

heavenly messenger, in his converse with Mary, did not intend, by anything he said of the Lord Messiah as the Son of God, to declare the *proper ground* of his Divine filiation, but only to inform her in general of his infinite dignity, and that his filial relation to the Father should be attested in his miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit.

Again : The Scripture frequently makes use of such words to express an *event*, as seem to denote the *cause*. So the evangelist says, "Therefore they could not believe, *because* that Esaias said again," John xii. 39. Thus the expressions on which the objection is raised, seem to denote the cause for which Jesus Christ should be called the Son of God ; but they signify only the event. For the sense of the passage is this : The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; and it shall come to pass that the Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. The particle, *therefore*, is not to be considered as pointing out the reason why Jesus should bear the exalted title, but why he should be *received* and *acknowledged* under it by his people ; who would infer, from his miraculous conception by the Holy Ghost, and his wonderful birth of a virgin, that he was the "Child born ; the Son given," and the glorious IMMANUEL spoken of in ancient prophecy, Isa. vii. 14 ; ix. 6.

But were we to understand the words in their literal sense, they would not express anything really inconsistent with what we maintain. For the power of the Holy Spirit, by which the body of Jesus was conceived in the womb, conferred upon him, as man, the unspeakable honour of being called THE SON OF GOD. This cannot be denied, in whatever sense you

understand the phrase, "He shall be called," whether for he shall *be*, or he shall be *denominated*. Certain it is, that the conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost, was the reason why that which was born of Mary is called the Son of God. For as the human nature of Jesus is hypostatically united to the Divine, it partakes of this and other glorious titles which are given to the Messiah, in consequence of his miraculous conception. The reason why the humanity of Christ is sometimes, though in a figurative sense, invested with such titles and qualities as belong only to the eternal Son of God, or the uncreated Word, is its *personal union* with the Word.

Admitting, however, that there were a real difficulty in the text, a difficulty intended by the wisdom of God to exercise our humility and faith; yet our opponents would gain but little advantage by it; because it is easily proved that the title, SON OF GOD, is established on different foundations from that of his miraculous conception. He is frequently called God's *beloved Son*, his *own Son*, his *only Son*, and his *only begotten Son*. We ought, consequently, to inquire, not only into his general character, *Son*, but also into those ideas of *distinguishing excellence* which are annexed to it by various remarkable epithets.

Our adversaries, being determined not to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God by eternal generation, endeavour to establish the title on the following foundations. His conception by the Holy Ghost; his investiture in the offices of prophet, priest, and king; his unction by the Holy Spirit; his resurrection from the dead; and his exaltation after his sufferings. Of all which in their order.

In regard to the *first* supposed ground of the august character, I would ask, Whether the mere

advantage of having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, be greater than that of being formed immediately by the power of God in a state of holiness, as were the angels, and the souls of our first parents. For to be formed by the Spirit of God, and by the power of God, is, on the principles of our opponents, the same thing. This, therefore, they must allow. Consequently, though Jesus might be called **THE SON OF GOD**, because he was formed by the Divine Spirit, yet the title would be common to him with angels, whom God created by his own immediate power. He would then be the **SON**, but not the **ONLY SON** of God.

It may, perhaps, be said, "Jesus might be called the **Son of God** in distinction from angels, because they have not a father, being created and unbegotten intelligences; which was the case of our first parents, and is true of the souls of men in general. But it was proper that Christ, being like other men, and having a mother, should also have a father. Yet, not having had one as other men, the want of ordinary generation being supplied by the Holy Spirit, we need not wonder either that he is called the **Son of God**, or that he is thus denominated in distinction from pure intelligences."—This reply is weak. For the character, **SON**, **OWN SON**, and **ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**, though such a sublime title, is of no real dignity, according to this argument. Because, upon this principle, the reason why Christ is called **THE ONLY SON OF GOD**, rather than the first man, or any of the angels, is only this: They, having been formed immediately by Divine power, were not conceived in the womb, as he was to whom the character is appropriated and peculiar. But give me leave to ask, What excellence is imparted to a creature, pro-

duced immediately by Omnipotence, merely on account of having been *conceived in the womb*? The Scripture teaches us to consider this title, **THE ONLY SON OF GOD**, as one that is very eminent and glorious; as one that distinguishes Jesus Christ from all the angels, and proclaims his dominion over them. But it would be absurd to imagine that *he* bears the exalted character, rather than any of *them*, because though they were formed immediately by the power of God, in common with him, yet he had the *singular advantage* of being formed in the womb of a virgin. Nay, there is something more noble in being formed immediately by Divine power, without the intervention of either father or mother, than in being formed without a father in the womb of a mother, by the Almighty. Because the less second causes intervene in the production of a Divine work, the more immediate relation it has to God; and immediate production carries the *appearance*, at least, of more excellence than that which is mediate. So the creation of man, for instance, was more perfect than his generation. If, then, Jesus deserve to be called the Son of God, because he was formed by Omnipotence, with the intervention of a mother, Adam, who was formed by the power of God, without father and without mother, deserves a higher title; and the angels, who were formed in a more perfect manner than our first parent, because not formed of any pre-existing matter, must be worthy of a more glorious title than he.

Again: If the Sonship of Christ resulted from his being conceived by the Holy Ghost, the Divine Spirit, rather than the first Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, would be properly denominated the *Father* of our Lord; because that effect on which the filiation of Jesus is supposed to depend, was more

immediately produced by the former, than by the latter of those Divine Persons. But this is evidently false, being contrary to the whole current of sacred Scripture. Further: Though the conception of Jesus was truly miraculous and very wonderful, yet it extended only to his human nature. But the word of God does not represent the Sonship of Christ as terminating in him as *man*. No; that infallible rule of our faith speaks of it as relating to his *Divine Person*. As man, he was the Seed of the woman and the Son of David, in contradistinction to his being the Son of God. Now, it is evident that his being the Son of God, cannot arise from that which constituted him the Son of man; for the sonships being so widely different, the foundations of them cannot be the same, cannot but be equally different, corresponding to the two natures united in his wonderful Person as IMMANUEL: agreeable to those words, "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. i. 3; ix. 5.

"But the conception of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost, is not the only foundation on which the title is established."—If so, different reasons of the glorious character must be sought, and our opponents must disclaim the advantage they pretend to have from the text under consideration.—If they suppose the evangelist in this passage to point out the *only* foundation of the title, they contradict themselves. But if they consider the character as having *other* foundations, then this text cannot be supposed to exclude others, nor, consequently, to oppose that of eternal generation.

The *second* pretended ground of the sublime title is, The *investiture* of Jesus Christ in his mediatorial offices. In proof of which they adduce the following text: "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" John x. 35, 36. That He who was sanctified and sent is the Son of God, is an undoubted truth; but that his sanctification and mission were the ground of his Sonship, is far from being proved by this passage. There is a wide and manifest difference between a *claim of relation* to any one, and assigning the *ground* of that relation. Of the *former* our Lord here speaks; of the *latter* he is entirely silent.

Again: Though princes and magistrates are called *gods* in the sacred Scripture, yet we do not read of any individual among them being called THE SON OF GOD; much less is any of them so denominated, in that emphatical and frequent use of the title in which it is applied to our Immanuel. Besides, if Jesus Christ were the Son of God, either merely or principally, on account of his mediatorial offices, he must have been much more so after he entered on his public ministry than he was before. But this cannot be supposed with the least shadow of reason. Dare our opponents affirm, that the Sonship of Jesus commenced at his baptism, when the Father said, "This is my beloved Son?" Matt. iii. 17.

Again: If Jesus be the Son of God on account of his offices, he must be so either by nature, or by adoption, or by a metaphor; for we know not, as yet, of any other way. Not by *nature*, on account of his *offices*; for that implies a contradiction. Nor by *adoption*; for how can his bearing an office be the

cause of his adoption? But if it were, this would not distinguish him from his disciples; who are all the children of God by adoption. Nor is he the Son of God by a *metaphor*; for, on such a supposition, the Sonship of Christ is greatly inferior to that of believers. They are the sons of God by adoption, and also by regeneration. Their sonship, consequently, is much superior to a merely *metaphorical* relation.

Once more: When we consider our Lord as invested with various offices, we view him as Mediator; but, as Mediator, he is the Father's servant, and is repeatedly so called. Whoever imagines, therefore, that Christ is the Son of God in virtue of his offices, confounds the distinct, the opposite ideas, of a *son* and a *servant*. To suppose that our Lord is the SON of God, by office, or on account of his mediatorial undertaking; and to assert that he is GOD, by office, are equally indefensible, and equally absurd; so that he who can demonstrate the *former*, has no reason to despair of proving the *latter*.

Some there are that cordially acknowledge the doctrine of the Trinity, and are far from denying the proper Deity of Christ, who yet maintain, that his exalted character, SON OF GOD, is economical, and founded in his mediation. But if so, it had its rise in a sovereign act of the Divine will; and, consequently, if infinite wisdom and absolute sovereignty had so determined, He who is called the *Father*, might have been the *Son*. Nay, on this hypothesis, had not man fallen, and had not grace provided a Mediator; neither the emphatical title, nor the sublime relation signified by it, would ever have been known in the world, nor ever existed.

The *third* reason assigned by them, as the foundation of the exalted character, is, His *Divine unction*.

But here they confound the effect with its cause; the character with the thing characterized. That God gave the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ, as man, is allowed; but he vouchsafed the Divine gift without measure, because he was his Son. This heavenly unction did not constitute, but supposed him to be the Son of God. The Holy Spirit indeed, is granted to believers; to the children of God in general as their common privilege. But the gift is not bestowed, the privilege is not enjoyed, *prior* to their adoption; no, both the one and the other are the blessed *fruits* of their filial relation to God. And so Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, *because he was* the Son of God; not that he *might be* so. Besides, if he had been honoured with so illustrious a title as THE SON OF GOD, only, or principally, on account of the gifts he received, yet he could not for that reason have been called God's ONLY SON; because many others have received, the gifts of the Spirit, though not to such a degree. But why should I here enlarge, seeing it is evident from the Scriptures, that Christ was the Son of God prior to his inauguration, his baptism, his unction?

The *resurrection* of Christ from the dead, is the *fourth* foundation on which our opponents endeavour to establish the glorious title. But our Divine Redeemer was the Son of God, his own Son, and his only Son, before that illustrious event took place; as appears from a multitude of testimonies, which need not be recited. It is, indeed, said, He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4; but then the words evidently suppose, that he was the Son of God *before* his resurrection. His triumphant resurrection did not *constitute*, but *declare* him

to be the only begotten of the Father. Besides, admitting that he might, with propriety, be called **THE SON OF GOD**, because he was raised from the dead; yet he could not be called his **ONLY** Son; for some have risen, and millions shall rise from the dead as well as he. Further: If Jesus bear the august character on this ground, it must be only in a way of analogy and by a metaphor; much in the same sense as the angels, being created by Jehovah, are called the sons of God. I said, by a *metaphor*, or only in a way of *analogy*. For I cannot perceive that the resurrection of a man from the dead, is any more like a generation, or gives a better claim to the sublime title, than his creation. Yet there are very few who would not be offended to hear, that Christ is the Son of God only by a *metaphor*. For every one may easily see, that believers in common would be the sons of God in a higher and nobler sense than Christ himself, were that the case; they being more properly the sons of God by adoption, than he can be in a sense that is merely figurative. But, whatever be the real ground of the glorious character, it is manifest, that it must be something *peculiar* to Jesus Christ; something in which none upon earth, nor any in heaven, besides himself, has a share; because none but He, either is, or ought to be called, "The **ONLY** begotten of the Father; the **ONLY** Son of God," John i. 14, 18.

The *fifth* reason assigned for the exalted character, is, the *sovereign exaltation* of Jesus to the right hand of the Father, after his death and resurrection. But I need not spend much time in refuting this conjecture; because many of the arguments already advanced return upon this occasion. I shall, therefore, only ask, Was not Christ the Son of God, his

own Son, and his only begotten Son, *before* his exaltation? Must we never distinguish between his being a Son, and his entering on the actual possession of his inheritance? Jesus, the Mediator, I allow, entered on the full possession of the inheritance, when he ascended into heaven; but does it from thence follow, that he was not the Son of God before? We may affirm, that God *anointed* his Son; that he *sent* his Son, to be our Priest, Prophet, and King; that he *raised up* and *highly exalted* his Son; because the word of inspiration assures us of these things. Consequently, instead of saying that Jesus is the Son of God, because he was anointed, was invested with various offices, was raised from the dead and highly exalted; we should rather say, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and invested with his mediatorial offices, became the first fruits of them that slept, and was exalted after his resurrection, because he was the Son of God prior to these events. And if so, we must either consider his conception by the Holy Ghost, as the only reason of the illustrious title, which we have already disproved; or we must have recourse to a more ancient generation.*

* Perfectly conformable to the reasoning of our author, in this chapter, are the language and sentiments of that sensible and ingenious writer, Mr. JOHN M'LAURIN. "If that name, GOD'S OWN, or proper SON, signified his being produced by God the Father, it would agree to all creatures. If it signified only some imperfect likeness to the nature of the Father, it would agree to all living, especially all rational creatures. If it signified only the highest resemblance, or likeness to God, that any creature has, it might agree to many; since no mere creature can have so much of God, but another might be raised to have as much or more. If it signified his being created immediately by the Father, whereas other beings are immediately created by the Son; all other rational creatures might have had the same relation

But here, as through the whole subject, we must carefully distinguish the *modus* of our Lord's eternal Sonship from the Sonship itself. The *latter* is revealed as an object of faith, by the Spirit of infallibility; while the *former* lies concealed in impenetrable darkness. I shall not, therefore attempt to *explain* the eternal generation of the Son of God. It is, I acknowledge, far above all our expressions and all our thoughts; nor do I wonder that all the comparisons which the wit of man can invent, in order to illustrate the subject, come vastly short of their designed end. But I have no need of such comparisons to satisfy my reason and conscience. For if I do not allow that there are many great and interesting realities which, as to the *modus* of their existence, are absolutely incomprehensible by me, I am not capable of reasoning either in religion or nature. But if this be granted, the eternal filiation of the Divine Son being to me incomprehensible, is far from affording a sufficient reason to question the reality of it. I ought rather to inquire, Whether I can, without impious arrogance, doubt of its truth, it being clearly revealed in the Bible.

By examining the Scripture, I am fully convinced that Christ existed *before his conception in the womb* of the virgin, for this we have proved in the preceding sections; that before his incarnation, he was **THE SON OF GOD**, for this the Holy Ghost expressly asserts; that he is the Son of God, not by adoption, much less by a metaphor, but in a *proper sense*, and hence he is called, "**THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD,**"

to the Father, and would, however, have the same relation to Christ that he hath to God. The name of **GOD'S OWN SON**, therefore, cannot agree to any mere creature." *Sermons and Essays*, page 137. Second edition.

John iii. 18 ; that, as the Son of God, he possessed a glory with the Father *before the world began*, for of this he himself assures us ; that he is the *Creator* of all things, and *one* with the Father ; that he is *equal* with God, and the *true* God, as appears from the foregoing pages. Consequently, how incomprehensible soever the *modus* of his Divine filiation may be, I cannot, without rejecting the testimony of God, refuse my assent to the *reality* of his ETERNAL SONSHIP.

CHAPTER VI.

OTHER OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

OUR opponents, with confidence, adduce all those passages of Scripture which express the idea of *dependence* in Jesus Christ upon the Father. They, therefore, frequently confront us with those texts which assert, that Christ does nothing of himself ; that he does those works which the Father gave him to do ; that the Son knoweth not the hour of the last judgment ; that the Father is greater than he ; and that the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, at the consummation of all things, John v. 19, 30 ; xvii. 4 ; Matt. xxiv. 36 ; Mark xiii. 32 ; John xiv. 28 ; 1 Cor. xv. 24. On each of these, and on similar passages, they argue against us. But as they make, in reality, but one difficulty, we shall consider them all together, and give them but one reply.

Here, then, it may be observed, that we frequently meet with such declarations in Scripture, as are, *in appearance*, directly opposite to these. There we behold our Lord acting according to his own will ;

acting with a sovereign authority ; acting as absolutely independent. " Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. I will, be thou clean. Thy sins be forgiven thee," Matt. xv. 28 ; viii. 3 ; ix. 2. There also we are assured, that he is one with the Father, and " equal with God," John x. 30 ; Phil. ii. 6 ; that He " knoweth all things, and of his kingdom there shall be no end," John xxi. 15 ; Luke i. 33. Now, these passages, with many of a similar kind, *appear* contradictory to those on which our adversaries argue ; but they are not, they cannot be so, in *reality* ; because they were all indited by the same Spirit, who is not liable to error and contradiction. Consequently, of two hypotheses, that which makes them clash and renders them irreconcilable must be false ; and that which proves their consistency bids fair to be true, and is abundantly preferable. The former, I am firmly persuaded, is the character of the *Socinian*, the latter of *our* hypothesis.

By what medium, for instance, will the Socinians show me, that Christ is *equal* with his Father, and yet *inferior* to him ? For, according to them, he is inferior, infinitely inferior to the Father *by nature*. Is he, then, equal to him by his *offices* ? Impossible ; the supposition is full of absurdity. For, in regard to his offices, he is evidently THE SERVANT of God ; he is not, he cannot, therefore, be equal with him, on that account. For a common servant to say, I am equal to my master, would be insolence ; for a minister of state to assert it, would be a species of high treason against his sovereign.

With what consistency can our opponents maintain that Christ knows *all things*, and yet is ignorant of the time fixed for one of the *greatest events* that ever did, or ever will take place in the universe ? The distinction between nature and office, is of no use

here. For *knowledge* is a property of nature; something, therefore, belonging to the *nature* of Jesus must be in question. Will they say, "When Peter declares that our Lord knows *all things*, that he does not speak in *the general*?" But what is speaking in the general, if not making use of general expressions? Besides, Peter, from a general principle, draws a particular conclusion: "Lord, thou knowest *all things*, thou knowest that *I love thee*," John xxi. 17. As if he had said, Lord I love thee, and thou must know that I love thee, for thou art not ignorant of anything. To suppose the apostle was under a mistake, when he so expressed himself, has no shadow of reason. Because if he were, he uttered blasphemy, by attributing omniscience to Jesus Christ, which belongs only to God; and because his holy and humble Master would not have rewarded blasphemy by saying, "Feed my sheep."

How can they reconcile those passages which inform us, that Christ does nothing of himself, that he prayed at the grave of Lazarus, and that the Father always hears him; with others which represent him as working miracles by his own will and his own power? If he be a mere man, he depends on God for his existence every moment, and was entirely beholden to the Great Sovereign for every exertion of power in the performance of his miraculous works. But if so, how came he to speak with such an air of Divine authority and of Divine power, "I WILL; BE THOU CLEAN," Matt. viii. 3? Had Moses, or Paul, expressed himself after this manner, he would, undoubtedly, have been guilty of blasphemy. Nor can the distinction between office and nature, be of the least service on this occasion.

Nor is their hypothesis any better calculated to reconcile what the Scripture asserts about the perpetuity

of our Lord's kingdom, with what it says concerning his *delivering of it up* to the Father. For as, according to them, he does not reign by *nature*, but only in virtue of his *office*, it does not appear how his kingdom can be eternal. Nay, it necessarily follows, that it must come to a period if his offices do so. The seeming contradictions, therefore, between the different passages, remain in all their force, as to any relief which can be afforded by their hypothesis. If, then, we be able perfectly to reconcile these apparently jarring texts, they must allow that our sentiments have a manifest and great advantage over theirs.

Though the distinction of *nature* and *office*, which is fundamental in their hypothesis, be of no service here; yet ours, of *two distinct natures* in the Person of Christ, which is essential to the system embraced by us, is calculated to answer the important end. Nothing more easy, nothing more natural, than to reconcile one Scripture with another, on the foundation of this distinction. For example: Jesus Christ is man, and therefore inferior to the Father: He is God, and therefore equal with the Father. He is man, and therefore ignorant of some things: He is God, and therefore must be omniscient. He is man, and therefore must be dependent on the First Cause; he prays, and is heard: He is God; to act, therefore, he need only to will, for by willing he commands, and by commanding he executes; "I WILL, BE THOU CLEAN." He is man, and therefore may receive a dominion, which is not natural to him; he may also receive it for a certain time, after which he shall deliver up his delegated kingdom and dominion to the Father: He is God, and therefore has an everlasting kingdom, a necessary dominion that shall never have an end.

Crellius will reply, "This distinction of *two natures* in Christ, is a fiction."—But if so, the Scriptures are absolutely irreconcilable. Besides, if we search the volume of inspiration, we shall find this distinction strongly marked and firmly laid. There it is affirmed, that "THE WORD," who created all things, "WAS MADE FLESH," John i. 14; and that "GOD was manifest IN THE FLESH," 1 Tim. iii. 16. These assertions must imply, that the Divine nature was united to the human, in the wonderful Person of Jesus Christ. The same fundamental truth is expressed in the name, "IMMANUEL; GOD WITH US," Matt. i. 23.

And if we examine the passages produced against us by our opponents, we may soon perceive that this distinction of natures in our Mediator is quite consistent with their scope and design. For example: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I," John xiv. 28. It is as *man* that he leaves his disciples; for, in other respects, he engages to continue with them to the end of the world: it is of himself, as going away *speedily*, that he speaks the words; and, consequently, he speaks of himself as man, when he says, "My Father is greater than I." And as to those ideas of *dependence* which he expresses in other places, the several passages may be easily explained, consistently with the analogy of faith and the Divinity of our Lord, either by the distinction of *two natures*, or by the office of *Mediator*, or by that *relation* which subsists between the Father and the Son. But that peculiar mode of subsistence not being revealed in the Scripture, it would be presumptuous folly in me to attempt an inquiry into it: and I again declare, that I will make no inquiries on this mysterious pro-

found subject which are curious and philosophical ;
FOR DIVINITY CONSISTS IN SPEAKING WITH
THE SCRIPTURE, AND IN GOING NO FURTHER.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ADAPTED TO RELIEVE THE MIND, RE-
SPECTING THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH ATTEND THIS GREAT
MYSTERY.

HAVING answered the principal objections which our opponents advance against us, it is proper we should now inquire, How we may satisfy our own minds, as to the difficulties attending the grand truth which it has been the business of this treatise to establish? And, in order to this, the following considerations are presented to the reader's notice.

Almost everything in the system of nature, notwithstanding the great improvements in modern philosophy, is attended with difficulties. If you look up to the heavens, you stand astonished at their greatness, and feel yourself incapable of comprehending that immensity which lies beyond those vast spaces which surround us. If you cast your eyes on the earth, you meet with as many mysteries of nature as there are animals, plants, and creatures inanimate. You meet with insuperable difficulties in explaining the sensation of one, the vegetation of another, and the motion of a third. If you consider material nature in its wide extremes of immense greatness and invisible minuteness, you are struck with amazement, and imagination is nonplussed. If, to the consideration of bodies, you take in that of their duration, time will show you incomprehensible wonders, both in the succession of ages past, and in

that which is future. If you turn your thoughts to spiritual essences, everything surpasses your comprehension. You cannot comprehend either their manner of existing, or their manner of acting. Even the human soul is so great a paradox to itself, that it long since despaired, not only of comprehending, but of knowing itself.

And if so, is there any reason to assert, as our adversaries do, that there are *no mysteries* in religion? Or, have they sufficient ground to refuse their assent to the doctrine of our Lord's eternal Divinity, so clearly revealed in the Bible, because it is attended with such difficulties as are insuperable to the powers of reason? Is it any wonder if the difficulties with which we meet in the Christian religion, and especially those that regard the Deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, should be found greater, much greater, than those which attend a philosophical inquiry into the system of nature? It would, indeed, be a wonder if it were not so; because the constitution and capacities of our minds bear some proportion to natural objects, which are created and finite; and are much better qualified to inquire into their causes and properties, their connexions and uses, than into those of religion, which are of a spiritual kind, and particularly what relates to the INFINITE GODHEAD. Besides, the blessed God has not prepared our minds, in the volume of revelation, for meeting with mysteries in the frame of nature, as he has in the objects of religion. He has told us that the mystery of godliness IS GREAT, and that the things of the gospel are accounted FOOLISHNESS by the sons of science, 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Cor. i. 23.

“But reason,” they will say, “reason is the principal light, and, in some respects, the principal revelation, by which God makes himself known to man.

By reason we are led to the Scriptures ; and by that noble faculty we are delivered from the blindness of universal scepticism.”—Reason, as before observed, prepares the way to faith, by leading us to receive the Scripture as a Divine revelation ; but when she has put the sacred volume into our hands, and has found the natural import of its language, she either is, or ought to be silent. She has no right to demand, How can these things be ? no right to dictate *what* the Almighty should reveal, or *how* he should speak. Nay, there is nothing more reasonable, than to hearken to the voice of Unerring Wisdom and Infinite Authority, with an *implicit* submission and an *unsuspecting* reliance.

There are two kinds of knowledge ; one of curiosity, the other of practice : and this distinction takes place in all arts and sciences. Thus, for instance, in the art of navigation, we must know what a ship is ; which seas are safe, and which dangerous ; at what time such a sea is navigable, and when it is not so. This is essential to the end of navigation ; and this I call a knowledge of *practice*. But it may be inquired, Why the sea is salt ? What is the reason that such a sea has its flux and reflux more than another ? And why such particular winds prevail more in this climate than they do in that ? This I call a knowledge of *curiosity* : and it would be very absurd to fail of reducing the other to practice, because these questions contain such difficulties as are unanswerable. Again : I resolve to eat my common food, and, sometimes, when I have no appetite, because I know that without food my strength and life must fail. But were I to defer taking the necessary refreshment till I knew how the various transmutations are performed ; or till I was able to comprehend how the food is turned into chyle, the chyle into blood, and the blood into flesh ;

all the world would laugh at my folly : while I should suffer the pains of hunger, perhaps the agonies of death, notwithstanding the pretended importance of such inquiries.

In the affairs of morality and divinity, there are also two kinds of knowledge ; the one of practice, the other of curiosity. To *worship* Jesus Christ, I must know that he is God. To put my *trust* in him, I must look upon him as God ; because it is written, " Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from JEHOVAH," Jer. xvii. 5. But it is not necessary that I should know the *modus* and the adorable secrets of the hypostatical union. As to what is *practical*, it is this : To know that Christ is the Son of God, whom all rational creatures are bound to love, obey, and adore ; that he created the heavens and the earth, and by him all things consist ; and that he is over all, God blessed for ever. But speculative and metaphysical inquiries into these things belong to a knowledge of *curiosity* ; and are no other than bold and presumptuous endeavours to penetrate the unsearchables of the Divine Essence and the Divine Personalities.

God's design, in that revelation which he has given, is to make known *realities* and *facts*, not the *manner* of them. So, in the works of creation, he discovers himself as an Almighty Being, whose power produced all things ; but he does not answer a multitude of curious questions, devised by men of a speculative turn, relating to the *manner* in which Divine power produced the universe, and operates in the conservation of all things. In the constitution of the world and the conduct of his providence, God gives us such a display of his perfections, as challenges our

reverence and affection, our obedience and adoration ; yet multitudes of insuperable difficulties attend the Divine administration, from our not being able to comprehend *how* the holiness, and wisdom, and power of God concur in the permission of the most wicked actions, and in over-ruling them so as to promote some valuable end.

And thus it is in the Divine word, which contains as a doctrine, and reveals as a fact, the incarnation of the Son of God. These Divine declarations, "The Word was made flesh ; God was manifest in the flesh," are plain and full to the point ; especially if considered in connexion with other infallible testimonies. But they do not, nor does the Bible at large, enable us to answer a number of difficult questions, which might be started about the *modus* of that wonderful fact. Nor, indeed, was this either necessary or practicable. It was not *practicable* ; for as the minds of speculative men are ever teeming with unprofitable questions and perplexing doubts, the volume of Scripture must have been of an immense bulk to have provided solutions for them all. It was not *necessary* ; for to know the *modus* of the grand reality would, perhaps, only indulge our curiosity and flatter our pride ; whereas our acquaintance with the *fact* serves for practice ; and it is practice, not the gratification of our curiosity, at which the Holy Spirit aims. Happy would it be if all teachers of divinity were careful to distinguish between those things which are practical and necessary, and those which are curious and merely speculative. They would be surprised to find by this distinction, that a great part of mankind spend their time in seeking a kind of knowledge which is of little or no use. A kind of knowledge which would neither meliorate their

tempers, nor amend their conduct; neither increase their devotion to God, nor promote benevolence to man. They would see that philosophical divines lose their way, the very first step they take, in searching after the truths of salvation; because they spend their time and pains in attempting to grasp incomprehensibles, instead of insisting upon what is plainly revealed.

As those who lived under the legal economy had, in comparison with us, but faint representations of the *reality* of the incarnation, (though agreeable to the plan of Divine wisdom, respecting the state of the church at that time, and had a regard to a clearer manifestation of that capital truth under the gospel dispensation,) how do we know but our present ignorance of the *manner* of that mysterious fact may have a relation to the future life? For the knowledge of the people of God does not only vary according to the difference of the Divine economies under which they live, but according to the different *states* in which they are. A child, for instance, has no reason to be offended or grieved because he cannot comprehend how the empires of this world are governed, any more than the ancient Israelites had because they were not favoured with all the light and grace of the Messiah's kingdom. The condition of men while on earth, like that of a child in the simile, does not permit them to penetrate the mysteries of religion to that degree of which the human mind shall be capable in a future state; though even then it will be impossible to "find out the Almighty to perfection," Job xi. 7.

Our ideas proceed from three sources; the senses, reason, and faith: and these are mutually dependent, though their uses and jurisdiction are different. The senses furnish reason with her materials, and reason

furnishes faith with her principles. The senses never rise so high as reason, nor is it proper that reason should rise so high as faith. Reason judges of that which the senses cannot perceive. She tells us, for example, that there is matter between the earth and the heavens; though this matter does not appear. And so it is the province and prerogative of faith to judge of those things which surpass the powers of reason. God asserts, and faith teaches, that "the Word was made flesh," though reason of herself perceives nothing of it; nay, though she strongly object against it. And why? Because faith is superior to reason, as reason is superior to the senses. As, therefore, it would be vain and absurd for a man to endeavour to discover that by the senses which reason cannot develope, so it is preposterous and arrogant for reason to determine upon those mysterious realities which lie within the province of faith, even of that faith which entirely depends on the Divine testimony, and is altogether directed by it. For as the errors of the senses, which are the first means of knowledge, are corrected by reason, so the mistakes of reason should be rectified by faith. Let reason, then, lead me to faith, as my senses lead me to reason; but let reason be silent when faith speaks, as my senses are silent when reason dictates. For certainly if reason convince me of many truths, contrary to what my senses suggest, if it convince me, for instance, that the sun is larger than the earth, though my eyes teach me the contrary, faith may teach us a variety of important things which reason could never discover, and which, when discovered, she cannot comprehend.

Here, perhaps, it may be said, "As the general agreement of men, in assenting to a proposition, is a

strong presumptive proof of its truth; so a general reluctance to receive it, is an equal evidence of its falsehood. The doctrine of the incarnation, consequently, having something in it repugnant to the minds of men in general, ought to be rejected as void of truth."—But there is a vast difference between rejecting a principle as contradictory to some *known, established* truth, and finding it *naturally incomprehensible*. The *former* is a character of its falsehood; the *latter* of its sublimity. There are some universal repugnances of the senses, of the imagination, and of the mind itself, which do not conclude against the reality of their objects. For example: The senses tell those that view from the ground an Egyptian pyramid, that the summit of it is almost like the spire of a steeple; and though all mankind were to see it in that situation, they would universally agree that it terminates in a point. But reason, judging of the distance and proportion of the object, as well as being assisted by experiment, corrects the error; and, notwithstanding this universal language of the senses, convinces you that the top of the pyramid is a platform capable of holding fifty men. Human *imagination* has an aversion, universally, to represent to itself men, who, without falling, have their feet diametrically opposite to ours. Yet reason corrects this error, and puts it beyond a doubt that there are antipodes. The *minds* of all mankind are naturally shocked at what philosophers and geometricians assert, concerning the infinite divisibility of matter; and yet, on inquiry, we cannot but assent to the truth of the strange assertion, notwithstanding this universal repugnancy. May we not, then, conclude, that though all men found something offensive to them in this proposition, "The Word was made flesh;" or, "God was made man;"