two phrases are far from being equivalent. Nothing would be more absurd than to suppose, that *the world* signifies *the world to come*, wherever the expressions are used, because the latter phrase is once or twice contained in the epistle to the Hebrews. Neither is the following passage any more to their purpose: "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not." Heb. x. 5. For *the world*, here intended, must necessarily be understood of that which we inhabit, and not of the heavenly state. Nay, the term *world* is so far from being generally used for *heaven*, in the Scriptures, that the two expressions are frequently opposed. To this purpose are the words of our Lord; "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father," John xvi. 28.

But in what sense was this world made by Jesus Christ? "The world, that is, the world to come, was made by him, because, through him it becomes *ours*; or, by him we have an hope to obtain it, and shall certainly, in the end, enjoy it."—But what apostle, what prophet, what writer of common sense and common honesty ever expressed himself in such an awkward, unintelligible, and ridiculous manner, as that in which the evangelist speaks, according to this interpretation? If you insist upon it, that the sense which they affix to the term *world* is forced and unnatural, and that it signifies the heavens and the earth with all their inhabitants; then they endeavour to persuade you, that the word *made*, here signifies *renewed*. The meaning, therefore, of the passage is, "The world was *renewed* by Jesus Christ." To give this interpretation an air of probability, they produce various passages of Scripture; but the only one that appears at all to the purpose, is the following: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. Here, it is manifest, that the term *created* is limited to a particular sense, and signifies *renewed*, as appears from the following clause, "unto good works." Had the evangelist said, "The world was made, or created by him, in righteousness, or to good works, or to be a new creature;" the words, it must be confessed, would have required the sense of our adversaries. But as he says nothing like it, all the rules of sound interpretation require, that we should take the expressions in their obvious and natural signification. If Paul, in the passage produced, had only said, "We are created by Jesus Christ;" and if, notwithstanding, he had meant the same as is now expressed, he would have used such an obscure and ambiguous way of speaking,

that we should have hardly come at his meaning; or most probably, have attributed a sense to his words which he did not intend. So, if John says, "The world was made by Jesus Christ," after having told us, that "all things were made by him," and that "without him nothing was made that was made;" and if he say it only to inform us, that our Lord introduced an alteration into the world by his gospel; we have reason to complain of great obscurity in his language, and must either consider his assertion as groundless, or embrace a sense of the terms quite contrary to their natural signification.

Once more: It was never said of any man that appeared in the world, "He was made flesh;" such a way of speaking being absurd. Yet, if we believe our opponents, this is the meaning of, "The Word was made flesh." That is, "Jesus, a mere man, came into the world." A goodly way of speaking for an inspired writer to use! But was it ever said, The king was made flesh; The emperor was made flesh? Was it ever said, by the Holy Spirit, "Such a prophet, or such an apostle, was made flesh?" Nor does it avail their cause to render the text, "He was flesh." For such a way of speaking is not more proper, and is equally unknown to both human and Divine language.

It follows, then, that all these expressions in the beginning of John's evangelical history, are without example, if understood according to the Socinian comment. But supposing it could be proved, that each of them was used in Scripture, once or twice, in the sense of our adversaries; yet so many singular forms of speech united would be entirely without example, and contrary to all reason. For though a single expression, when used in an uncommon, or even an unnatural sense, may pass in a crowd of

other expressions that are clear and pertinent, by which it may be understood; yet, if a writer use ten or a dozen of them in the compass of a few periods, he will render his language obscure and absurd, and himself contemptible. It is unreasonable to suppose, that the general term, *beginning*, should be here taken, contrary to all use, for the commencement of the Gospel. But if you should find an example of its being used in the sense they affix to it, among a multitude of instances to the contrary, it does not, it cannot follow from thence, that it must be understood in such a limited and particular signification here; because all the circumstances of the discourse lead us to consider it in a general sense, as the most natural. But when you offer this violence to that expression, you cannot do so to eight or ten more which immediately follow, without impeaching the wisdom, or the goodness, of the Spirit of God; as if he intended, by connecting so many expressions, which are all to be taken in a particular sense and contrary to their natural use, to lead us into error. Our opposers find their account in considering each expression by itself; because it is possible, by great application, to imagine some senses that are pretty near those which they affix to the words of Scripture. But when they are obliged to unite all their designs and explanations together, they make an absurd and ridiculous appearance.

Nor would it help their cause to suggest a doubt concerning the *Divine authenticity* of the beginning of John's evangelical history. For, in answer to such an insinuation, we need only observe, That the language of this evangelist expresses nothing relating to the personal dignity, glory, and works of Jesus, but what is taught us by other apostles. In the writings of Paul, for instance, we have the following

assertions concerning Jesus Christ: "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; He laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands; By him were all things created, visible and invisible; All things were created by him, and for him; God was manifest in the flesh," Phil. ii. 6; Heb. i. 10; Col. i. 16; 1 Tim. iii. 16; with many other similar passages.

Equally unavailing would it be for them to philosophize on the *manner how* the writings of the evangelists are the word of God. For whether it be by inspiration of suggestion, or whether by way of superintendency, or by both united, that God influenced the minds, and tongues, and pens of those infallible teachers; yet it cannot be supposed that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, and received miraculous gifts, only to talk as they do, if Jesus Christ be a mere creature. For, only admitting that they possessed a moderate share of common sense, and were honest and good men, though entirely destitute of extraordinary gifts, they could not but take particular care that they gave no occasion to impiety and idolatry, by ascribing the names, properties, and glories of the true God to a mere creature.

Should it be said, "These grand expressions concerning Jesus Christ are no other than the flourishes of rhetoric, and the elevated flights of fancy;" I answer, We may be soon convinced of the contrary, by a general reflection on the character of those sacred books which constitute the canon of the Scripture. Not a single expression can be found in any of them to the prejudice of God's glory. No impious metaphor, no hyperbole tending to blasphemy, nor any unbecoming comparison of man with God, is there to be found. The language is humble, modest, reli-

gious. It is really surprising that, though other authors can hardly write a few pages without injuring the glory of God, this long series of holy teachers discover, in all their words and ideas, that respect which is due to the Supreme Being. This, as all must confess, is one of those internal characters by which the Bible is known to be the **BOOK OF GOD**.

Nor can it be objected with any greater appearance of reason, "That the idea of **THE WORD**, taken for the Son of God, who is God himself, being new and extraordinary; we are obliged to seek for new and singular senses in the passage."—For, as before observed, one singular expression and new idea, surrounded with other expressions and ideas that are common and plain, cannot create any very great difficulty; and all the rest of the paragraph is composed of terms and thoughts that are neither uncommon nor obscure, while unembarrassed with forced and unnatural interpretations. Besides, it is well known that the ancient Hebrews used these several phrases, The face of God; the majesty of God; the glory of God; and, the **WORD** of God, as expressive of the same idea. The Chaldee paraphrase uses them as synonymous expressions; and Rabbi Jonathan renders these words, "The Lord said unto my Lord," by, "The Lord said unto his **WORD**." In short, it is plain that these words, with which the gospel according to John is introduced, "In the beginning was the **Word**," carry in them a manifest allusion to the beginning of Genesis: this evangelist beginning the history of Jesus Christ with the first works of the Son of God; giving us to understand, that he is the first Cause of all things, and that before the creation he was with God; while the other evangelists begin their interesting narratives with his

manifestation in the flesh. The beloved disciple informs us, that **THE WORD**, by whom the world was created, was not a mere sound, like the word of man, but a **Divine Person**, who existed with God, and was God; and expressly tells us, that this Person is **JESUS CHRIST**.

These considerations are sufficient to remove the doubt, which some suggest, about the genuineness of the beginning of this gospel; as if it favoured more of the wild speculations of the Gnostics, than of revealed truth. For it appears from hence, that the ideas are not so new and strange as they imagine. Besides, to suppose that Cerinthus composed either the *beginning* of this gospel or the *Revelation*, is an ungrounded surmise. Not the *former*; for it ought not to be detached from the rest, nor from John's epistles, nor from his Apocalypse; in which these phrases, *the Word, the Word of God, and Jesus Christ the true God*, are used repeatedly. Not the *latter*; for Cerinthus would never think it advisable to forge and publish books under the name of his avowed opposer; nor would the churches of Asia have received the absurd imaginations of that heretic for the gospel of John. Nor can any two things be more incompatible than the doctrines of the evangelist, and the dogmas of that heresiarch. Cerinthus believed that angels created the world; that a fallen angel gave the law; and that Jesus was really the son of Joseph. He taught that *Jesus* was a man, and *Christ* the power of God; which power came upon him at his baptism, and returned to heaven at his death. He affirmed that *Jesus* suffered the inconveniences of life, and the violence of persecution; but that *Christ* wrought stupendous miracles, and was superior to all opposition; that *Christ* was impas-

sible, though *Jesus* suffered; and that *Christ* fell upon the apostles at the feast of Pentecost. I pass over the crimes which he authorized, and the extravagant subordination of æons, which were common to him with other Gnostics. Now, these are such notions as have not the least countenance in the gospel according to John. Why, then, these unreasonable doubts and restless inquiries? If the paragraph under consideration must be suspected of being composed by a Gnostic, because it establishes the pre-existence and Divinity of Jesus Christ; we may, for the same reason, suspect the whole New Testament to be the work of those heretics, and reject it all at once.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARIAN HYPOTHESIS EQUALLY INDEFENSIBLE.

ON a superficial survey of the Arian system, it seems much more plausible than that of Socinus; because it preserves entire the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, which is a doctrine most expressly and repeatedly mentioned in the New Testament; and, indeed, were we to stop here, the former would undoubtedly have the advantage. But when we more closely consider the subject, we find that the Socinian hypothesis is free from several capital difficulties which attend that of the Arians, those ancient enemies to the cause of truth and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. This will appear if the following things be considered.

The term, God, must necessarily be understood, either as a name of *office*, or of *nature*; as denoting *external* qualities and trusts, or *intrinsic* excellence

and *essential* perfections. The Arians, therefore, cannot defend themselves when they are urged with the consideration of the name, GOD, which is given to Jesus Christ, by saying, "It is a name of office; and Christ only bears it as an ambassador of the Most High;" which is the evasion of the Socinians. For, as the disciples of Arius confess that Christ existed not only before his appearance in the world, but also before the creation, they cannot deny that he was, in some sense, GOD, before the formation of the universe. Those passages of Scripture which they explain of his pre-existence, are very express in this respect. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," John i. 1. But if they allow that the Word was *with God* in the beginning; and that he *was God* before the formation of the world; they ought also to grant, that he was "in the form of God;" that he is "the true God; the mighty God; the great God; God blessed for ever." For there is no more reason to allow the one, than there is to acknowledge the other.

But, as they deny this consequence, they will permit me to ask, How the names and praises, which are appropriated to the Great Supreme, can belong to Christ in his first estate; in which he neither *represented* God, nor *acted* in his name, nor was his *ambassador* to men? For, if he were a mere creature, however exalted and glorious, it could not be lawful to express his essence and attributes by the name, GOD. Can it be said, without impiety, of the most excellent creature, "He exists in the form of God, and thinks it not robbery to be equal with God?" Though the LOGOS, in his pre-existent state, possessed a Divine glory, in comparison *with*

us; can we, on the Arian hypothesis, attribute a Divine glory to him, when considered as being *with* GOD? What! must he bear the name of that incomprehensible Being, who is infinitely more exalted above him, than the most excellent creature is above the meanest insect, or the smallest atom! Instead, therefore, of saying, "He was in the form of God," before he humbled himself, we must affirm, that he was *always* in the form of a servant, in the form of a creature; and that *much more* in heaven, than when upon earth; much more *before* the creation of the world, than when he conversed with men. For with what perfections soever a creature may be endued, it is much more in the form of a servant, when in the immediate presence of God, than when among men. Instead, therefore, of the sacred writers informing us, that Christ, in his first estate, and when with his Father, *was God*, they should have said, that he was then comparatively *nothing*. As a nobleman, whose grandeur is very considerable when in a country village, loses much of his splendour when at the king's court and in the royal presence.

Again: Jesus Christ, considered in his first estate, and as with God, bears the name, GOD, either because he *is* God, or because he *acts* as God, or because he *represents* God. Not the *first*; for, on the Arian principles, he is a creature; and, therefore, how excellent soever he be, he cannot, without falsehood, be described by a name consecrated to the Creator. Not the *second*; for in his first state, before the creation, he did not act at all; or, if it were supposed that he did, it was only as the minister of God; and, consequently, he ought not to bear a name appropriated to the first Cause. Nor can it be the *last*; for he could not represent God to the

inhabitants of the heavenly world, before they had an existence. Nor, when the angels were formed, had they any need of such a representation; for they see God face to face; that is, as much as is necessary to the plentitude of their holiness, happiness, and glory. Nor could he represent him to men; for, at the time supposed, they were not created. Besides, why, in order to represent God, must he bear his name? May not a superior be represented, without the person representing bear his peculiar character? Here the Arians are greatly embarrassed; which embarrassment is much increased, by considering that Jesus bears the name **GOD**, with distinguishing and sublime epithets; for he is called, "**The TRUE GOD; the MIGHTY GOD; the GREAT GOD; and GOD BLESSED FOR EVER,**" 1 John v. 20; Isa. ix. 6; Titus ii. 13; Rom. ix. 5.

Another difficulty attending the Arian hypothesis is this; They cannot explain those passages of Scripture which assert, that Christ "made the worlds," that he "created all things, visible and invisible," that he "laid the foundation of the earth," and that "the heavens are the works of his hands," and that "he upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 2, 3, 10; Col. i. 16: they cannot, I say, explain these and similar passages without contradicting themselves, by acknowledging his Divinity, properly so called, after they have denied it, or without running on the most evident absurdities. For, as they understand those passages literally, which declare that God "made all things by Jesus Christ," and that "without him was not anything made that was made," John i. 3, they are obliged to attribute to him the creation of heaven and earth, with all their inhabitants. It, therefore, necessarily follows, that the **WORD** either

made all things by his *own* power, as the sun enlightens the earth by his beams; or, having no inherent power for such a work, was the *mere instrument* by which the infinite power of God exerted itself, as the apostles, who had no power of their own by which to work miracles, were only instruments in the hand of Omnipotence, to control the course of nature, and to astonish and bless the world. If the *latter*, we have reason to complain of being deceived by the language of Scripture, which says expressly, "All things were made by him." How unaccountable it is that he should be called GOD, if he be only the instrument by which Divine power and wisdom display themselves! And, considering the care which the apostles take to guard against a supposition that they wrought miracles by their own power, we cannot but think it exceedingly strange, and as tending greatly to mislead our conceptions, in matters of the highest importance to the glory of God and the salvation of men, that they are not equally careful to inform us, that it was not by *his own* power that Jesus formed the universe and wrought his wonderful works. But, so far from it, they repeatedly declare, that their Divine Master is he "by whom and for whom are all things," Heb. ii. 10; that he "laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands," Heb. i. 10; that he "created all things, visible and invisible," Col. i. 16, from the loftiest angel that surrounds the throne, to the meanest worm that crawls in the dust. Now these, and such like expressions, it must be acknowledged, are very extravagant, if Jesus contributed no more to the production of the universe than the apostles did to the miracles wrought by their instrumentality. But if it be said, "Jesus formed the creatures by his *own*

power which he received from the Supreme Being," then it follows, that the Father *communicated* to him the power of creating. But that is an *infinite* power, for it surmounts the infinite distance which is between *being* and *nothing*. Now, infinite power is an infinite perfection; and it is manifest that an infinite perfection cannot be communicated to a creature, which is and must be finite in its powers and capacities. The supposition of the contrary is absurd, as it involves a contradiction, because it implies that such a creature is both finite and infinite.

Again: If Jesus Christ, being only an exalted creature, did create all things, he must be considered either as an *instrumental* cause, or as the *principal* cause. Not the *former*, for no instrument can act but where there is an object, and such an one to which it is in some measure proportioned. But in the work of creation there is no object on which to act, the work itself producing the object. If the *latter*, he is the Creator; he possesses an infinite power; he is truly and properly GOD. For if he be invested with infinite power, why not with unerring wisdom and supreme goodness? Why not with every perfection of the Deity?

Further: Either Jesus Christ acted *alone* in the creation of all things, or in *conjunction* with his Father. If the *former*, why is the formation of the world ever attributed to the Father? If the *latter*, either he exerted the same, or a different power. If the *same*, it was an infinite power, for such is the Father's. If a *different* power, it was created and finite. But as Omnipotence needs no coadjutor, (to will, and to create, being the same with God,) so the supposition of a *finite* power giving existence to the universe, and the idea of a *created* Creator, are the

first-born of absurdities. Nothing more offensive, nothing more shocking to common sense, than the thought of a creature *creating* the world; yet with such inconsistencies is the Arian system attended, and such absurdities do its abettors digest.

Once more: On the Arian hypothesis, it is impossible to defend Moses and the patriarchs from a charge of idolatry, in worshipping, as the true God, the Angel who appeared to them so often. Because they cannot say, with the Socinians, "That this Angel was not worshipped on account of his own excellence, but because he represented God; and that, detached from his exalted office and ministry, he was not worthy of more honour than any other of those heavenly intelligences." For this Angel, according to them, was **THE WORD**, whom the evangelist teaches us to consider as existing from the beginning with God, and as being God. So that all the honours he claimed and received from the ancient patriarchs, must be looked upon as due to his own perfections; and, consequently, we are taught to apply to an angel those oracles which had for their object the eternal God; to apply to the servant what is peculiar to his Lord; to a subject, what is due only to the Sovereign. But this consideration will be resumed hereafter.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ON THE SOCINIAN HYPOTHESIS, IS OBSCURE, ABSURD, AND NOT CONSISTENT WITH PIETY.

As to the *obscurity* of Scripture, on the principles of the Socinians, it is so apparent that I need not spend

any more time in proving it; I shall, therefore, only inquire into the occasion of it. The obscurity we find in many passages of sacred writ, is reducible to one or another of the following heads. Let us now see whether the darkness and difficulties attending those texts which are controverted between us and our opponents, be referrible to any of them.

In many parts of the Scripture there is an obscurity which arises from *the nature* of the things proposed to us. To this head belong the difficulties with which we meet in those passages of Scripture which relate to the nature of God, the mystery of the incarnation, the decrees of God, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, the eternity of those torments which await the wicked, and all those great and sublime subjects, which are incomprehensible by man, except *they* cease to be what they are, or *he* cease to be what he is. But we cannot reduce to this principle the obscurity which our adversaries find in the passages before mentioned. For there is not, there cannot be, any great mystery in a creature revealing the counsel of God. It is no surprising thing for a man to live at the time when the gospel dispensation commenced, or in the time of John the Baptist, to be known of God only, to be appointed to a more glorious ministry than that of the prophets; or for a man to be made flesh, that is, to partake of a corporal nature. It was no very wonderful thing, according to the interpretation adopted by our opponents, which Jesus asserted, when he said of himself, "I was, in appointment, before Abraham; I possessed a glory with the Father before the world was; because it was determined, in the Divine decree, that I should possess it."

Another cause of obscurity in the sacred writings, is, The *darkness* which was brought on our minds

by the first grand apostasy. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. ii. 14. We should, therefore, examine ourselves, and see whether the obscurity of which we complain, spring from our own depravity. It might, indeed, be justly suspected to arise from this quarter, in reference to the controverted texts, if *we* were the persons who found them obscure; but as it is chiefly our opposers, *they* ought to acknowledge the obscurity. For, in our sense, the *object* is sublime and mysterious, but the *language* plain and familiar: in theirs, the object is well proportioned to our capacities, but the language is obscure and perplexed. Further: Are we, or our adversaries—let common sense judge—the persons who are chargeable with a secret desire of giving an unnatural turn to these passages, in favour of our own opinion; and with acting under the influence of evil passions, in finding out entirely new and very extraordinary senses? What mistake, what irregularity can there be in supposing that these expressions, "In the beginning," are to be understood in a general sense? Or that this expression, "The Word was GOD," includes something more exalted and more Divine than the glory of a mere servant? Or that these words, "By him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made," signify something more, than preaching the gospel, reforming the world, and the effects which followed? Or that these words, "Before Abraham was, I am," include an assertion and commendation of personal excellence, which do not agree to the meanest of rational crea-

tures? Who, I ask, is able to fix and to prove a charge of mistake upon us, or of any extravagance, for thus thinking of such passages as these?

Again: The *genius* of the original tongues, which, in some cases, is very different from ours, is another cause of obscurity. It is granted, however, that this is not the source of those difficulties with which we meet in the passages disputed between us. The *genius* of the sacred language is far from leading us to invest a mere creature with the most glorious characters of the Creator. To this it is quite averse. Other languages have something heathenish and impious in them. They do not scruple to use the terms, *adorable, divine, sacrifice, incense, eternity, and supreme good*, when speaking of a creature. But the language of inspiration, being the language of GOD, never prostitutes terms of such sacred significancy to little or base purposes; it is always sober, religious, and consistent with itself. The penmen of Scripture, it is true, sometimes use hyperboles; but never such as can injure the glory of God.

Further: The Scripture is obscure in reference to events which are yet *future*. Great perspicuity, in prophecy, might impede the accomplishment of it. Nobody wonders, for instance, that things should be involved in enigmatical figures in the visions of Ezekiel, so as to render his discourses obscure; because they are the secrets of futurity. But, in the expressions before us, there is no prophecy. They, in general, refer to the time past. Such as, "Before Abraham was, I am; in the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God; the Word was God." The obscurity, therefore, of which our opponents complain, cannot arise from this source.

Once more: A *false philosophy*, or a misapplica-

tion of that which is true, is another occasion of obscurity in many passages of Scripture. Various texts, in the Old and New Testament, though clear in themselves, have been much obscured by scholastic and philosophical comments. Yet even this cannot be the source of those difficulties which our adversaries find in the passages controverted between them and us. For the question is not about any obscurity in the words of the Holy Spirit, as explained according to *our* sentiments, but as interpreted according to *theirs*. And they pretend, that their hypothesis is quite free from the cloudy and embarrassing subtleties of the schools; yet it is on their principles that these passages are so exceedingly difficult and obscure.

This, then, is an obscurity which has none of those causes that are common to difficult passages of Scripture; which is very surprising. But this surprise will increase, when it is considered, that as the obscurity has not its cause in us, nor can be reasonably ascribed to us, it must be attributed to God. But if he be the only cause, it will be impossible for us to account for it, with honour to his character. For his design in it could not be to *glorify* himself; because an obscurity in his revelation, which leads us to believe that Jesus, a mere man, is GOD, that he created the world, and is invested with the essential glories of the Supreme Being, cannot possibly tend to the honour of God. Nor could his design be to *illuminate* the minds of men; for how should an obscurity enlighten the mind? Besides, was there no other way of communicating heavenly light, without exposing mankind to the danger of so baneful an error? Nor was it to *try our faith*; for though the greatness of the objects revealed in the Bible, and the contrariety which is in them to our natural prejudices, may serve to