

THE
DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

ESSENTIAL TO THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE capital truths of religion are so closely connected, that, like the principles of geometry, some of them serve as so many steps by which to descend to the knowledge of others.

In our examination of the principal evidences on which our faith is established, we were led by the truth of the existence of God, to that of natural religion; by the truth of natural religion, to that of the Jewish religion; and by the truth of the Jewish religion, to that of the Christian religion.*

The mutual relation which these grand truths have one to another, has led us a step further. We could not carefully examine the foundations of the Christian religion, without being convinced, that the same principles establish the DIVINITY of Jesus Christ—establish it in such a manner, that he who doubts whether the Lord Messiah be truly and properly GOD,

* Referring to the author's treatise, "On the Truth of the Christian Religion."

ought also to question the truth of the Scriptures which contain the Christian doctrine ; and, that whoever is assured the New Testament is divinely authentic, ought not to dispute the Deity of Christ. This is the general design of the ensuing treatise.

But, for the better understanding it, one distinction is highly necessary. The Divinity of Jesus Christ may be considered either as a mystery *concealed* from us, or as a truth *revealed* to us. That our Lord is really a Divine Person, is a truth revealed ; but the modus of his Divine Subsistence is an unsearchable mystery ; and, so far from attempting to explain it, we ought rather to show that it is inexplicable. All the difference between the people and their teachers, in this respect, is, The ignorance of the people is modest and humble ; they are not ashamed to own it : but that of their teachers is haughty, and has recourse to scholastic distinctions, in order to conceal itself. We do not, therefore, undertake to *explain* the mystery, but to *prove the fact*. We shall have no recourse to metaphysical speculations to show HOW the thing is ; but we shall make it appear, from Divine Revelation, that it REALLY IS.

As my general design is to prove, that there is a necessary connexion between the Divinity of Christ and the truth of the Christian religion, I shall make it my principal endeavour to show, that they must stand or fall together. For this purpose I shall adopt a method which may seem a little new and extraordinary ; but such as may, perhaps, be convincing. If Jesus Christ be not the true God, of the same essence with his Father, I shall show, That the Mohammedan religion is preferable to Christianity, and Christ inferior to Mohammed ;—that the sanhedrim did an act of justice in causing Jesus to be put to

death for blasphemy ;—that He and his apostles have led us into a complicated and pernicious error ;—that there is no harmony between the Old and the New Testament ; and, that neither the ancient Jewish, nor the Christian religion, is attended with sufficient criteria to distinguish it from imposture. Which particulars I shall distinctly consider in five sections : to which I shall add a sixth, designed to answer the principal objections against the orthodox faith.

As the DIVINITY of Christ, the INCARNATION, and the TRINITY, are three subjects which may be distinctly handled, it is proper to apprise the reader, that it is the *first* only which I intend here to establish ; it being, in some respects, fundamental to the other two.

The brevity at which I aim not permitting me to rank the adversaries of the orthodox doctrine in different classes, and to engage the Arians, Semi-arians, and Socinians, separately, I have so managed the argument, that they are generally opposed by the same proofs.

I distinguish, once for all, and request the reader carefully to remember it, between the *persons* of our adversaries, and the *cause* which they plead. Towards the *former* I have all the sentiments of love and compassion which are due to my erring fellow-mortals. I admire the parts, the learning, and the gifts, which God has bestowed on some of them. And though they do manifest violence to the Scripture, I would not accuse them of speaking contrary to their own light, nor judge them unworthy of toleration in a Protestant state. As to their *cause*, I ought not to be censured, if I endeavour to represent it in its own colours—in all that deformity which necessarily attends an hypothesis that is contrary to Divine

revelation and the spirit of true religion. This is my duty, and one end of my ministry. I ought not to omit anything which appears to be a lawful and probable mean of convincing them that oppose the truth, and of reclaiming those who have wandered from the path of duty; but it is far from being my design to use hyperbolical expressions and declamatory language, in order to give an hideous description of a disguised doctrine. My intention is, to adduce such arguments from the Scripture as are pertinent and conclusive, and to propose them in a plain manner; having recourse to the Divine testimony and right reason for the establishment of truth, and the confutation of error. May the WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR enlighten the mind and guide the pen of the writer, that this work may redound to the glory of GOD MY SAVIOUR, and prove a blessing to all its readers! Amen.

SECTION I.

IF JESUS CHRIST BE NOT THE TRUE GOD, OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH HIS FATHER, THE MOHAMMEDAN RELIGION IS PREFERABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND JESUS CHRIST INFERIOR TO MOHAMMED.

CHAPTER I.

IF JESUS CHRIST BE NOT OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH HIS FATHER, THE CHRISTIANITY WE PROFESS IS A CORRUPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND MOHAMMEDANISM THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF IT.

THAT there is an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature, is a principle of natural religion. God cannot, therefore, without the most hateful impiety, be treated as a creature; nor can a creature, without damnable idolatry, be treated as God. If, then, Jesus Christ be the Creator, he cannot be said, without impiety, to be a mere creature: and, if he be a mere creature, he cannot, without idolatry, be acknowledged as God. Consequently, if we, who consider him as of one essence with the Father, and the eternal God, be under a mistake, we cannot be cleared from a charge of idolatry, since it is as such that we worship him.

We could not justify our conduct by saying, "We sincerely believe Him to be God; so that though there is an error in our judgment, yet there is no infidelity in our hearts, our worship being directed to God only;" for the same reasoning might serve to excuse all idolaters past, present, and future. The

heathens, who worshipped their Jupiter, really believed him to be God, and their acts of worship were intentionally referred to the Supreme Being ; yet they were not the less idolatrous on that account.

Nor ought we to imagine, that a creature, on account of its superior excellence, may become the object of worship, which it would not be lawful to give to one of an inferior order. For those who worship the stars, are as really idolaters as those who worship wood and stone ; and those who worship angels, as those who worship the stars : because idolatry does not consist in rendering Divine honours to a creature that is *comparatively low* in the scale of dependant existence ; but in addressing them to a *mere creature*.

Here it will be said, “ It may be lawful to worship a creature, whom God is pleased to invest with his glory ; as it is lawful to pay extraordinary honours to a subject, to whom the king orders they should be paid.” But then it must be granted, that it is never lawful to worship a creature as the true God, any more than it is to honour a subject, by treating him as the real sovereign. I may venture to assert, that God neither would, nor could part with this character of his glory in favour of another. He *could* not : for it is impossible that He only should be the true God, and that another, who has not his essence, should be so too. He *would* not : for how could he will a thing, which, being contrary to the truth, is contrary to his nature ? Suppose, then, that Christ is God’s representative, and that it is as such he is an object of worship ; yet, not being God, he cannot, without manifest idolatry, be worshipped *as* God.

Again : Idolatry is a crime which violates the law of God, and destroys the spirit of piety : it is directly

opposite to the two great ends of religion, which are, the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls. As to the *former*, it evidently robs Jehovah of his glory, and invests a creature with it. As to the *latter*, the Spirit of infallibility has declared, that "idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Hence it follows, that the Christianity we profess is a corruption of the Christian religion; and that Mohammedanism is the re-establishment of it. For if Christianity, in its primitive purity, represent and treat Jesus Christ as a mere creature; we corrupt and subvert it, when we consider and worship him as the true God. If then the religion of those who worship him as the Supreme Being, be a corruption of Christianity, the Mohammedan religion, which represents God as infinitely superior to Jesus Christ, must be, in this respect, the re-establishment of it.

We have been told, indeed, by Episcopius, "That the Christian religion is not a science of bare contemplation, but a practical knowledge; and that it consists in obedience, rather than in any abstracted speculations on the Deity." I grant the principle, but deny that it is pertinently applied in the case before us. What! are those sentiments *mere speculations*, which are of such importance, that we are guilty of idolatry, if they be false, and our adversaries of blasphemy, if they be true?

If our Lord be of the same essence with his Father; or, in other words, if he be God by nature, he ought to be adored as such; and our opponents cannot, without the greatest impiety, refuse to acknowledge and worship him under that most exalted character. But if he be not of one essence with the Father, we cannot consider and address him as the true God, without being guilty of idolatry. So that the

great question here is, How may we avoid impiety, on the one hand; and idolatry, on the other? consequently, it is practical and of the highest importance.

The learned author just mentioned, labours much, therefore, to little purpose, when he endeavours to prove, "That it is not essential to salvation to know, whether Jesus Christ be a Divine Person, by eternal generation; or whether, being a mere creature, he be called God on account of his ministry." For, to prove that the knowledge of these things is not essential, he must not only show, that the Socinians may, without being idolaters, worship one whom they *believe* to be a mere man by nature; but also, that we, without the guilt of idolatry, may adore Jesus Christ AS GOD, though he be not so in reality. If our belief of the eternal generation and consubstantiality of the Son of God, betray us into idolatry, nothing can be more fundamental, or more necessary, than a knowledge of those questions which respect his generation and consubstantiality. But it is certain, that our doctrine, upon this subject, does lead us into idolatry, if we be in an error as to the doctrine itself. For if Christ be not of the same essence with his Father, he is not God: and if so, we cannot place him on the throne of God, by paying Divine honours to him, without manifest idolatry.

Nor have we any excuse by which to extenuate the impiety of our conduct. For were we to say, "That we worship him as the Supreme Being, because we verily believe him to be so;" the heathens, as before observed, might, on the same principle, justify the worship which they addressed to Jupiter. Were we to plead, "We are not to be blamed for worshipping him as God, because, though he be not so, he deserves our adoration;" we should only change the

state of the question. For the question here is not, whether he deserves adoration ; but, whether we may adore him **AS GOD**, though he be not God. Were we to assert “ That nothing is absolutely necessary to be believed, performed, or avoided, in order to our salvation, but what is most evidently commanded, or prohibited in the Scripture ;” it would only serve to condemn us. For what is more expressly contained in the Bible than those precepts which require that we should ascribe the glory of God to none but God ? Or, what is prohibited on more dreadful pains than idolatry, which puts the creature in the place of God ? Were we to imagine, “ That God would not condemn our worship, because he assumes to himself all the honours that are paid to his Son ;” a little reflection would convince us of a great mistake. For if Christ be a mere creature, he cannot be called the Son of God, but in an improper and very remote sense. Consequently, however highly exalted he may be above other creatures, yet the disproportion between him and God is greater, immensely greater, than that which subsists between Gabriel and a worm. If, then, a very excellent creature would take it deservedly ill, to have the honours which are due to himself, transferred to one that is mean and vile ; with much greater reason will God be offended, that the worship which is due to himself only, is addressed to Jesus Christ.

But it is said, “ Jesus Christ represents God.” True : it is, however, certain, that to *represent* God, is one thing ; to *be* God, is another. “ But he is the Son of God.” Granted : notwithstanding, on the Socinian principles, he bears that character only in a figurative sense : consequently, there is a greater distance between him and God, than there is between

the meanest insect and the most glorious angel. So that though it were proper to invest the vilest creature with the titles and glories of the most exalted; it would not be lawful to pay to Jesus Christ those honours which are due to none but God.

CHAPTER II.

IF JESUS CHRIST BE NOT OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH HIS FATHER, MOHAMMED WAS A TEACHER RAISED UP OF GOD TO INSTRUCT MANKIND.

It appears, then, that the Mohammedan religion is, in some respects, the re-establishment of Christianity, if Christ be not the true God. But I shall here be told, "That the religion of the Arabian prophet is replete with fiction and imposture." Granted: yet I beg leave to inquire, How it came to pass that truth and error made so strict an alliance in it? That Mohammed was an impostor is acknowledged; that he abolished idolatry must also be allowed; and thus two opposite characters are united in him. If he turned a great part of the world from the Christian idolatry, for so I call that worship which Christians pay to Jesus Christ, if he be not God, by what spirit performed he so great a work? By the Spirit of God, or the spirit of the devil? If by the *latter*, how came he to abolish idolatry? If by the *former*, how could he be an impostor?

It may be objected, "Mohammed condemned the worship of the pagan idols, and so the dilemma may be retorted." But there is a difference between the principles which he supposed, and those which he

established. The knowledge of the true God had been introduced among the heathen, and pagan idolatry was destroyed, before he appeared in the world. It was not Mohammed, but JESUS CHRIST, by the preaching of his apostles, who produced these great effects: and Mohammed, by what spirit soever he is supposed to have been inspired, neither durst have attempted to introduce, nor could have established, a religion in the world, contrary to them.

But the case is not the same, in regard to the true knowledge of Christ and the destruction of Christian idolatry. It was Mohammed who taught mankind, that Christians, in worshipping Jesus Christ as God, were guilty of idolatry. It was his chief design to rectify the mistakes of those, who, as he thought, worshipped several gods under the name of a TRINITY; for so he speaks in his Koran. As, therefore, Christ and his apostles were the reformers of the heathen world, by destroying pagan idolatry; so Mohammed ought to have the honour of reforming the Christian world, if it be true that he really destroyed the Christian idolatry. But, as we should have had abundant cause of astonishment, if the apostles had destroyed the pagan idolatry and converted the heathen world by preaching fables; so we should have equal reason to be surprised, if Mohammed abolished the Christian idolatry by imposture.

Besides, Jesus Christ declares, that teachers are known "by their fruits." This maxim must be true, because it was spoken by Truth itself. If, then, we apply this principle to the case before us, we cannot but conceive an high opinion of Mohammed, and acknowledge him to have been a great prophet. It is no more than justice to his character, if he was the person who taught mankind the iniquity and the

danger of confounding God with a creature. For he has enlightened many nations and many ages. Like a wise and sincere worshipper of his Maker, and the friend of mankind, he has placed God on the throne of God, and the creature in the rank of a creature. What more lawful, what more holy, than such a design? What could be nobler, what greater, than such a work? If Mohammed has indeed enlightened the world, by asserting the rights of the Deity, and overturning the Christian idolatry, he deserves those titles of honour which the Mussulmen give him; and we may boldly affirm, that he ought to be considered, as a teacher of truth and a prophet of God—a prophet, greater than any that were under the law, greater than Jesus Christ. These are strange and shocking paradoxes, yet certain and unavoidable truths, if Christ be not the true God.

I said, he is *a teacher of truth*. This cannot be denied, while he teaches mankind such essential truths. This first principle of sacred truth, *A mere creature ought not to be worshipped as God*, is the foundation of natural religion, as distinguished from superstition; of the Jewish religion, as opposed to pagan idolatry; and of the Christian religion, considered in its purity. Mohammed, then, who established his religion on this grand principle, is a teacher of truth, of divine truth; even of that truth which, of all others, is most important and essential to religion.

“But Mohammed aims at the gratification of sordid passions, and is rather a teacher of the flesh than of the spirit.” If so, we have reason to wonder that so much truth is attended with so much impurity and vice; for light and darkness have no communion. If, then, he did not act by the Spirit of God, it must have been by the spirit of the world; and if by the *latter*, then

not by the *former*. We must, therefore, inquire after the characters of these two spirits in him. We are told, that "He is impure in his maxims and morals." This is a character of the spirit of the world; but the fact must be admitted with some restriction. For Mohammed reformed religion by overturning the Christian idolatry, and causing God only to be worshipped, through a great part of the world. This is, undoubtedly, a character of the Spirit of God, and a strong presumption in his favour. For how should an impostor promote the good-pleasure and the honour of God, by enlightening mankind and destroying idolatry? What! has God invested an impostor with the highest character of his own prophets, and with that of his own Son? For the prophets, who predicted the coming of the Messiah, foretold also, as a character of his appearance, that he should destroy idolatry. What! has the Most Holy made an impostor the instrument of his mercy, and the minister of his glory? What should we have thought of the Divine conduct, if God had chosen devils incarnate to be his messengers to mankind, and preachers of his gospel? We should certainly have concluded, either that he intended to render the gospel detestable, by putting it into the mouths of devils; or, that he designed to consecrate those apostate spirits, by making them the depositaries of his truth, and ministers of his grace.* This comparison is the fitter, for its

* The evangelical history and the Acts of the Apostles inform us, it must be acknowledged, of attestations that were given to the dignity of our Lord's person and the truth of his gospel, by infernal spirits. But there is a great and manifest difference, between those occasional, transient, and rejected testimonies, and the case which is here supposed. See Mark i. 23—25; Luke iv. 33—35; Acts xvi. 17, 18.

being odious, to illustrate the point. For what we say of the devil, may be said of seducers, his ministers, in general, and of Mohammed, in a particular manner. That is, if he, being an impostor, was chosen of God to re-establish the true religion, by destroying the Christian idolatry; Providence must have designed either to render religion infamous, or to consecrate the impostor by choosing and employing him in a work so great, so glorious, so divine: both which suppositions are impious and abominable.

CHAPTER III.

IF JESUS CHRIST BE NOT OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH HIS FATHER, MOHAMMED WAS A GREAT PROPHET, THE GREATEST OF PROPHETS, AND PREFERABLE TO JESUS CHRIST.

MOHAMMED, on the principles of our opponents, was a great prophet, and superior to any of the prophets under the Old Testament. This will appear, if the following things be considered. The ancient prophets spake only to the people of Israel; but Mohammed to the finest and most considerable part of the world. Of them there was a long succession, yet not effectual to preserve a single nation from idolatry; but he had no need of a companion, or successor, to banish idolatry for ever from those countries where his doctrine has been received. They were raised up in an extraordinary manner, and wrought various miracles, in order to destroy idolatry; but he delivered a great part of the world from the Christian idolatry, without the assistance of one

miracle. Moses, though the greatest of the ancient prophets, did not know God as he is; Jesus Christ, and he only, knew him perfectly, and made him known to men. But, if the doctrine of our adversaries be true, Mohammed has made him known much better than Jesus Christ: which leads us to show, that the *former*, according to their hypothesis, ought to be considered as a greater prophet than the *latter*.

This appears from his doctrine, and the success of his ministry. As to the *success of his ministry*, the thing speaks for itself. Jesus, indeed, caused his gospel to be preached and received throughout the world; but then he has hardly destroyed one kind of idolatry, before his followers lapse into another: for they are no sooner delivered from pagan, than they fall into Christian idolatry. But Mohammed established his religion on firmer foundations. He took wiser and juster measures, to preserve his disciples from relapsing into idolatry in future; nor have they ever discovered an inclination so to do. The disadvantage of Jesus Christ, upon the comparison, arises from this: The doctrine of Mohammed has in it a natural character, which is more opposite to idolatry than the doctrine of Christ. The reader, in order to be convinced of this, need only to consider the language of Jesus, in the writings of the New Testament, and compare it with the language of Mohammed, in his Koran.

Jesus tells us in his New Testament, "That he was before John the Baptist, and before Abraham; that he had a glory with his Father before the world was created; that he was in the beginning, that he was with God, and was GOD; that all things were created by him, whether they be visible or invisible;

that all things were not only created by him, but for him, and that by him all things consist; that he laid the foundations of the earth, and that the heavens are the works of his hands; that he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last; and, that there is one LORD, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* In the same sacred rule of our faith and practice, he is called, "The Son of God, his own Son, and his only begotten Son."† He is further called, "The LORD, LORD and GOD, GOD with us, GOD manifest in the flesh; The TRUE GOD; The GREAT GOD and SAVIOUR."‡

And, that we might not be at a loss for the sense in which these names and characters are given to him, we find him applying to himself many oracles of the prophets, which undoubtedly speak of the true God, and contain the characters of his peculiar glory. Solomon, for instance, addressing himself to the God of Israel, at the dedication of the temple, said; "Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men," 1 Kings viii. 39. Jesus claims this Divine prerogative, in the most solemn manner, as that which shall engage the fear and wonder of all his disciples. "All the churches shall know that I AM HE WHICH SEARCHETH THE REINS AND HEARTS: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works," Rev. ii. 23. It is written in the law, according to the exposition of Jesus

* John viii. 58; xvii. 5; i. 1; Col. i. 16, 17; Heb. i. 10; Rev. xxii. 13; 1 Cor. viii. 6.

† Mark i. 1; Luke i. 35; Acts viii. 37; Rom. viii. 3 32; John iii. 16; Heb. xi. 17.

‡ Luke i. 76; 1 Cor. i. 30, 31; Matt. i. 23; 1 Tim. ii 16; 1 John v. 20; Tit. ii. 13.

Christ; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matt. iv. 10. Yet an infallible writer assures us, that when God brought his First-begotten into the world he said, "Let all the angels of God WORSHIP HIM," Heb. i. 6. Concerning JEHOVAH the psalmist sings; "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Psa. cii. 25—27. That these things are asserted of God none can doubt; and that they are applicable to none but Him, is, I should think, equally evident. Yet it is past denial that this text is expressly applied to Jesus Christ. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. And, Thou LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest: thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Heb. i. 8—12. It is of JEHOVAH these words were spoken; "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men," Psa. lxxviii. 17, 18. God only has legions of angels under his command and at his disposal. God only can dispense heavenly donatives to rebellious men. And yet Jesus Christ, by the pen of his apostle, applies this passage to himself, in the most direct manner. "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" Eph. iv. 8, 9. Once more: It is God, the infinite, eternal JEHOVAH,

who speaks in the following sublime passage; "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," Isa. xlv. 23. This text also is applied to Jesus Christ, by his faithful servant Paul. "We shall all stand 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," Rom. xiv. 10, 11. Quotations of a similar kind might be easily multiplied; but these may suffice to show, how Jesus Christ speaks of himself, and taught his apostles to speak of him. I shall now proceed to show, in the following chapter, how Mohammed speaks of himself, and how carefully he guards against idolatry.

CHAPTER IV.

IF JESUS CHRIST BE NOT OF THE SAME ESSENCE WITH HIS FATHER, MOHAMMED WAS MORE TRUE, MORE WISE, MORE CONCERNED FOR THE GOOD OF MANKIND, AND MORE ZEALOUS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAN HE.

WE have seen that Jesus Christ equals himself with God, by saying of himself such things, and applying to himself such oracles, as cannot belong to any but the Supreme Being. Thus did not Mohammed. For he declares, in almost every page of his Koran, that none but the eternal Father is God. He, indeed, calls himself a prophet, a man divinely sent; but he lays no claim to Divinity. He acknowledges that Jesus Christ had a Divine mission; but will not

allow him to be called GOD, nor the SON OF GOD. There is not the least ambiguity in his language, on this important subject. He plainly asserts, that they who say, "The SON of Mary is God, are infidels." And avers, "That Christ, the son of Mary, is no more than God's envoy." That the "Christians are infidels, by making *three* gods, when there is but *one*." Nay, he thus represents God as complaining to Jesus Christ; "O, Jesus, Son of Mary, dost thou persuade mankind to put thy mother and thee in the place of God, and to worship you, as if ye were Gods?" To which he represents Jesus as answering; "God forbid that I should say anything contrary to the truth! Thou knowest whether I have taught that doctrine, or no. Thou knowest the secrets of all hearts." He requires that men should "worship God, the Creator of heaven and earth; who made the light and the darkness." And he calls those "infidels, who set up Christ as equal to God."

Hence it appears, on the principles of our adversaries, that Mohammed was more *true*, more *wise*, more *concerned for the good of mankind*, and more *zealous for the glory of God*, than Jesus Christ. This conclusion we abhor, as full of blasphemy; and yet we cannot but consider it as unavoidable, if the sentiments we oppose be true.

If Christ be not of the same essence with his Father, Mohammed was more *true* than he; at least, in those things which regard the fundamentals of religion and the glory of God. This will appear if you recollect the manner in which our Lord speaks of himself, and how, by the direction of his own Spirit, his apostles represent him, in the Scripture testimonies adduced in the preceding chapter; and compare them with the declarations of Mohammed, which

are directly contrary, as is manifest from the quotations just now produced from his Koran. In the *former*, Jesus is described as bearing Divine characters, and possessing Divine perfections; as performing Divine works, and as being the true God; but in the *latter*, as a mere creature, and infinitely inferior to Jehovah. The language of the Bible, therefore, and the language of the Koran, cannot be both true, because they are contradictory. But that of the Koran, which expressly asserts that Christ is a mere creature, and ought not to be considered as the Supreme Being, is not false, if he be indeed a mere creature. The inference, then, is plain and unavoidable, though shocking and horrid, that it is the language of the Bible, the language of Jesus Christ, which are void of truth.

It will be said, "The expressions of Mohammed are proper and literal, but those of Christ figurative and hyperbolic; so that, though contrary in appearance, yet not in reality." But what proof is there, that the language of Christ is figurative? Besides, it is unlawful, it is highly criminal, to make use of such figures as are injurious to the glory of God. We could not, without profaneness, say, "Such a man is equal to God in wisdom and power, in greatness and grandeur." And it would be but a poor apology for the use of such expressions, were we to endeavour to defend them by saying, "They were applied, and are to be understood, in a hyperbolic, and not a literal sense." For we should soon be told, that some figures are impious; and that such hyperboles as equal the creature with the Creator, are to be detested as absolutely unlawful. If in the style of the world, mortal beauties be called *adorable*; if they be spoken of as so many *divinities*; the language,

though figurative, is manifestly profane; though nobody can be so far deceived by it, as to mistake a beautiful woman for a Divinity. For if these figures, either directly, or indirectly, imply a want of reverence for God, it is enough to denominate them impious. If, then, in human language, we ought not to suffer such figures as indicate a want of respect for the Deity; much less ought such expressions to be used in a language sacred and divine, as is that of the Bible. And if such hyperboles be insufferable, when doing honour to mortal beauties, whom we cannot possibly mistake for the true God; how much more dangerous and iniquitous would they be, when used concerning a subject who might, as the event has shown, in respect of Christ, be easily taken for the Supreme Being!

Again: If Jesus Christ be not of the same essence with his Father, Mohammed was much *wiser* than he. As wisdom consists in choosing the best means for obtaining a proposed end; we need only examine, What was the *end* of each, in establishing his religion; and then inquire, What *method* the one and the other took, to succeed in their designs. Mohammed's design was, as he declares, to make known the true God, as exalted far above all creatures, to make him known, as the only object of religious worship; who ought to be distinguished from all other beings, even from Christ himself: maintaining, that Jesus is far from partaking with his Father in the glories of the Deity. Of these things Mohammed endeavours to persuade mankind. And for this purpose he makes use of plain, and strong, and proper expressions. He loudly and vehemently declares, that they who treat Jesus Christ as God, are idolaters; which is the direct way to accomplish his design. It is sup-

posed also, that the great end of Jesus Christ is to glorify God. To *glorify God*, is, according to the language of inspiration, to exalt him far above all other beings. The ancient prophets, foretelling that God should be glorified, in an extraordinary manner, in the latter times, express their ideas in the following words ; “ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the **LORD ALONE SHALL BE EXALTED** in that day,” Isa. ii. 11. But Christ debases God, at the very time he professes to exalt him ; for, by his expressions, he puts himself in the place of God. This he does, when he calls himself God ; when he claims Divine perfections ; when he attributes to himself the work of creation ; and when he applies to himself those oracles of the prophets, which display the essential characters of the Supreme Being.

If it be said, “ It is sufficient that Christ declares, *his Father is greater than he* ;” I answer, It would be a haughty kind of modesty for a mere creature to say, The Former of all things is greater than I. Neither Moses, nor Isaiah, nor any of the prophets, ever used such language. A loyal subject never affects to say, The king is greater than I. That is taken for granted. Nor will a holy creature make use of such language concerning his Creator ; because it would be, in some sense, to compare himself with the infinite God. Besides, what would it avail for Jesus, *once* in the course of his converse on earth, to say, “ My Father is greater than I,” John xiv. 28, when, in the general tenour of his conduct and language, and in the language he taught his disciples, he speaks and acts as if he were the true God ?

It may, perhaps, be replied, “ Here you beg the question : for those expressions, from which your con-

clusion is drawn, require a very different interpretation." When, for instance, Jesus is called GOD, our adversaries will have the name to signify, that he was sent from God, and represents God. When he is said to have "made the worlds;" the meaning is, that he made the happiness of the age to come, or the kingdom of the Messiah, which was so eagerly expected by the ancient Jews. When it is said, "He was in the beginning," and "All things were made by him;" the expressions mean, that he was from the time of John the Baptist, and is the author of the gospel, and of all that is done under that dispensation. When he is called, "GOD manifest in the flesh;" the character signifies a creature that represents God. And when it is said, that "he laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands;" the expressions are used, and the works ascribed to him, by way of accommodation, and not in a literal and proper sense. A small share of common sense is quite sufficient to show how unnatural and violent these interpretations are. But, supposing they were to the purpose, it could not be denied, that these expressions of Scripture, if they must be taken according to these explanations, are very obscure and equivocal. It could not, I say, be denied; since the far greater part of the Christian world has been ignorant of their meaning for so many ages; and since the first impression they naturally form on our minds, suggests the propriety of a very different interpretation. This evinces, if I may say it without blasphemy, that Christ was not so *prudent* in the choice of his language as Mohammed. For that pretended prophet always speaks in a clear, strong, peremptory manner, in order to show that it is not lawful, on any consideration, to represent a creature as possessed of the characters and

properties of God. Whereas Christ and his apostles have used many expressions that are obscure and equivocal; such as, in their most common acceptation, seem to invest a creature, a mere man, with the glories of the Deity: we being obliged to understand the terms of which a discourse consists, in their common and natural signification, and not in one that is uncommon and forced. Consequently, the language of Mohammed is more proper to glorify God than the language of Christ; and, therefore, if the design of the *latter* was to honour and exalt God, he has not succeeded in it so well as the *former*.

Further: If the sentiments of our adversaries be true, Mohammed was more *concerned for the good of mankind* than Jesus Christ. This appears from hence. A prudent and diligent endeavour to preserve men from idolatry, is one of the greatest marks of a sincere regard to their happiness; because idolatry destroys their souls, by excluding them from the kingdom of heaven. If, then, Jesus Christ be not a Divine Person, of the same essence with his Father, he has not taken proper measures to preserve men from the dreadful evil of idolatry; while Mohammed has done it effectually; for he has abolished the Christian idolatry in a great part of the world, and laid such foundations of his own religion, that a man cannot be guilty of idolatry, without first ceasing to be his disciple. But as for Christ, he has given occasion to it; he has laid a foundation for it: for he does not only permit and direct his disciples to give him the titles of the Supreme Being, but also to ascribe to him the perfections and works of the Deity, and to apply to him many of the sublimest oracles of the Old Testament which relate to the God of Israel.

It was, for instance, a very surprising thing, that

Jesus, when he appeared to Thomas, after his resurrection, should suffer him to cry out, "MY LORD, AND MY GOD!" without saying a word to him about the impiety and blasphemy of an exclamation, which treats the creature as if he were the Creator. Thomas, before, was an unbeliever; now he is an idolater. Till that instant he would not believe that Jesus was risen; he considered him as a man lying under the power of death; but now, on a sudden, he addresses him as God; he bows and adores. Of the two extremes, the latter is most condemnable; for unbelief is not so criminal as idolatry. *That* dishonouring Jesus Christ; *this* usurping the throne of God. Better for Thomas, therefore, to have persisted in his unbelief, than, by renouncing it, to fall into idolatry. And yet, strange indeed! strange to astonishment! who can account for it? Jesus upbraids him only with the *former*; not at all with the *latter*. Besides, as our Lord could not but know what an impression these words of his amazed and adoring apostle would make on the minds of men; as he knew that the Jews, deceived by expressions less exceptionable than these, had accused him of blasphemy; and as he knew that these very expressions would give occasion to Christians, in succeeding ages, to treat him as the true God; it is evident that he ought, from a concern for the good of mankind, to have strictly prohibited all expressions, which tended to make such a dangerous impression. And yet he not only permits his disciples to *speak* after this manner; but directs them to *record* the expressions for the perusal of all future generations; and that without giving the least hint, that the terms are used in a new and uncommon sense, though they appear so impious and blasphemous.

Once more : If Jesus Christ be not of the same essence with his Father, Mohammed was *more zealous for the glory of God* than he. The essential glory of God consists in the eminence of his perfections, by which he is infinitely exalted above all other beings ; and his manifestative glory, or the honour he receives from his rational creatures, in the acts of religion, by which he is distinguished from every creature. Now, Mohammed has glorified God, by distinguishing him from all other beings ; but it does not appear that he has been thus honoured by Jesus Christ ; since his own expressions and conduct, and the language of his apostles, have a natural tendency to make us consider a mere creature as the Great Supreme. All expressions which attribute to a creature the characters of God's glory are sacrilegious. Nay, though they might receive a sense which is not impious ; yet they are unlawful, if their ambiguity be such as renders them liable to be misinterpreted, to the dishonour of God, by an impartial searcher after truth. For if, in civil commerce, equivocal language, which, without any force upon the expressions, may be so understood, as to injure our lawful sovereign, would be accounted criminal ; and if, when the dignity of majesty is deeply interested, we consider the silence of some, and the equivocations of others, who ought to speak clearly for their master's honour, as so many implicit acts of treason ; have we not reason to condemn equivocations in the case before us, of impiety and blasphemy, though there were nothing else to induce us to do it ? But a man must be wilfully blind who does not see that there is something more than mere ambiguity in a language which is little short of a perpetual application of the characteristics of God's glory to Jesus Christ.

Hence I conclude, if Christ be a mere creature, that Mohammed has spoken conformably to truth and prudence; to a concern for the good of mankind, and a zeal for the glory of God. While Jesus—detested be the thought!—while Jesus has spoken imprudently and falsely; while he has spoken cruelly, in regard to us; and impiously, in respect to God. But if Jesus Christ be of the same essence with his Father, then it is evident, that when he attributes to himself the names and perfections, the works and honours of God, he speaks agreeably to truth; because he is God: he speaks wisely; for he uses the fittest expressions to convey his own ideas, and to obtain the end intended: he speaks like one concerned for the good of mankind; because he appears unwilling that we should be ignorant of a truth so capital and fundamental: and he speaks as one that is zealous for the glory of God; because we cannot neglect our duty to him, without offending Jehovah. Consequently, Mohammed has not spoken conformably to truth; for he has maintained that Jesus Christ is not, what he really is: nor consonant to his own design of glorifying God; because, by dishonouring Christ, he injures God himself: nor yet agreeably to a concern for the happiness of men; seeing he teaches them to blaspheme Jesus Christ, which exposes to a Divine curse.

To the tenour of my arguing, several objections, I am aware, will be made. It will be said, for instance, “ Mohammed is chargeable with not having formed sufficiently high ideas of Jesus Christ.” Be it so; the injury which religion has sustained, in that respect, is very inconsiderable, compared with the advantage it has received from him, by destroying those extravagantly exalted notions which men had formed

of the Son of Mary. For there is no very great harm in representing a mere creature as less excellent than he really is; especially, if that creature be the idol of mankind; which, on the principles of our opponents, was the case here. But effectually to teach men, not to confound the creature with the Creator, is a capital branch of religious instruction. Mohammed looked upon Christ as a mere man, yet as a man sent from God; and it is principally under this view that our adversaries would have us consider him. If, then, the author of the Koran abolish idolatry, and by so doing exalt God, as much as men had before debased him; he may very well be pardoned the small fault, of not sufficiently honouring a mere man. “But supposing Mohammed had an advantage in some respects; this does not hinder Jesus Christ from having a far greater in others.” As the two great ends of religion are, the glory of God, and the happiness of men; and as Mohammed has succeeded better than Jesus Christ, in his design of glorifying God and preserving men from idolatry, it follows, that he ought to have the preference. For, on the hypothesis which we oppose, Christ is so far from honouring God, that he robs him of his glory, and Mohammed restores it to him. “Mohammed only *pretended*, never sincerely designed the advancement of God’s glory.” I reply, according to the maxim of Jesus Christ, teachers are to be known by their fruits. “He wrought *no miracles*.” Granted: but it is not essential to a true prophet to work miracles, as appears by the example of John the Baptist. Besides, the law teaches us not to judge of a doctrine by its miracles, but of miracles by the doctrine. “Christ was *foretold* by the ancient prophets; but Mohammed could never boast of any such thing.” But can any substantial reason

be assigned, why the ancient oracles should not foretell the coming of Mohammed, who destroyed idolatry in the most considerable part of the world; when they foretold the appearance of a man who has been the idol of the Christians for so many ages? Of a man who, by his own doctrine, and that of his apostles, gave occasion to this dreadful idolatry, to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of millions? Were the coming and ministry of a mere man, that would equal himself with the eternal Sovereign, a proper subject of prophetic eloquence and transporting joy? Had Isaiah, for instance, any reason to lift up his voice, and say to Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee?" Isa. lx. 1. "The *morals*, however, of Jesus Christ, greatly excel those of Mohammed." But what real excellence can there be in those morals which do not prevent Christians from being guilty of blasphemy and idolatry; which leave Mohammed the honour of being more zealous for the glory of God, and more careful of the interests of men, than Jesus Christ? "Mohammed, it is well known, propagated his religion by *craft* and *force*; but Christ by upright and gentle methods." Granted: but yet I beg leave to ask, In whom are the marks of a proud and worldly spirit most evident? in one that is a man, like ourselves, who attributes to himself the titles, perfections, and honours of God; or in a man who, in the establishment of his religion, endeavoured to exalt God, by showing that no creature ought to be associated with him? "Mohammed flatters the *sordid appetites* of men, by promising them a sensual paradise, replenished with carnal delights." Not now to inquire, whether his disciples do not spiritualize their Koran, and take the gross expressions in a mystical

sense, it may be sufficient here to observe, That those vices which arise from the sensual appetites, are not so dangerous as those which proceed from the pride and impiety of the mind. The morals of Mohammed, therefore, are less dangerous, in this respect, than the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

To conclude : so long as it is supposed that Jesus has given occasion to Christian idolatry, and while the Arabian prophet is considered as having turned so many millions from it ; the advantages of the former will be very few and small, and those of the latter many and great : because there is nothing so essential to religion, as the glorifying of God ; nor anything so contrary to it, as the practice of idolatry.

Thus it appears, that the TRUTH of the Christian religion, and the DIVINITY of Jesus Christ, are so united, that we cannot establish the one, without maintaining the other ; nor give up the latter, without renouncing the former. But this will appear with still greater evidence in the further prosecution of my subject.